

<b>Content</b>	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Child in History	5
Chapter 2: Presenting the Child	21
Chapter 3: The Child of Eden	39
Chapter 4: The Child and “the Other”	55
Chapter 5: Teaching the Child	73
Conclusion	91
End Notes	95
Bibliography	97

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Anita Aune Nestvold

## Introduction

The first children's literature to emerge was written with a strong religious didactic purpose to educate the child in the consequences of a sinful life. When this type of literature is read today, literary critics, scholars, teachers and writers politely mock the texts due to their presentation of the child, the moral teaching, biblical scriptures and other elements that seem to represent a totally different era in literature, and attitude to the child and parenthood as well. At the same time, contemporary literature is praised for its outstanding work related to new topics such as race, sexuality, family, death, violence, as well as the author's use of narrative voice to express emotions, and portrayal of the real child—of real childhood. The contemporary reader will see Magorian's novel as more representative of the way we raise our children today than Sherwood's religious method, which is experienced as something separate from that. The two novels are written in two different centuries and their narrative style reflects the time, and the audience of children and parents that they wrote for. Sherwood's and Magorian's novels are different in narrative style, but the child and childhood they present are the same. This proves that children's literature has not altered as much as it appears to have done. In comparing the novels of M. M. Sherwood's *The Fairchild Family* (1818), and M. Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1983), similarities in presentation of the child, use of the biblical Garden of Eden, presentation of othering, and focus on education of the child stand out as elements that unite children's literature written in two different centuries.

In Western society today, there is a growing tendency to stigmatise religion as irrational and not inconsistent with intellect and reason. A division is created between irrational faith on one side and rational reason on the other; they come to represent two separate aspects of life. Since the Western world has separated faith from the rational, people who express faith are then considered irrational, and their opinions and viewpoints as well. This is evident when

literary critics read Sherwood's stories today; there is a problem related to the decoding of a text whose content the reader is alienated from and therefore sees as irrational. When the contemporary reader, who is alienated from religion, reads religious novels such as *The Fairchild Family*, the discourse of the Evangelicals will not be in harmony with the secular contemporary reader. The communication and message of the text are already unfavourable to the Evangelicals because it represents the irrational, and the reader will then draw a conclusion based on first impression of the text and stereotypes related to Evangelicals and their view of the child and childhood rather than what the text actually says. The gap existing between the rational reader and the religious writer is difficult to fill since the text itself is written in a style that belongs to another century and another culture, and may not appeal to the contemporary reader.

The Evangelicals were ground-breaking in their view of the child and family, and had a great influence on the forming of the new image of the child and childhood that developed during the nineteenth century. Writers such as Sherwood deserve attention for their contribution to this change that created the image of the child and family life that we are proprietors of today. To create a better understanding, comparing texts such as *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* can be a help. One has to look behind the words and the vocabulary, and even the religious manipulative language, and discover what the authors actually write to the child reader and see how they place the child and childhood in society.

The most common approach to a comparison is to look at one topic and split it into fragments, and most publications related to literature do that. Much of what is published about Sherwood's works are examples that explain the use of didacticism in children's literature, or they are used as examples in studies related to religious and/or Evangelical writings.

Magorian's novel is still new, and is surprisingly seldom used in academic studies, but rather is used in schools as a novel that contains a variety of topics and is therefore suitable for

discussion in class. There are no comparisons found between Sherwood's and Magorian's novels, and the reason for that may be that the novels appear to exist at opposite ends of the scale; Sherwood has Evangelical belief at the centre of the novel, while Magorian presents Evangelical belief as otherness. In comparing them, it has therefore been important to point to the several similarities related to the child and childhood that unites them, rather than just one. The four areas—the presentation of the child, the use of the biblical Garden of Eden, the phenomenon of othering, and the focus on education—represent a common concern with the child and the presentation of childhood that the authors of *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* both want to pass on to their readers; they represent a foundation for writing the child and childhood that exists in children's literature, independent of religious belief or not.



## **Chapter 1.0: The Child in History**

Ariès and Stone claim that the idea of childhood as something separate from adulthood, and the concept called the nuclear family, are inventions developed between 1500-1800 (Tucker and Gamble 2). It is difficult in retrospect to say something about how people experienced family life before these developments. Revisionist historians have contested that relationships within families before the eighteenth century were characterised by “distance and even callousness in parents’ attitudes towards their children” (Tucker and Gamble 2-3). Gradually, between 1500 and 1800, adults began to see children as individuals different from them, and not only as humans on their way to become adults. With this change in the understanding of the child, literature aimed at this particular group also appeared. The first children’s literature appeared in the seventeenth century, and since then, the literary image of the child has changed and is still in the process of changing today. The image of the child reflects social changes that have happened alongside the production of literature, and explains why the literary child as well as the real child has a special position in literature and in society today.

The Age of Reason in the seventeenth and eighteenth century created a wave of new understanding in relation to how people saw the world and their place in it. Its peak, and end, was the French Revolution (1779), in which the emphasis on reason had to give way to Romanticism’s emphasis on emotions. Two men of this period have had a great impact on our understanding of the child: John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. They have both been major contributors to the forming of the child image that we see today.

### **Locke (1632-1704)**

John Locke was a British philosopher, who published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693 and later *Conduct of the Understanding*. The first was a collection of advice given to

his friend about the education of his son, while the latter was thoughts on how to think clearly and rationally. Locke's works were written in the century that discovered the intellectual capacity within the child, and the adult's influential force on the child's development. Earlier, the child had been seen as a plaything, an animal, or a miniature adult who was unimportant. Locke did not agree with this view, and treated children as human beings who needed to be nurtured by parents to develop rationality. He "urged parents to spend time with their children and tailor their education to their character and idiosyncrasies, to develop both a sound body and character, and to make play the chief strategy for learning rather than rote learning or punishment" (Uzgalis). Locke wanted to educate people to think for themselves, and to prepare them for making decisions on their own which would benefit them, their society and their country.

### **Rousseau (1712-1778)**

Rousseau published his book *Emile, or On Education* in 1762 where he presented his ideas and thoughts related to the education and nurturing of children, which in this book was synonymous with boys. Stressing emotions and feelings, his voice became an important influence on and anticipator of the Romantic Movement. He believed that "[i]n the natural order, since men are all equal, their common calling is manhood" (Rousseau 6). For the child to grow up to be a man, he based his thinking on the belief that "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil" (Rousseau 1). To remain good, the child had to be protected from the surrounding world, and "the domineering wills of others" (Bertram). The child was led to a process of thinking rather than told what to think and act, and then motivated to draw his own conclusion based on experience. This was the basic idea behind his education of the child, but the education had three dimensions: nature, man, and things. Nature was the growth of our organs and faculties, the physical and mental equipment given



to us at birth. The use man made of that growth was the education of man, and finally, “what we gain by our experience of our surroundings is the education of things” (Rousseau 2). The surroundings affect the child, and the growth of reason will make the child seek or shun the sensations that cause pleasant or unpleasant situations. In the education of the child the only factor that could be controlled was the education of man, and partly the education of things. Since they could be controlled, they had to work together with nature “and follow the lead of that which is beyond our control” (Rousseau 2). Nature became the basic platform on which Rousseau built his education--the child of nature. The best way to raise a child was therefore close to nature, away from urban life. Rousseau saw a connection between nature and health, and his belief was that the best way to gain good health was through labour: “I will not stop to prove at length the value of manual labour and bodily exercise for strengthening the health and constitution; no one denies it” (21). The child should work to develop the body, since manual labour worked with the forces of nature. He did not believe in physical punishment, and advised parents to give the child freedom rather than a confined or constrained childhood (Bertram). Rousseau’s thoughts have had a great impact on the way the child is seen today; especially his child of nature and the child’s freedom to develop according to the qualities every child has by birth. His approach to education—teaching is best done through activity or by experiencing knowledge to be true—has been an inspiration in developing the teacher role and function in the process of educating the child.

Locke’s and Rousseau’s focuses on the child as an individual influenced the eighteenth century’s increased concern with the poor, and the poor child in particular. The death rate was high, and children were abandoned in the streets due to their parents’ poverty. Orphanages were established to address the problem of abandoned children living on the streets, and were often founded by wealthy middle-class citizens. To make the children decent citizens, education was considered important by the middle-class founders and religious leaders.

Charity schools were established to educate the children of the poor in religion, reading and writing, but “[t]he driving force behind the charity schools was less a concern for the individual children than a fear of Catholicism” (Cunningham ch. 3). In the eighteenth century, education became an important means of protecting the younger generation from Catholic influence. The conflict stemmed from the Reformation of the sixteenth century, but later changed into a political rather than a religious conflict with France, with whom Britain had frequently been at war since the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) (Cunningham ch. 3).

The desire to help orphans was easier to convert into action than to acknowledge the differences within society and the reason behind the abandonment of children. William Blake was one of the few who dared to express his thoughts and point at the realities behind the situation. In the first three stanzas of his poem “Holy Thursday”, he describes the day when the orphans are dressed up and paraded through town on their way to church to give their founders a look at their investments:

Is this a holy thing to see  
In a rich and fruitful land,  
Babes reduc'd to misery,  
Fed with cold and usurious hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?  
Can it be a song of joy?  
And so many poor?  
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,  
And their fields are black & bare,  
And their ways are fill'd with thorns;  
It is eternal winter there. (Blake 19)

Under such conditions, it is understandable that the death rate was high. Among the middle-class, the economic situation and living conditions were far better, but still the death rate was not radically lower than among the poor, but it was about to change. Cunningham records that “[i]n the 25 years from 1750 the death rate of aristocratic children under the age of five dropped by 30 per cent. The reason for this, it has been argued, was not because the children were less likely to catch diseases or be better fed: it was because they spent more time with their mother” (ch. 3). Another important contribution was breastfeeding, and by 1780, “most aristocratic women were . . . breast-feeding, itself a major contributory cause of the decline in infant mortality” (Cunningham ch. 3). Childcare had for decades been left in the care of nannies. As a result of Locke’s and Rousseau’s contributions to the idea of the child and childhood and an increased awareness in society in general, people raised questions and gradually the situation changed among the aristocracy. Locke and Rousseau had both pointed at the importance of childhood as the foundation for adult life. They did not agree on how it was best done, but still, they both claimed parents to be essential in the growth and nurturing of the child, and for the aristocracy, it turned out to be knowledge of great importance.

Society and parents' increased concern for the child made the child a target for the quickly expanding consumer market. Locke and his theory of learning through play inspired producers to create toys that would make the child want to learn (Cunningham ch. 3). Locke had warned about the consumer child. He pointed to the role of adults as guides in preparing the child for the increased abundance found in shops. At this early stage of a commercialised

England, books written for children found their natural place as tools to be used for educational purpose as well as entertaining. This was not the first literature intended for children, but the purpose—education and entertainment—separated this literature from earlier religiously driven publications. Existing class distinctions created a division within the literary market between the chapbook and religious literature. A chapbook was a pamphlet sold by chapmen to entertain an adult audience. It contained different kinds of popular literature: tales, ballads and tracts, and the quality of the content varied. Nevertheless, they were cheap and therefore available to and popular among the lower classes. Not all of the content was considered good reading for a young mind. It could contain sexual and violent content and language not always considered proper for a child. Therefore, in the seventeenth century the chapbook tradition came to represent everything the religious puritan writings were not in matters of content. This conflict continued into the eighteenth century when one of the first books written for children, Sir Isaac Watt's *Divine Songs, Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), was published. This book was mainly written to protect children from chapbooks (Cunningham ch. 3) and to instruct the child in religious matters. It was not until the eighteenth century that children were seen as a group in need of a specific kind of literature where the child was the centre of the story. Before that, the publications aimed at children contained Bible stories. The stories were not direct copies of biblical stories, but stories that were held to be true and written by "the Holy Penman" (Bottigheimer 300).

The Bible stories changed and developed through the coming centuries "from negative to positive exempla at the beginning of the eighteenth century, their slow reduction in the number of female characters in the course of the eighteenth century, and their increasing emphasis on New Testament stories in the nineteenth century" (Bottigheimer 300). The development must be seen as a way of adjusting to the changes of the commercialised society

and new demands from the child reader. The literature produced in the eighteenth century was written for and by the middle-class, and mainly written by men. As such, children's literature excluded the life and point of view of the working class and the poor, but also the female view on the child and family life. With the Romantic Movement, the situation for female writers improved. The liberation and equality message of the French Revolution opened up for a way for women to express themselves. Education and raising children were included in the agenda, and male-dominated society considered women to be most capable of dealing with matters concerning children and children's education. The road to producing literature for children was then short, and from the beginning of the nineteenth century, women dominated literary production for children (Metz).

Many of the female writers were a part of, or influenced by, the Evangelical Movement, which started at the end of the eighteenth century, but did not gain its full momentum until the 1830s and 40s. It was a time of political and economic change following in the wake of the industrial revolution, and "religious and educational reform movements—frequently supported and often led by, women—flourished . . . and intersected with and frequently took the form of writing intended for children" (Vallone 73). Considering the large number of women, it might be expected that a female perspective would shape their writing, but Lynne Vallone claims that female writers were "inheritors of a masculinist ideological understanding of the child . . ." (75) meaning; the focus was on moral and spiritual welfare, and the intimate relationship between parents and child—the more feminine side—was not yet on the agenda. Still, the Evangelical image of family life represented a change from the middle-class life that had represented the ideal from the seventeenth century. Mothers and fathers were seen as equally responsible for the upbringing of the child, and the value of family life, of doing things together, presented a new understanding of the importance of interaction between adults and children if parents wanted to influence the child. Despite its appearance as

successful, a middle-class family was a split family; parents and children were separated, and the children were either left to their own devices or kept under care by a nurse/servant. The children were dressed up to meet their parents for a short period during the day, and they were expected to behave well during the meeting. Writing for children reflected this type of split family life, and was dominated by the same middle-class view of the child, family and society, which kept the mother at a distance, while the father was often feared. One author who went outside this class-conscious writing was Mary Martha Sherwood and *The Fairchild Family*. Her presentation of a family where children were raised by both parents and not a nurse, presented a new ideology of raising children that would be read by Calvinists as well as non-Calvinists. This was the first lifelike domestic tale written for children, and was popular for more than eighty years, long after Mrs Sherwood's death in 1851 (Avery 454). Still, the middle-class novel and the split in family life between child and parents came to dominate most literature written for children during the Victorian Era (1837-1901) until it was replaced at the end of the nineteenth century with the adventure story which glorified the British Empire (1815–1915).

After the progressive Victorian Era and the end of the greatness of the British Empire came a time of wars (1914–1945), and in their wake, financial problems (1930s). Literature written for children in the first decades of the twentieth century avoided the topic of war. For some reason, British children's literature seemed to deal with the topic by rejecting the existence of the war, or by glamourising the situation. Britain had for decades been a leading world power, and still worked hard to maintain its position. Children's literature became an important source of influence, and in a way, served as propaganda to maintain the image of Britain as a world power. Topics like loyalty and forthrightness are often found in literature of these decades, and they often portray young men who go to war and fight with pride. Literature for girls was "conservative in tone, urging girls and women to support their menfolk, to set aside

the talk of independence and feminism of pre-war days” (Agnew and Fox 11). It was important to keep things the way they were to ensure the stability of British society.

The lack of paper during the war period created a decline in the production and print of novels. Instead, weekly story-papers became an “important distraction—or even a means of coming to terms with the war itself” (22). The story-papers were meant for older readers, and the lack of other types of literature also created a community among readers of all classes and gender since they were more or less the only literature available during the war years (Agnew and Fox 28). The austere lifestyle of the period is reflected in the writing, and the stories were written to create an imaginative universe away from the war, but still, the war was often the topic but seen from the glamorous perspective of heroes and agents putting their life at risk for the British Crown.

Another writer of the 30s who celebrates the family is Eve Garnett. What separates her from other writers of the time is her concern with the poor. Writing about the poor had not been a tradition among middle-class writers, but Garnett, influenced by conditions in working class areas in the 30s, wrote and illustrated *The Family From One End Street* (1937) to describe the life of the poor. In contrast to writers such as Charles Dickens, who a century earlier had written his novels as socio-political criticism, this was a happy story about a working class family, the Ruggles, which almost glamorised the life of the poor. Garnett won the Carnegie Medal for her novel, but many publishers turned down the book since it was considered unsuitable for children. The book represented a break with the successful books of the time which “involved middle-class families and/or talking animals ... [while others] found it patronising and unacceptable” (“Winning Year: 1937”). The reactions to the novel explain the long-lasting dominance of the middle-class novel in British society, but also who the publishers viewed as potential readers of the literature they published.

The 1930s was a period of dramatic change. World War I had ended, the financial depression arrived and the industrial progress had created global processes of change influencing the lives of many people. In Britain, class distinction had for long created deep social problems, and Goronwy Rees, a journalist and one of many Marxist intellectuals, claimed that “[i]f Britain suffered less than other industrialised countries from the shock of the world economic depression, it was because depression was already a permanent feature of her economy” (qtd. in Stevenson and Cook 292). In this situation, British literature “tended to be mainly in harmony with the previous values of that decade” (Butts 99) which echoed the greatness of the empire. In addition to the traditional adventure story that typically explored the world in accordance with the spirit of empire, flying stories emerged. Flying stories were a reaction to the technological development that coloured the first decades of the twentieth century and the importance of aircraft during the first and second World Wars. According to Dennis Butts, it is remarkable how the characters in these stories lack individual characterisation. People had died in great numbers during the wars, and writers did not want the reader to be attached to the characters, but rather see them as machine-like people who did a job for the country—they were heroes. The flying story declined after World War II with the fall of the empire, and was replaced with historical romance, fantasy and science fiction (Butts 101). In this period great writers like C. S Lewis and J. R. R Tolkien published their still-famous stories *Narnia* (1950-56) and *Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), stories that contrast the previous styles by stressing feelings, human relationships, depth, and the fight for the good in humans and in the (fantasy) world. The fact that writers still turned to fantasy and avoided reality, expresses society’s continuing need to protect the child reader from reality, and continue on the track where the child was still innocent, in need of protection from the surrounding world, and served a purpose as the saviour of man. In the child lies the future, and in post war Britain the image of the future was gloomy, and the need to create a child of hope was crucial.



In 1904, American psychologist and educationalist Stanley Hall was the first to use the term “adolescence” to describe the period that transforms the child into an adult. Literature had up to now been written for children, though aware of the fact that children did not stay young forever. Still, writers did not primarily focus their writing towards an adolescent audience, but gave them adult characteristics to express older age, for instance young characters dealing with “adult” technology and situations. While the American novel started to deal with adolescent subjects at the beginning of the twentieth century, “the Great War and then the Depression resulted in a continuing absence of adolescent subjectivity in literature for British young people” (Hilton and Nikolajeva 4). Hilton and Nikolajeva point to the emotional and mental consequences of the war as one of the reasons for this, and suggest that due to the traumas and shocks of the twenties and thirties, the conservative British reader was not in a position to accept radical literature dealing with teenage angst (4).

The traumas and losses of the war could not be repressed forever, and the end of the Second World War brought the change. Writers who had survived the war opposed the sentimental tradition that offered an adolescent character who provides hope for the future, and changed it into a protagonist as “vulnerable to breakdown and inner conflict as society itself” (Hilton and Nikolajeva 7). This change created a distinct difference between literature written for children and that written for adolescents. The young adult characters moved away from nature and into the city to depict “the adolescent protagonist in a moment of crisis” (Hilton and Nikolajeva 9). Children’s literature was no longer for children of all ages, but was now divided into books for children that still focused on the innocent child, and books for adolescents that portrayed youths facing different types of crisis.

Literature in post-war Britain was divided in its view on what children should be offered. On one side, they were offered quality literature that avoided references to the war period, and on

the other side, story-papers and comics that exalted violence and celebrated war for “generations with no direct experience of the war” (Agnew and Fox 39). In the early 60s, comic books dedicated to war proliferated and even developed dramatically in the 70s. Agnew and Fox question the neglecting of story-papers and comics when critics of children’s literature are studying the treatment of war in literature published for children and adolescents: “It may well be that such comic books have made a far wider impact in shaping the responses, and perhaps attitudes, of readers than the quality fiction understandably preferred by parents, teachers and librarians” (39). Though story-papers were not considered proper literature, they put war on the agenda and made the topic available for young readers rather than avoiding the topic as the traditional literature did. Making the topic available, the discussions were kept alive and the stories that children had heard spoken of could be connected to the stories they read, and thereby, the reader could be a part of their parents and grandparent’s war. Not until the 60s and onward, did literature about social issues, racism and genocide, become appropriate topics in English schools. Novels such as *Anne Frank’s Diary* were frequently used in classrooms, and for the next 30 years different books for children of all ages recorded the cruelties of war (Agnew and Fox 40). Finally, the brutalities of human history became available for children.

The 60s has in many ways been seen as the decade that changed the family structure that for centuries had dominated western culture. In the wake of feminism, divorce and working mothers replaced what long had been considered the standard family unit: father is working; mother is home with the children and takes care of the house. Instead, a new term—“single mother”—became quite common. This change raised new issues related to child-care, working hours, salaries, and education. More children spent hours home alone every day, and some of them did not spend time with both parents. Not only the family was affected by the changes of the post war period. British society had to face great social problems immediately

after World War II, and the situation continued to escalate. From 1970 and onward, the statistics on unemployment, divorce, abortion, illegitimate births for teenagers, homelessness, and crime give a gloomy picture of development in Britain (Agnew and Fox 39). Social problems are also reflected in children's literature, and according to Butts, a change of topics came in the 1980s and 90s. Novels reflecting topics related to "adolescent sex and abortion, crime, divorce, drugs, homelessness and violence began to appear, often winning important literary prizes for their outstanding qualities" (Butts 142). The relevance of the stories has been debated, and Hilton and Nikolajeva claim that the "unlikely to happen" themes (e.g sex, drugs, suicide) "offer young people situations, including extreme situations . . . which they, in most cases, fortunately will not be exposed to in real life" (15). This exposure will make teenagers or other readers think about aspects of our society and family life that do not work, or function the way they could or should. The adult writer has a need to explain the world to the innocent child who is growing into adulthood. Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom* is an example of such literature when she deals with domestic violence in relation to a fanatic religious single mother. This shift in emphasis to a concern with educating the child on topics related to certain areas of a child's life, gives a flashback to the first children's literature that served a strong didactic purpose in the raising of the child. Despite a turn towards didacticism, Butts states that the didacticism of the 80s and 90s was more muted than the explicit moral and didactic writings of the nineteenth-century writers. Instead, readers were warned of the problems of modern living, or writers tried to create empathy for characters in difficult situations saying that if they can survive, you can too (Butts 144-45).

Adolescent literature gained new heights in the 80s, but not without reaction. It was soon discovered, and acknowledged, that this literature was likely to be read by children as well, which created a problem for the publishers who on one side were responsible for the

publication and on the other side wanted financial profit. Julia Eccleshare explains this conflict of interest:

Did publishers have a responsibility not to include ‘unsuitable’ material for them, or was it enough to have overt labelling warning that this was *intended* for teenagers? As books for teenagers became increasingly daring in terms of explicit writing about sex in the 1970s, violence in the 1990s and drugs by the end of the century, the naming and marketing of the books was a significant issue. (543)

The concern among publishers and adults in the last half of the twentieth century for a distinction between children’s and adolescents’ literature, may have been exaggerated. In 1981, Katherine Ngandu published a study of elementary students in Nebraska; the findings explain why children read. While teachers believed that students’ primary purpose in reading was survival—to have a job and make a living—and secondarily to gain knowledge, the survey showed that the students themselves said they primarily read for knowledge, and for survival second (Ngandu 129). This study is more than thirty years old, but what it points at is a discrepancy between teachers and adults’ ideas of what children would like to read and what they actually want to read when and if they could choose for themselves. It also reveals what the first writers for children discovered: children are after books which have a content considered not proper for a child, just like the content of the chapbooks in the eighteenth century. In retrospect, protection from any kind of literature has proved to be a difficult task after the Internet became a tool difficult to avoid but it also gives the child access to a world of knowledge they did not have before.

Children’s literature started out as a means of educating the child to be a good Christian, ready for heaven. This purpose has changed along the way, but religion as a part of the child’s

life and of our society has remained. Despite some gloomy predictions in the 1960s that religion would vanish with knowledge, it still holds a strong global position and, in the Western world, a growing interest in the supernatural is noticeable. Rita Ghesquiére claims the new historicism of the 1970s creates a better climate for religious writing, since “[t]he ‘new historicism’ does not assume the superiority of one’s own position” (311). Openness towards other people’s religions became more common. Instead of drawing a glamorous picture of religion, writers wrote the dark side: crusades, human weaknesses, greed, and abuse of power to give a wider understanding of each religion’s place in the world. Despite the change, authors also described religion and faith as a pillar in life which helped the characters to tackle life (Ghesquiére 313). Another aspect of religious writing that Ghesquiére notices is what she calls hidden religion: a religious theme that is so hidden in the text that the young reader who is not in possession of the knowledge needed to decode the stories, fails to recognise the religious information (313). These types of novels are today often labelled crossover novel or literature, and are directed towards a dual audience: both children and adults. C. S. Lewis’s *Narnia*, J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, and Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy are examples of such literature. In these literatures, there are layers of meanings, and different readers—children, adolescents and adults—will all be challenged. All these novels are bestsellers, and the Bible as a key source (*Narnia*) or elements of it, such as a Christ figure who gives his or her life for someone else (Harry Potter) can be found, or the story is simply built around biblical allegories and allusions (*Narnia*, *His Dark Materials* and Harry Potter), which proves that the Bible as a primary source for writing is still strong among writers. The stories of the Bible, whose function is to educate people in religious, moral and ethical questions, still hold a central place in the Western literary culture, but religion’s absence from adults and children’s lives, weakens the readers ability to decode the existing layers of the literature.

Despite the need for a better understanding of biblical themes, it is difficult to imagine Evangelical or other religious writers being in control of and having such an influence on children's literature today as it had in the nineteenth century. Writers of Christian fiction still exist and are still producing literature on a large scale, but they are no longer dominating the market. Yet, the moral voice of the adult writer has made and will always make an imprint on the text they produce for the child reader. The adult writer and the adult buyer of books are the ones who decide what is acceptable literature for a child to read, and still, these ethical and moral guidelines are grounded in the Christian heritage that our western society is built upon. The child's position in society has changed gradually and dramatically from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The changes have, to a certain degree, been reflected in the written material that has been produced for children in this time period. The religious aspect has gradually been replaced with a need to inform the child about the changes and challenges they are facing in society today, but the religious aspect of the writing: morality, good and evil, faith, ethics and the use of allegories and allusions, give Christianity a central position in children's literature of the West even today.

## Chapter 2.0: Presenting the Child

Writers of children's literature want young readers to find familiar elements in the novel that they recognise in their own childhood. At the same time, the child they want to present to the child reader has to correspond with society's image of the child, since adults and publishers are key figures in the creation of a bestseller. Authors therefore have to balance their writing to fit a dual audience by creating a child who attracts the young, as well as the adult reader. Sherwood and Magorian wrote in two different centuries, but still, strong similarities can be found in their presentation of the child; they both place children as pre-adolescents and set the child in a family context; they value some of the same characteristics in the child, and both actively use the narrator to place the adult's voice as superior to that of the younger characters.

When writers of children's literature write stories about children, the stories will be a natural mix of their own childhood and the childhood they witness in the growing generation. Writing the child and childhood in retrospect creates problems related to representation since the author's own childhood is likely to be a false impression of an imagined past and based on memories. The narrator in John Banville's novel, *The Sea*, describes his childhood memories and the conflict of reliability in memories when he says:

So what I foresaw for the future was in fact, if fact comes into it, a picture of what could only be an imagined past. I was, one might say, not so much anticipating the future as nostalgic for it, since what in my imaginings was to come was in reality already gone. And suddenly now this strikes me as in some way significant. Was it actually the future I was looking forward to, or something beyond the future? (70)

This is a good description of the problem related to childhood representation. It describes the beauty of an imagined past or future, and the nostalgia that exists in memories and the false

representation that comes with childhood memories. Every adult has been a child, and can thus claim to be an expert in the field, but when it comes to childhood, actual facts presented are a subjective impressions from one person's point of view. Our tendency to glamorise or dramatize childhood memories exists in the gap between "real" childhood and the representation of it. What we are looking at when we gaze at our childhood is often a false image. Ellen Pifer describes this process and says that when we study childhood, we study ourselves, and with the child's changing image, "our [own] beliefs, prejudices, anxieties, and conflicts. The fate of the fictional or literary child, in particular, says much about the way we view our own nature and destiny . . . our chances for succeeding as a species on this planet" (16). The childhood authors will as such produce a mix of their own pre-adolescent years and the contemporary childhood they witness in the growing generation. They write for the future, the generation to come, but their reference point is their own experienced childhood, or rather memories of it. Experienced childhood and real childhood become the extreme-points, and the literary child and childhood come alive somewhere in between the two of them. The literary child is a construction rooted in the author's own childhood memories, and then mixed with an understanding of what is missing, or needed, in contemporary childhood that will cause problems for the future child. Sherwood and Magorian wrote in two different centuries, but still, the children they present are not so different from each other. The similarities in presentation of the child, characteristics and position of the child in society illustrate that childhood representation is based on *adults'* understanding of what a good and happy childhood is rather than the child's. Since the same elements are found in literature from early 1800 as well as in contemporary literature, they are representative of a basic adult understanding of what childhood should contain.

Writers of children's literature have to place the child in age. In both *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the children are under ten. Sherwood and Magorian state the age



of the children early in the novel; William<sup>1</sup>, in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, is nine when the story begins, ten when it ends; the Fairchild children are between five and nine, depending on the novel's edition, since all the children are one year older in the editions published after 1818. By placing the child under ten, both writers address pre-adolescents. They also avoid problems related to puberty and other physical and mental changes representing the step from childhood into adulthood. The children are still possible to shape, but also capable of reason and reflection. They interact with adults, but also act on their own, but most important: the children are still reliant on their parents.

In *The Fairchild Family* the family lives in the countryside, and nature is a central element of their everyday life. They walk, grow fruits and vegetables, and eat and read in the fields. The parents educate the children. Mr Fairchild teaches Henry, while Mrs Fairchild is responsible for the education of Lucy and Emily. They live a middle-class life of the nineteenth century, but are active contributors to the local community through charity. The children are raised to be a part of the same understanding that does not see the middle-class as superior other people, but rather places all Christians as equal. Then, Christians are seen as superior other people of other religions and beliefs. The same distinction between Christians and non-Christians is reflected when Henry, Lucy and Emily play with children of all classes, but rather prefer to be with a good poor Christian than with a non-Christian of the middle-class. Their daily routines are underpinned with a mix of practical duties, religious activities, reading, physical exercise, education, learning practical skills and meals. The Fairchild children's lives are centred around the parents and the house, and the parents are equal characters to the children in the story; they have a central place in the narrative and play an active part in the story.

In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, William—also known as Willie or Will—has two lives, and in a way, two identities. He is London Willie, a lonely boy, who is abused by his religious fanatic

mother, bullied at school, and who lives an isolated life convinced that he is the worst behaved, and most ugly boy in the world. His ideas of himself are founded in his mother's spoken negative verbal abuse of him and everything he does, and her physical abuse of him. This part of his life is not given much space in the novel, but rather the focus is centred on his new life with Tom in Little Weirwold. William's life with Tom is good. He has his duties, he goes to school, does his homework, plays with friends, is outside, eats, and draws. Tom is just as much a central character to the story as William, and their interaction is the ground on which the story is built.

Some of the basic elements in *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* are the same. Daily routines, education, physical exercise, and the child in society are emphasised in both stories. The child under adult protection and guidance and good parenthood is important in both novels, and reflects what Pifer claims: in writing childhood, the author's worries for the future generation are also revealed (16). They both see the responsibility to develop the child as primarily belonging to the parents, and when everyday life and routines are still presented as basic elements in children's literature, they reflect the security of structure that parents and adults see as important for a good development of the child. This is the adult author's opinion more than the child's perspective of ideal childhood. Structure is believed to give qualities that, from an adult's perspective, will benefit the child later in life; they will become parents that pass the same structure on to their children, and the content of the daily structure as well. Structure also makes nurturing easier for the parents, and it is therefore vital to make the child adopt the same understanding. When Sherwood emphasizes practical daily routines and exercise, Rousseau had only fifty years earlier presented the working child in *Emile*, and his ideas had not gained a strong position within the middle-class yet. They still saw manual work as something that belongs to the working class. Sherwood's children are representatives of the ideal, and function as an example to the middle-class reader. The purpose of work and

exercise was according to Rousseau to improve the life and health of the child who at this time in history died early. The parents had to take responsibility and be active contributors to improvement, and in Sherwood's novel, the parents take the children for walks and do work together with them: they become the ideal parent.

Magorian wrote her novel in a decade when technological development exploded, and some of the younger generation would not know what it meant to do manual labour and be alienated from the hardship of bodily work. When she describes in detail William's physical development alongside his mental and intellectual development, she states that body and mind are connected, and that mental health is connected to a use of the body. When she sets her story in the pre-war years, this was a time when manual labour was still needed and crucial for society in towns as well as in the countryside. She wants the contemporary reader to understand the progress that has happened in the post-war years, and to appreciate the life they have, but also to value practical tasks and manual labour given to them since mental strength is developed through the use of the body.

Sherwood and Magorian also express a concern for the contemporary development of parenting when they focus on adult nurture of the child. Sherwood had a concern for children brought up in a non-Christian family. A childhood without a Christian upbringing and parents who did not care for the child spiritually as well as mentally and physically, were not considered properly nurturing. She shows the reader that a child who is not brought up within a Christian family is lacking the most important aspect of life: a life with God. A life lived without God is not a life according to Sherwood, and she is urging parents to take responsibility for Christian upbringing. Nearly two hundred years later when *Goodnight Mister Tom* was written, the position of parents had weakened in society, and opposing parents was common among adolescents particularly. The strong attachment between Tom

and William, and Tom's role in William's human development, states to the reader that adults and parents are important people in a child's life. Therefore, adults should spend more time with the younger generation, and young people should value their parents and other adults in their life. Magorian also distinguishes between good and bad parenting. William's mother is not taking care of him and loving him the way she should, but Tom, who is only a host for an evacuee child, manages to love and care for him despite their lack of family relation. This posting of values related to an adult's behaviour describes to the child what to expect from an adult caretaker and that there are situations when a child should not support their parents but leave them.

Sherwood's and Magorian's focus on parenthood is not exclusively meant for the child; it also communicates with an audience that is not always thought of as readers of children's literature: adults. The adult characters therefore need to reflect mainstream values existing within the society of which the novel is published. If a novel is to be published, it cannot contradict what society sees as good parenting; the literature needs to reflect what parents want their children to find in their own parenthood. Writers want literature to function as a mirror to the adult reader's own role as parent. In the case of Tom and William, Tom becomes the ideal carer while William's mother represents the parenthood not wanted and not accepted by society. Sherwood represents the Christian family as the ideal family, but also refers to other families whose parents are irresponsible and lack the qualities needed to be good nurturers. In Sherwood's and Magorian's novels, the child under adult care is a central element, and it places the child in an inferior position to the adult characters. The child is always dependent on adults to improve as a human being. For the Fairchild children it is the parents who are the foundation on which they build their life and faith. The parents have the answer to every question, and they always know what is best for the child. For William, it is Tom and everything he represents that makes William grow. Tom has the keys that make

William open up and develop. By placing children under adolescent age and under adult care, writers of children's literature display to the child and adult reader the position of adults and parents as superior to that of children.

The child under adult care is often presented with some qualities that writers use for a didactic purpose to communicate to the reader which skills are important for a child to be in possession of. These qualities are aspects of childhood that authors see as important to a child's development, but the child will also acknowledge them to be of importance to them. In both *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*, reading is one of these qualities. In the texts, both writers make the activity of reading to be a social activity rather than a solitary activity. The Fairchilds always read together as a family, and it is the youngest one, Henry, who reads: "Henry shall read them to us, my dears," said Mrs. Fairchild, "whilst we sit at work . . ." (Sherwood 164). Reading creates pleasant situations when the family brings food and work with them and go out to read under a tree. Having Henry read emphasises the importance of learning the skill of reading early. He reads at the age of five, as well as learning Latin. Both reading and learning of Latin are intended to prepare him for an adult life as a clergyman. Reading is the key to knowledge, and the children are portrayed as if they agree with this view when they ask for books rather than toys when the gardener is to bring them something from town. In real life, a child seldom replaces toys with books, so here Sherwood's didactic intention is to emphasise reading and make it a key activity in family life that everybody enjoys. Sherwood devotes seventy pages of the novel to the reading of books, and in addition, reading of the Bible and psalms is given much space. For Sherwood, reading was an essential skill for a child to learn, and the parents are involved in the learning from day one.

Reading as an essential skill and the adult's central place in the process of learning it, are also found in *Goodnight Mister Tom*. William's greatest wish in life is to learn to read and write. When he has, he is invited into a world of knowledge, fantasy, and art that makes him develop as a human. The literature he is reading describes and names his inner feelings, and gives him words to express what he feels and thinks. It is also the books that become the centre of the friends' social interaction. They put on plays and have to learn canonical literature by heart. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, Tom is essential to William's reading process. He takes him to the library and he sits with him night after night until he knows how to read; Tom's role is to be the catalyst in William's reading process. William also expresses joy by reading, and thinks it is an unexplored universe that opens up to him when he goes to the library to read and borrow books. In his friendship with Zach, reading is also a central element; the world of books unites their different backgrounds and knowledge of life. Zach, who knows how to read, gives William different information that he knows from books, and he thinks it is peculiar that William has not heard of the great writers of English literature such as Shakespeare and Dickens.

In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, personal development and reading are closely linked. Magorian gives child characters who like to read a more interesting life than those who do not like reading. Zach is vital, intelligent, has every answer, good imagination, and is extrovert. Together with his family, he has travelled the world and seen many places. Carrie, the most talented girl in the school, does not have the opportunity to go to high school like the boys. The war changes this, and gives her the opportunity to go to grammar-school and then a high-school education. Carrie and her sister Ginnie are representatives of the polarisation of expectations related to the female gender that took place in the war and post-war years. Carrie's love of books represents progress, while Ginnie's life reflects traditional attitudes related to the female gender. According to Carrie, "Ginnie likes housework! She doesn't

complain. She says the more she learns now the better wife she'll be when she's older" (424).

In another chapter Carrie states:

“Boys gits all the chances. The grammar school in Weirwold only takes boys,” she said in protest to Zach, “and they never bother to put girls in fer the high school. And here's me dyin' to go and him” she said waving a finger at George, “havin' all the chances, and him hating books.” (191)

Carrie's great love is not a man, so far, but her love affair is with books. The books she reads enrich her life and widen her horizon to a world outside of Weirwold and to a world where men and women are equal. She wants more, and is likely to experience more in life than her sister, the way their situation is presented in the novel. When Magorian gives space to this topic, she wants both girls and boys to be aware of the possibilities there are in education and knowledge, and make girls see that there is more to life than getting married and having children. To get there, every child has to learn to read.

When Sherwood wrote her novel in 1818, reading was a middle-class phenomenon, and reading was also closely linked to the reading of the Bible. Reading was power, but in relation to the Evangelical Movement, it also meant a possibility to interpret the Bible independently, without involvement from educated people. It is clear from the book's title, *The History of the Fairchild Family; or, the Child's Manual: Being a Collection of Stories. The Importance and Effects of a Religious Education*, that Sherwood sees reading as a tool for education in religious matters. Sherwood adapts her novel to the social forces of the adult part of society that wants a book for children mainly to serve a religious purpose. In addition to this demand, she wants her book to attract children; she wants children to experience reading as fun, so she

adds an aspect of entertainment to meet the demands of a more commercialised audience of both children and adults.

Society's view of the child is reflected in the literary representation of the child: the iconic or symbolic meaning that the child represents to the reader. During the Victorian era, the child of innocence came to represent the ideal childhood; a childhood where children could grow without adult interference; a place where the child has not been exposed to the knowledge of evil, sex, death, and other aspects of life considered to belong to the adult world. Since then, this image of the child has held a strong position in Western children's literature. William in *Goodnight Mister Tom* is nothing like the classical child of innocence when he stands outside Tom's door at the beginning of the book. He is described as "thin and sickly-looking, pale with limp sandy hair and dull grey eyes" (Magorian 2). The description makes the reader pity him, take him in, and care for him. Through the text it is understood that his mother has not cared for the boy in the way modern readers would expect. The chapter reveals to the reader that the child's innocence has been replaced with fear and anxiety. The image of the mistreated child moves the reader. William is a victim, and his situation is touching. He is a representation of the type of child—the child victim—who represents everything that the modern western world wants to replace and creates laws against to protect children like him. Under Tom's protection, William's innocence is regained. He gradually develops the characteristics common to the child of innocence: he plays, his creativity flourishes, his worries are replaced with joy and happiness and he is taken care of by an adult who cares for him. Even death is removed from his life; he has learned how to handle it.

In comparing Magorian and Sherwood's texts, changes in representation of the child become visible. The two novels represent two different perspectives on the child and childhood, and as such, two different images of the child as cultural objects. Sherwood's story is written



before the Victorian Era and the image of the child of innocence who needs protection from the influences of the adult world. Sherwood's representation of the child is the sinful child. From her evangelical perspective, the child is born a sinner and is in need of God's grace. She does not believe in innocence or purity. The earlier the child understands his or her position before God, the greater its chances of staying on the straight and narrow path. The evangelical child is not in the hands of the world, but under constant temptation by the devil that needs to be defeated. If the child cannot resist sin, it must learn to repent. The children in *The Fairchild Family* are therefore under constant religious influence, but still do not demonstrate any signs of being victimised. Despite Sherwood's black and white representation of the child as sinner or as saved, her addressing of the message to the child was done according to the child as cultural object of 1818. Religion was in a strong position, the majority of the population went to church on Sunday, and the Evangelical Movement had a strong following due to the revival that swept England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A high death rate together with the position of Christianity made the majority of the population in agreement with Sherwood's view of the child as sinner who had to be saved as soon as possible.

There is a similarity between Magorian's lost and regained innocence as found in William, and Sherwood's presentation of the lost lamb (Cutt 52)—the child sinner, who is found by Jesus at the moment when the child repents. The innocence in Sherwood's novel is a religious innocence based on an understanding that a child without sin has a pure heart before God rather than a protection from adult issues. This innocence is not a condition that will gradually grow into adulthood, but rather a position before God that the child, and later the adult, needs to work on as long as he or she lives. By the grace of God, the efforts will be rewarded at the end of the journey—in heaven. Unlike the Victorian innocence, this innocence is not free from worries and the troubles of the adult world. The child lives in a

world full of sin, and the forces of evil will attack the child, so the child needs guidance from a Christian adult to resist them. The basic idea of innocence may not be the same, but both writers believe there is a place where the child can be free from the evil of the world. Sherwood and Magorian feel responsible for creating a childhood where the child is the centre, but both of them worry about the child's future and want to make sure the child is well-equipped for adult life. Both religious innocence, as found in *The Fairchild Family*, and the Victorian understanding of innocence, as found in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, build on the innocence found in the Bible and the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. For both stories, it is in the garden that the children find everything they need to grow from a child to an adult.

One element often found in the child of innocence is imagination. Susan Honeyman talks about authors' need to create a world for children where adults do not enter, and that these places "were dreamt up by adult authors . . ." (51). Authors of children's literature seem to create a space in the story where imagination can run free. Why authors often connect imagination to the child, could be an expression of adults' feeling of losing this particular aspect of life, and that it cannot be regained. Adults do not stop imagining things when they grow up, but in the child's world, imagination is often channelled through play. Children invent imaginative worlds and characters that they alone see, but which are real to every participant in the play. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, William's imagination comes alive when he lives with Tom and is allowed to be a child of innocence, free from the oppression of his mother, and to exist in relation to and harmony with other children. In the beginning of the novel, Zach is presented as the creative and imaginative child. William's imagination comes from another dimension than Zach's, and it is revealed as the story goes on. Since Zach has been a happy child and lived a happy childhood with caring parents, his imagination is a part of his life, his attitude, his language, and his body. William's imagination has been suppressed,

but when it is allowed space, due to his new life with Tom and his improved living conditions in Weirwold, his imagination comes from an inner source that he did not know he was in possession of. He draws and paints his imagination, his inner life, and he acts very well in the play because he is capable of imagining that he is someone else, not just childlike creative and spontaneous as Zach. William uses his imagination to connect his old life with the new, and allows his old life and impressions from that time to unite with his new through his imagination: “Willie withdraw into himself. He remembered an old tramp he used to watch down by the tube station near where he lived . . . Willie carried on imagining that his dirty feet were wrapped in rags and newspapers and when the scene came to an end he shuffled slowly off the stage” (Magorian). In this situation, William’s former life experiences connect to his imagination, and that is actually what makes him a good actor. He has felt the pain, the atmosphere and smell of the city, and he can find it in his memory and act it out because he sees it within him; acting out imagination becomes his therapy. For Magorian, imagination and creativity are closely connected to a good life. Imagination only exists within mental freedom, and that is why imagination has a central place in William’s life with Tom in Weirwold.

In Sherwood’s novel the children show few signs of imaginative play. There are examples where the narrator describes fragments of imagination: “When Lucy and Emily awoke, they began playing in their beds. Emily made babies of the pillows; and Lucy pulled off the sheets and tied them round her, in imitation of Lady Noble’s long-trained gown . . .” (Sherwood 72). This is the closest we get experiencing some kind of imaginative world among the Fairchilds. Some of the chapters deal with activities that are acted out as a result of spontaneity or childish enthusiasm. Spontaneity and enthusiasm are closely connected to imagination—existing in another time and space without adult limitations—so it could represent what in later literature for children is described as imagination. In the novel, these episodes always

stand, as examples of how children are led astray by their spontaneous childishness, and such situations must be avoided; the nature of the child needs to be controlled. One example is the chapter called “Story on the constant Bent of Man’s Heart towards Sin”, where the children are nearly left to themselves when the parents have to go away. They end up quite drunk, and later they nearly kill the youngest sister, playing on the swing. In this story Sherwood represents childish behaviour as uncontrolled actions that the child is to be held responsible for: “Oh, Mamma!” said Lucy, “I cannot think how I could behave so ill as I did yesterday; for I had resolved in my own mind to be very good—indeed I had. And when I did wrong, I knew it was wrong all the time, and hated myself for doing it; and still I did it” (79-80). Nowhere in this chapter is John, the adult who was to look after them, held responsible for the incidents. In the Fairchild world, a childish mind not under adult control is presented as a potential danger to the child: “Now all the time the little ones were in the presence of their papa and mamma, and kept carefully from doing naughty things by the watchful eyes of their dear parents” (71). The role of the parents is to control the child’s imagination so that it will not lead the child astray. The way to do it is to limit playing: “When they had played as much as their mamma thought fit, they came back, and sat down to work, as they had done in the morning . . .” (178-9). Play has to be controlled, which again reflects the pre-Victorian view of childhood as a condition that has to pass before the child can think and behave as an adult. Sherwood emphasises and represents the good child as a child that more or less behaves like an adult, or at least wishes to be one.

When Sherwood and Magorian present the child and its characteristics to the reader, it is through the narrative voice. The narrative voice draws the reader into the story and makes the characters come alive. The narrative voice uses descriptions, monologues, and dialogues to involve the reader, in the literary journey. In reading children’s literature, it is important to be aware of the narrative voice, and what the function of the narrative voice is since it is always

the voice of an adult speaking to a child. This is an asymmetric power position, or what Maria Nicolajeva calls the duality of the voice (173). In literature, an asymmetrical power position is often spoken of in relation to oppressed groups (women, nationalities, religions). In children's literature the problem is rather the opposite; the child is not oppressed, but the adult writer states through the text a claimed understanding of what it is like to be a child since every adult writer has been there once. This is, of course true, but an adult has along the way developed a knowledge of life and of language that makes an author capable of speaking for the child in a way that "creates an inevitable discrepancy between the (adult) narrative voice and both the focalized child character's and the young reader's levels of comprehension" (Nicolajeva 173). This duality creates room for the author, through the narrator, to control the reader's thoughts through a mix of an adult's authoritarian voice and the child's undeveloped character. The method often serves a didactic purpose in the literature. In both *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* the narrative voice is the voice of an adult. In *The Fairchild Family*, the story is told from a third person subjective narrative point of view, but the narrative voice also shifts into objective first person at the end of every chapter. The strong adult voice is also what makes the novel appear to have a strong moral and didactic purpose. The narrative voice speaks louder than the children's since it is given more space than the voices of the children, and it controls what is to be said and how the children are to act, feel, respond, and when they are to repent. When the narrative voice shifts to first person, he or she is talking to the reader directly, and the narrative voice has a clear educational purpose. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the narrative point of view is third person episodically limited, a technique that gives the narrator the opportunity to enter into different characters, and therefore give the reader a wider perspective and viewpoint of the story and its characters. To create a dynamic text, the narrative voice changes viewpoint and uses dialogues and monologues to report what characters are saying and what they are thinking. Monologue is often used to describe

characters thoughts and feelings. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, two types of monologues are identified: quoted monologue and narrated monologue (Nicolajeva 178). Quoted monologue is, according to Nicolajeva the oldest form of narrative used in children's literature, and it puts the adult narrative voice in control of the child, and the didactic influence the narrative has on the child reader. The narrator can talk to the reader, explain what the characters are doing or why they think the way they do. But it all comes from an adult's perspective, which makes the child reader trust the narrative voice to be reliable and trustworthy; after all, the narrator is an adult with a knowledge and life experience that makes him superior to the child. The other form of monologue found in *Goodnight Mister Tom* is narrated monologue. Narrated monologue creates a mix of the narrator's and the character's discourse and, as readers, we are never quite sure who is talking, or who is behind the discourse of the statement. Nicolajeva claims this perspective often makes the reader assume that the authorial control is "eliminated or at least subdued" (180). This is not the case. Instead, the authorial control is hiding behind the characters, and gives the author the possibility to practice covert didacticism and covert ideology (180). One example is the description of William monologue when he comes to Tom's house the first day:

He was such a bad boy, he knew that. Mum said she was kinder to him than most mothers. She only gave him soft beatings. He shuddered. He was dreading the moment when Mr Oakley would discover how wicked he was. He was stronger-looking than Mum. (Magorian 8)

For the reader, this text appears to be William's inner monologue. Studied, elements such as perspective (he . . . ) and choice of vocabulary (dreading, shuddered, discover, wicked) makes the monologue more likely to come from an adult's omniscient perspective rather than a young boy of nine who cannot read and write. Through the narrative monologue, the narrative

voice controls William's thoughts. His thoughts describe a situation that gives the reader information about his view of himself, that his mother is beating him, and that he fears Tom will beat him as well. In narrative monologue the consciousness allows the narrator to repeat *he*, rather than *I*, as in quoted dialogue. This creates a distance that makes the narrator able to report on the situation and emphasise different elements of the situation that a quoted monologue does not allow. In one line the consciousness of William is talking, the next line the narrator sees him from the outside saying: "He shuddered" (8). This type of narration controls the reader's emotions and opinions of the narrative; the narrative voice manipulates the reader. For the reader, the shifts are happening so fast that the narrative voice and William's monologue becomes one voice. For a child, the voice is more likely to appear as William's voice rather than the narrator's. Then the author has succeeded. The child thinks it is William who is talking, but instead, it is the author who uses the narrator to give information to the reader that will make the child create an image of the mother as evil. Later in the novel when she is presented as a Christian, her evilness is for the child synonymous with Christianity. The adult author has practiced covert ideology on the child who does not know that domestic violence and Christianity do not automatically belong together.

Magorian's and Sherwood's novels are different in style and narration, but there are similarities. The children are pre-adolescents and the family idea is the basis for their lives. Elements related to the child, such as reading, the image of the child of innocence, and the imaginative child seems to be characteristics that have survived the nearly two hundred years between when Sherwood wrote her novel and Magorian's contemporary novel. Both writers have found the narrative voice to be a good way to influence the child. Sherwood's narration and narrative voice seems strongly didactic to contemporary readers. She passes a specific moral and religious fundamental view on to the child reader, and does not try to cover it. The child reader is always informed of the narrator's viewpoint, which is that the adult is always

right. Magorian's narrative is also didactic and states a moral and ideological perspective. Her choice of narrative voice hides her agenda, and the child reader is not openly exposed to the narrator's viewpoint, since her viewpoint shifts with the characters. The adult narrator manipulates the child to think and feel according to what the narrative voice says through the characters. A child reader is not mentally capable of decoding this type of narrative voice, but becomes an ideological victim to the narrator's hidden agenda, and the adult narrator's voice becomes stronger than that of the child character.



### Chapter 3.0: The Child of Eden

The first children's literature to emerge was written to educate the child reader in matters related to religion. Sin, death, and disobedience were central elements in the literature reflecting aspects of the Christian doctrine that go back to the story of Adam and Eve in Eden, and the fall of man. In both Sherwood's and Magorian's novels, the Garden of Eden is used as an allusion to create a deeper understanding of evil and death as aspects of a child's life, and elements from the biblical allusion, such as the garden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the wood, and death are themes directly connected to the biblical story, and used to explain the realities of life to the child.

*The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* both have religion as a central theme in their narratives, and the narratives are based on the biblical allusions of the Garden of Eden. In the Bible, God planted the Garden of Eden, and placed Adam there to work and take care of the garden, which was full of trees and had a river watering it. In the garden there are two trees: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would die. The story is well known. The serpent tempts them, they eat the fruit and the story ends with Adam and Eve being driven out of the Garden. The Garden is sealed, and they are told that from now on, women will give birth with pain, and men shall eat food through sweat and manual work. The allusion of the prelapsarian garden has for centuries been used in children's literature, and the most famous is *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett published in 1911. When the story of Eden is used in children's literature, it is because it points to a place where sin, death and depravity did not exist. The child of innocence reflects this condition, and that is why the allusion of the garden and the image of the child of innocence are often presented together, such as Burnett's novel. Unlike the Garden of Eden, there is often a house in the garden in children's literature, and

*The Secret Garden*, *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*, all have one that is central to the story and the children's upbringing. The house is placed in or surrounded by the garden, and the condition of the garden often reflects the relationships the people of the houses have, and the quality of their lives. Sherwood's and Magorian's descriptions of the gardens are totally different. Sherwood draws on the traditional biblical understanding of the garden where God is present and cannot be hidden from—He is omnipresent. In the story, the presence of God is replaced with Mr and Mrs Fairchild. Statements expressing this position are outspoken for instance when Mrs Fairchild says to Lucy: "Whilst you are a little child, you must tell your sins to me . . . when you are bigger, and I and your papa are removed from you, then you must tell all your sins to God" (Sherwood 48). In the novel, the parents become all seeing characters who have a position similar to that of God in the Garden of Eden when they know that the children have sinned and confront them with the situation.

The description of the garden has strong similarities to that of Eden. It is full of fruit trees and flowers, and there is a river. On the other side of the river is a hill, and on the hill is an oak tree with a hut under its shade. The description is of abundance and freshness, cultivation and life. For the children, the garden is a place for playing and social interaction, but also a place for temptation, as for Adam and Eve. The garden becomes a place where your character is put to the test, and when Henry is tempted by a big red apple, and takes it, there is a clear connection to the fall of man. The similarities between the Fairchild children's life in the garden and the fall of man in Eden underlines that humanity is suffering from the fall and, despite repentance, the human race proves to be no better than Adam and Eve when tempted, or as Mrs Fairchild says it: "Your heart, my dear [Lucy], is no worse, and no better, than the heart of all human creatures; for there is none good, no not one" (89). According to her, people are doomed to struggle with sin as long as they exist; sin is man's heritage from Adam and Eve, but one can repent. The novel is made to help children see their sins, and give them

tools that will help them repent and lead them into the narrow path of self-denial. The Fairchild parents do not protect the children from life itself in the garden, but prepare them for the consequences of the fall: sin, depravity, and death.

In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, there are references to different gardens within the novel, but each of them show death as a part of life, and the gardens are the places where death meets life and death becomes the beginning of a new life. The first garden spoken of is Tom's small flat garden: "The graveyard and cottage with its garden were surrounded by a rough stone wall, except for where the back of the church stood" (Magorian 9). When William arrives there are some clusters of flowers along the edge. This is the front garden of Tom's house. In the back garden is a toilet, and a gate leading to a road that takes them to the field. Tom's garden is in the shadow of the graveyard. It is even fenced, and protected against whatever might be outside, and even the church has its back to it. When William and Tom take their first trip to the field outside the cottage, Tom says to William: "Let's see you shut it now, William. You must always remember to shut every gate" (47). This is what Tom's life is, and has been about: closing gates and building fences against society to protect himself from his own sorrow and loss of wife and son. After William comes under his roof, Tom's situation starts to change. The changes are happening inside of him, but they are also reflected visually in the changes happening in the garden. Because of the war, they have to build a shelter in the garden for air-raid protection. The work in the garden, makes both of them develop. In the garden they are equal. They are both in a vulnerable condition, both emotionally naked, and comparable to the relationship God and Adam had before the fall, only here it is paradise on earth rather than the heavenly Eden. Magorian's novel differs from other children's novels when the garden is also a place for adults to grow. The symbolic child in the garden, unblemished and without sin is in *Goodnight Mister Tom* disturbed when Tom and William are together in the garden. The image of innocence is a false image of reality, and by placing

both of them in the garden together, Magorian states that the fall of man concerns all ages and genders, and Tom and William are examples thereof. Tom has lost his wife and son years ago, and has never recovered, while William has not yet experienced death, but is emotionally dead due to his life with his mother; neither of them have the qualities of innocence needed to be within the garden. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the garden is a place for William and Tom to recover from the consequences of the fall. Tom and William build a friendship, and an emotional relationship through the work. The shelter—their security—develops in accordance with their friendship, and their creation of a home for both of them. Both Tom's and William's personal growths are similar to that of the garden. The more they dig, grow, and plant, the more they grow and develop as humans. William did not have a garden in London with his mother, only “traffic and banging and shouting . . . ” (8) which expresses the lack of freedom, growth and support he had from his mother while he lived with her. With Tom, he finds the garden that makes him grow, expressed through Tom's and society's care, and his friendship with the other village children. When William talks to Zach for the first time, it is in the garden, and it is also where he is at the end of the novel when Carrie comes and they go on the trip to the river and move on with their life after Zach's death.

The second garden found in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, is Mrs Hartridge's. She is the teacher at school, but is pregnant and has a baby. To William, Mrs Hartridge is everything his mother is not. She has a sensibility for other people, is friendly, wise, and she sees William for who he is. Mrs Hartridge has a husband who is believed to have died in combat, so she and William share a common understanding of death, especially after the death of William's sister Trudy, who died in his arms. Mrs Hartridge is the one who releases him from the burden of his sister's death. He thinks he could have saved her, but when Mrs Hartridge on his visit to her in the garden, unbuttons the front of her blouse and places “one of the breasts into the baby's mouth . . . ” (Magorian 340), he understands that Tom was right, “[h]e couldn't have given

Trudy what she had needed” (341). He feels lighter, and manages to place the guilt on his mother’s incapacity to bring up a child. Mrs Hartridge replaces death with life, and later in the novel her husband is revealed not to be dead, and her garden becomes the symbol of life, or the place where death is replaced with life. The description of the garden is of one with a vegetable path, a herb garden, tall trees, and grass (338), and describes Mrs Hartridge as a woman with mental strength. William’s fascination with her, is connected to her strength, and in the garden he describes her as a Goddess, or maybe Eve in the Garden of Eden: “[S]he was more beautiful than ever . . . her eyes were still as large and blue, her hair still as golden and her voice was just as melodious, if not more so” (339). Since she just has delivered a baby, she becomes the symbol of Mary, Jesus’s mother. Just like Mary gave birth to Jesus who became the saviour that restored man’s relationship to God, Mrs Hartridge delivers a baby who restores William to the place he was in his life with Tom, before he went to London to his mother and experienced the death of his sister Trudy. In the same way as Mary restores the prelapsarian state for humanity, does Mrs Hartridge bring William back into Tom’s garden. To William, Mrs Hartridge is the purest creature he knows, and she is connected to the most fruitful garden in Weirwold—she means life to him.

The third and last garden in *Goodnight Mister Tom* is Geoffrey Sanderton’s. He is a young artist who has been wounded in combat and lost his leg and ear. He lives in a house in a garden, in Spooky Cott, in the wood across the river in Weirwold. Geoffrey’s garden and house are described in different terms than that of Mrs Hartridge. Around the garden is a high hedge and when William and Zach have passed it, they “stood waist-high in grass and dandelions . . . Pots of red geraniums stood starkly on the window-sills . . . Will walked . . . and stood in the middle of the tangled garden opposite it [the house]” (Magorian 369-70). Geoffrey’s garden and neglected house describe his solitary life and mental breakdown after his war experience, but also his artistic mind and his recovering, as visualised in the flowers.

As the story continues, his garden and house is repaired and restored together with his own mental condition and life in general. Geoffrey is the one who sees and develops William's artistic talent. He offers him teaching to develop his skills. He serves as a catalyst in the processing of William's feelings after the death of Zach, just like Mrs Hartridge did after the death of Trudy. Geoffrey uses a picture he has of himself and his friend, who was killed in action, and the friend's pipe, to create a reaction in William after Zach's death. Geoffrey knows death and he also knows how to deal with it. Just like Tom and Mrs Hartridge, he helps William recover and find a reason for living.

Magorian does not believe in the child of innocence in the garden, who can be protected from the realities of life. Her innocence is within the garden, but the function of the garden is to develop the child in different areas by creating an oasis where people share life and life experiences. A child cannot be protected from the world and live in innocence, but needs to harvest from adults' experience of life, as seen with both Tom and Geoffrey.

Magorian's focus on the garden as a place where the knowledge of death, good and evil are central elements for a child's growth, may seem to contradict Sherwood's novel where the omnipresent God and parent, seem to be a hindrance for personal development. The children in the Fairchild's garden are controlled, and they are held responsible for their actions before God and parents. The Fairchild children are not portrayed like William, who is underdeveloped and anxious due to his life with a mentally ill mother who misuses religion to control and manipulate William in her upbringing of him. The children in *The Fairchild Family* have a strong mental health, and the corrections and focus on sin and punishment do not have a negative effect on the children—it does build character. The Fairchild parents' way of raising children makes them confident. Seen from a contemporary perspective, the children's reactions to their religious upbringing could be questioned as trustworthy and

representative of children of the time. Doreen M. Rosman says that some families practiced religious terrorism to make the child truthful and prepared to face God in case of death, while other families “opposed the habit of threatening future judgment on children for the slightest misdemeanour” (73). *The Fairchild Family* seems to be an example of the latter. Since Sherwood’s novel was popular for more than hundred years, it must have touched upon some elements of realism, and not represented the extreme. Sherwood and the Evangelical writers believed in correction as a secure way of raising a child. Parents were examples, someone to follow and look up to. The same understanding can be found and recognised in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, when William finds his father figure in Tom. Tom, like Mr and Mrs Fairchild, represents security. Within the house and the garden of Tom and the Fairchilds the protectors of the children create an understanding of the world that the children can use as a foundation for living. The methods may seem different but they are not. Love, care, and a close relationship to the child, are what make the children in both novels grow, develop and feel secure.

From the secure house of Tom, William and Tom can see the wood outside the graveyard. The wood as symbol of danger is often used in stories (Ferber 79-80), but it is also connected to life and faith-changing episodes. In the Garden of Eden, the Bible does not speak of a wood, but says: “And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food” (*New International Version*, Genesis 2.9). After the fall, Adam and Eve “hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3.9). The trees, or the wood, are a hiding place from God after the fall, where men try to hide from God after they have sinned. In the beginning of *Goodnight Mister Tom*, William and his friends do not go into the wood, but only go to the river, to play. It is summer, and the leaves on the trees cover Spooky Cott where Geoffrey lives. The children believe ghosts haunt Spooky Cott, and they are afraid to go there. It is not the cottage that is haunted, but Geoffrey who is struggling

with trauma after his war experience. He is trying to recover after the loss of his fiancée who “had been blown out of his arms by a bomb. He had lost two of his closest friends and his parents had been found under a pile of rubble” (Magorian 373). Geoffrey is a man who has tasted death, tasted the consequences of the fall, but survived. When William and his friends first meet to go to the wood it is autumn. William, Zach, the twins and George decide to go to the cottage, and crawl along the road so as not to be seen by anyone. Coming to the wood, they “climbed up the banks towards the trees. A scattering of clouds had blotted out the sun and wind began to rattle through the branches. As they reached the high hedges which surrounded the cottage the sky became grey” (368). The situation is described in gothic manner, which underlines the removal from the secure garden and Tom’s protection, and into danger. As the story moves on, William is the one who shows courage. While George and the twins go home, William convinces Zach to go with him to the cottage. When they come closer they hear music, music that makes William stand “like one in a hypnotic trance. The music seemed to touch some painful and tender place inside him and it flooded his limbs with a strange buzzing sensation” (370). The person playing the music is Geoffrey, whose life has been filled with pain, just like William feels in the music. Despite his one ear, he finds music to be of importance: music creates memories and it touches something within him—his emotions. The same emotional force hits William when he hears the music. The music and the pain unite their souls. In the wood and Spooky Cott, is a garden, and William does not find danger in the wood but an oasis for development and healing. This is where he goes to develop as an artist, and it is also where he goes after Zach’s death. The wood surrounding Spooky Cott changes with William’s life, and the seasons and the trees reflect his emotions. When Zach was alive, the wood was green, when he dies, winter sets in, and the leaves fall off, and William’s stripped life is similar to the condition of the trees. The wood that first represented danger is the place where he discovers who he is, and where he heals from his



emotional wounds; the wood is the place where he finds rest. William's meeting with Geoffrey not only changes him, but it makes Geoffrey come out of the wood, from the knowledge of death and back into life. The novel presents the wood and Spooky Cott as having the same effect on William as it has had for Geoffrey; he goes into the wood, heals, and comes out with knowledge of life and of himself.

In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the river is closely linked to the wood. In literature, the river often has a symbolic meaning; it is the symbol of progress, life, change, and growth, and crossing it is often of symbolic importance (Ferber 170-73). In the beginning of the novel, the children only play at the banks, but to get to Spooky Cott, the river has to be crossed. Every time he goes to Geoffrey, he crosses the river, and gradually he changes. One day, after a visit to Geoffrey, William has an awakening and wakes from his "zombie-like daze" (Magorian 396) of grief when Geoffrey tells him that it is "[b]etter to accept, than to pretend that he never existed . . ." (404), referring to Zach's death. William then goes down to the river:

At last he finally reached the river. He stood by it staring at its glassy surface, his chest and shoulders pounding, his gut aching. He felt again Zach's presence next to him, felt him staring up at the starry night and coming out with some strange fragment of poetry . . .

"No, no. You're not here. You'll *never* be here . . .

"I hate you, God. I hate you. You hear me? I hate you. I hate you. I hate you."

(404-05)

William has changed, and by the river, he is ready to confront God; he has developed a new understanding of who God is. In the woods of Spooky Cott he had his test. He removed himself from the garden and Tom's protection, and came out as an independent boy who

knows what he feels and what he wants—he has grown. When he comes home after the confrontation, he calls Tom “Dad” for the first time. His returning to the house has some of the same elements as the story in the Bible of the prodigal son and his homecoming:

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.  
(Luke 15.20-24)

*In Goodnight Mister Tom:*

Tom was waiting for him by the gate. He was about to give Will another five minutes before heading out towards Spooky Cott when he heard light footsteps coming down the road. He peered through the darkness and caught sight of a blond tuft of hair sticking out of Will’s balaclava. His face was covered in earth and tearstains and his lips and eyelids were swollen and puffy.

“Come on in,” he said, breaking the silence, and put an arm round Will’s shoulders as they walked along the pathway to the cottage. Just as he was opening the front door Will turned quickly.

“I’m sorry, Dad, he said. “I didn’t think you’d be worried, like. I had to be on me own, see. I had to. I forgot about you. I didn’t think. Sorry.”

“You’re home now”, said Tom. You look fair whacked. You’d best get washed and go to bed.” (405-06)

The story about the Prodigal Son in the Bible is a parable about coming home to Jesus, being saved from a life in sin and experiences God the Father's love for the lost child who went astray: a restoration of the fall of men. When Magorian here puts Tom in the position of God, he becomes the Saviour, and it is a strong comparison she is using here. William has just been at the river, expressing hate towards God. He then goes back and asks for forgiveness, like the prodigal son in the Bible, but the one he asks for forgiveness is Tom, and not God. At the river, he rejects the image of God as one who punishes or rewards according to your religious behaviour, and replace it with the image of God the father found in the story of the prodigal son, who accepts the son for who he is due to his position as son. When William cries out that he hates God, it is the image of God and of a father that his mother has given him. Tom has given him a better understanding of what a father is, and through the reading of the Bible, also a new understanding of who God is. The meeting at the gate between Tom and William unites the two images. William may not reject God; he just changes his opinion of what kind of character God is. His God-identity is now linked to the character Tom rather than his old God-identity connected to his mother. He now sees himself as a father’s son for the first time, and takes his position as one when he sees that his home is with Tom, within the garden. Tom responds to William’s apology for coming home late by telling him that he is home now. Tom also sees William as his lost son, such as the father in the story of the prodigal son does, but also as a replacement of the son he lost.

The son who left home is also a theme in *The Fairchild Family*, and there are strong similarities between the two stories. The chapter called “The Misery of Those Who are Under the Anger of God” describes Henry’s situation after he has disobeyed his father and refuses to

asks his forgiveness. He goes into the wood, and the introduction to the trip has the same gothic elements that we find in *Goodnight Mister Tom*:

It was dark, and the wind whistled, as it often does in an autumn or winter's night in England . . . At one time it sounded as at a distance, sweeping over the fields; then it came nearer and nearer, and rustled among the trees, the leaves of which were beginning to fall; and then it came close, and shook the window. (Sherwood 275)

It is autumn, the trees have no leaves, it is dark, and the presentation of the wood and trees correspond to the feelings Henry has as a lonely young boy away from his parent's comfort and care. When he goes into the coppice, the "trees waved their heads backwards and forwards in the wind . . . and made him think that the woods and the fields were changed" (Sherwood 276). This part of the wood is normally Henry's favourite area where he goes for walks to pray and sing hymns, but now "there were no flowers to be seen, by reason of the fallen leaves, which nearly covered all the pathway" (276). When Henry normally takes his trips in the wood, he is in another state of mind, and his relationship to his parents is not disrupted. Henry goes to the wood to remove himself from the presence of his parents, just like Adam and Eve hid from God in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve hid among the trees because they had disobeyed God, and wanted to hide from the presence of God. Henry has disobeyed his father, and does not want to talk to him. On his walk into the wood, "he heard a very sweet sound of one singing in the wood . . . It was a part of the wood facing the mid-day sun, and sheltered from the wind" (277). It is Charles Trueman who is singing, and his spiritual state of mind is here underlined with his placement in nature—in the sun away from the wind. The meeting with Charles is a turning point for Henry. Charles describes for him the similarity between a father's forgiveness and God's, and that the lack of forgiveness would be "the absence of God" (280). The absence of God's presence was what Adam and Eve felt

when they saw that they were naked; the sin in their lives had opened their eyes to the laws of nature. When Henry finally asks his father's forgiveness, also here, the allusion of the prodigal son stands out:

“Go to your papa, to be sure, Master Henry,” answered Charles,” and fall down on your knees before him, and beg his pardon.” . . .

It was no hard matter to get Mr. Fairchild to forgive Henry, now that he saw he was humble.

“I freely forgive you, my dear boy,” said Mr. Fairchild . . .

“Oh! Papa, Papa!” said Henry, “I have been very unhappy!” So Henry kissed his papa and mamma, and dear sister, and they were all happy again. (285)

Henry has his test in the wood, but in this book as well as *Goodnight Mister Tom*, it is just as much a question of being within the garden, and able to see what is in the house. Like God protects Eden and its creatures, the Fairchild garden is under the protection of the parents. The trees in the garden may be the place where you hide when you have sinned or been disobedient, but it is also the place where you experience God's presence, or in this case, the love of your parents. In *The Fairchild Family*, the characters do both. The parents who represent God are responsible for reflecting the love of God to the child. When the children disobey, the parents are still in the same position, and punish the child according to their sin, to reflect God's call for Adam to confess after the fall when he calls: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3.8). Sherwood's story about Henry is built upon the biblical representation of Eden and the fall of men, while Magorian's wood trip is more related to changes. Still, both Henry's and William's wander in the wood lead them into another garden that changes them. The woods make them realise the nature of evil or of sin, and their meeting with the garden in the wood, outside the secure home, make them see the garden at home with new eyes. They

both come home to their father and confess that their removal from home had been a mistake. A garden is an atmosphere, and the child can choose to be a part of the atmosphere, or break out. In both stories, the child found its way back home.

A fatal consequence of a removal from the garden is death, and in both novels, the allusion of Eden is used to contrast life and death. From Tom's two front room windows "one looked out on to the graveyard, the other to a little garden at the side" (Magorian 4). In the graveyard are some trees that catches William's attention, "[b]ut the tree which caught Willie's attention was a large oak tree. It stood in the centre of the graveyard by the path, its large, well-clad branches curving and hanging over part of it" (9). This is where the allusion to the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden occurs. While the tree in the Bible is placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden, this tree stands in the centre of the graveyard. In the Bible, God says to Adam that he can eat the fruits from all the trees in the garden, ". . . but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2.17). When the oak tree is placed in the graveyard, it becomes the representation of man's fall, and the consequence of it: death. William is attracted to the tree: "It seemed a sheltered, secluded sort of place. He'd go and sit beneath its branches" (Magorian 11). Beneath its branches is the shadow, and here it becomes the shadow of death. Later, Tom also tells William that his wife and son are buried at the tree's foot. The tree is an oak tree, the symbol of greatness, strength, rootedness and steadfastness (Ferber 143-45). The simile between the oak tree and Tom's surname—Oakley—makes him a man who is alive among the dead, but still has the qualities of the oak in him. He is also a personification of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and this knowledge is what draws William to the tree, to Tom. When William stays with Tom, he is "eating" the fruits of the oak tree: he becomes a part of it. Tom has eaten its fruit and experienced the knowledge of good and evil and of death. Beside the tree is a path, but the tree's branches are hanging over it. This is the path

that leads to the river and the wood. Tom's knowledge is the guide that takes William into the wood and down to the river. The branches cover the path, symbolising Tom's wish to protect William from the realities of life and death, but William finds the strength he needs to move on in the shadows of the tree, in Tom's presence. In the end, this knowledge is what sets him free. In *The Fairchild Family*, the oak tree is the place they go to read the stories. The stories describe to the children the consequences of a life without God, and are as such, a literary presentation of William's life experiences. The tree is to readers of the novels a reminder that the fall of Adam and Eve is the reason behind the unpleasant aspects of life.

Death as a topic is important in both novels, and good and bad, familiar and unfamiliar people die. Still, none of the deaths actually happen inside the house, within the garden. Even in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, where the deaths are William's relatives, none are linked to the house of Tom. The surrounding garden serves as a protection from death, similar to the Garden of Eden before the fall. The graveyard is on the outside, and is surrounded by a wall to keep death inside the walls. Within the garden death has no power; not until the final pages of the final chapter when William notices Tom's age, and realises that Tom is an old man and will not live forever. The same protection from death within the garden is seen in *The Fairchild Family*. They leave home to go and see a dead person, and the people who die are not within the family. The family is surrounded by death, but even when Emily is close to dying, she conquers it. The avoiding of death scenes within the house creates a prelapsarian place in this world where the child can find protection from the surrounding evil and be a child.

The image of the Edenic garden in children's literature has survived for more than 200 years, and the child is still in it, protected from the outside and still innocent in the process of growing. Fiona McCulloch, in discussing Burnett's *The Secret Garden* sees the impossibility of the representation when she states:

Gardens themselves are not natural environments but, on the contrary, highly constructed, artificial spaces. Though childhood and gardens are perceived to be natural and pure in their prelapsarian facets, ironically, both are subject to cultural manipulation from postlapsarian society. (83)

Sherwood's and Magorian's gardens are a mix of the prelapsarian Eden, and the postlapsarian understanding of the child's place within the garden, or within the family. The image of the garden is constructed, and the child in it as well, but the garden as symbol for the love and care that a family represents still works as a frame for childhood descriptions. It fits more than ever into western society's image of the innocent child who needs protection from the adult world. The natural and pure child will therefore, in future literature, still be found within the garden. Despite a secularisation of society, which alienates the reader from the biblical allusion of Eden, the Edenic garden as symbol, still seems to fascinate writers today. The literary garden has removed itself from the biblical Garden of Eden, but the purity of the prelapsarian garden lives on and reflects a false image of life to the child, and that is what Magorian has tried to contradict in her novel when her gardens are representatives of death, but also of life. It is a place of innocence, but as both Magorian's and Sherwood's novels show; there is more to life than innocence.



## Chapter 4.0: The Child and “the Other”

In literature for children, terms like “the good” and “the bad” are frequently used to distinguish between characters who are within acceptable moral bounds and those who belong among the immoral and unreliable characters within the narrative. In terms, this concept has a name—“the Other”, or otherness—and refers to “a term used for that which has been marginalised” (Rudd 222), and can refer to social marginalisation related to gender, race, ethnicity or religion. In comparing Sherwood and Magorian’s novels, othering is clearly expressed in both of them, but who they point at as “the Other”, and how they express otherness may vary, but the purpose behind their description of “the Other” and otherness is to make the child adapt to their attitudes to control it.

In 1978 Edward Said published his book *Orientalism*, and coined the terms “Orient” and “Occident” to explain how the West’s (the Occident’s) view of Asia (the Orient) expressed Western culture as superior to oriental, based on the distinctions between them. In children’s literature, Said’s terms “Orient” and “Occident” can easily be recognised in travel stories like G. A. Henty’s novel *With Clive in India—Or, The Beginnings of an Empire* (1884), written while Britain was building its empire. In this and similar stories, the cultural aspects of difference are easy to recognise. The stories make a clear distinction between “they” and “we”, and “we” are considered more civilised, have the right religion, and behave in the right ways. Rudd explains Said’s Orientalism in relation to children’s literature and points to Orientalism as a textual artefact, a discourse about otherness, and Orientalism explains “that which is different from or opposite to the person whose perspective determines a text’s point of view. The identification of someone as “Other” implies an unequal power relationship, where the one being “Othered” is perceived as inferior, or at best strangely exotic” (Rudd 221). This perspective brings Orientalism to the point where we have to look at children’s

texts as an expression of adult's othering of children and childhood, but also of cultural, political, religious or social viewpoints that the adult writer tries to force upon the child reader. If the power relationship is unequal, readers and critics of children's literature have to be aware of how the superior part address and portray the inferior part. Perry Nodelman compared Orientalism to children's literature and used the comparison to shed light on adult's perspectives on childhood. He claims that we study childhood not to understand children, but to know how to deal with them (Nodelman 30). Then children's literature and the othering that writers present to the child is his or her, way to control what and who the child considers to be "the Other"; the child will inhabit the same perspective as the writer does and be easier to control. This means writers have an agenda, and that agenda is closely linked to societies' understanding of otherness. Clare Bradford brings the question up to date when she says that since children's texts "both reflect and promote cultural values and practices, it is inevitable that they disclose conceptions of and attitudes to race, ethnicity, colonialism and postcolonialism, responding to discourses and practices of the societies where they are produced" (39). Writers therefore have to be aware of the discourse in which they belong, and acknowledge that they are not only shaped by contemporary discourse, but that "habits of thoughts and valuing persist over many generations, even when they have been superseded by political and cultural change" (Bradford 39). Writers belong to a discourse, and every discourse is in possession of, and a producer of, otherness. Due to the nature of otherness, it is always easier to see and point at others discourses of otherness than to acknowledge that the ones we are proprietors of are just another perspective, and could present another Occident's perspective of another Orient. In relation to children's literature, this means that the otherness children are exposed to is dated back in time and may not be a part of the contemporary otherness existing within the culture that the child is a part of. When the child is exposed to a

new other or otherness, he or she is likely to adopt an adult's otherness that they were not in possession of before they read that specific text or book.

Both Sherwood and Magorian use otherness to describe to their reader what they consider not to be mainstream characters, behaviour, or opinions; they contrast "the Other" to promote the "normal". For both Sherwood and Magorian, othering is closely linked to religion. For Magorian, Evangelical Christians express otherness in her story, and this is personified in William's mother and her lack of care for her son. Sherwood is clearly hostile towards non-Protestants, especially Catholics, and uses every opportunity to show her aggression towards them. There are several ways to express otherness. When Sherwood displays her hostility toward the Catholics, whom she considers a threat to the children's Christian and moral education, she uses dichotomies. Dichotomies are based on word-pairs in which one has a negative or inferior meaning, while the other has a positive or superior meaning in the text and in the context in which they are used. If the Protestant Christians are clean, good, cheerful and hardworking people, the Catholics or other non-believers are dirty, cruel, quarrelsome and lazy. This is further implied in the novel by describing Catholic characters as representatives of low morals, gossiping, or having their behaviour cause fear to the children. This otherness and hostility are found both in the 1818 and 1902 editions, which suggests that her view on Catholics was representative of British society in large part for quite a long time. The purpose for using dichotomies in *The Fairchild Family* is to display the otherness of the Catholics, and then use the negative descriptions as a foil for the good qualities of the Protestants, or Evangelicals. The same polarisation is used in what Joseph Th. Leerssen calls national stereotyping: when a group of people are given some characteristics based on another group's opinion of them. The key element in stereotyping is generalising; all people of that specific group are the same. National stereotyping describes otherness through characteristics that distinguish one particular group or nation from another. These characteristics are then

posted as typical, meaning “representative of the type at large” (284) Leerssen’s ideas correspond with, and are related to otherness because otherness is grounded in, and works in relation to national stereotypes. When Magorian presents Evangelical Christians in Britain as violent and unloving parents, this is a national stereotyping. William’s mother becomes the representative for the whole group of evangelicals, and everything she does is synonymous with this group of people. The majority of them are most likely not to be like her, but the group is seen as a mass and not as individuals. One element of national stereotyping which is close to the use of dichotomies is national characterisation. Leerssen points to three areas in literature that “govern such discursive shifts and volatility” (275): the oppositions South and North, strong and weak, and central and peripheral. It is these same areas that Sherwood draws upon when she is using Catholic France verses Protestant England, the rich verses the poor, or urban life compared to their own life in the countryside to describe otherness. The oppositions credit one side at the expense of the others and the positive characteristics are always related to the Occident, while the negative are related to the Orient. The same elements are used in Magorian’s novel when Tom’s dialect points towards a connection to the northern part of England while William’s mother lives in the south—in London. William is the weaker character compared to the strong character of his mother, and life in the countryside is described as much better than that of London. The polarisation creates a distance from the stereotyped group. It becomes more difficult for the people of the occident to verify the correctness of the opinions expressed, but also easier to state a general opinion since the people that the occident is making statements and opinions about, are not in their neighbourhood.

When Sherwood and Magorian describe otherness, it is often through adults more than children. They use the adult’s otherness in lifestyle to contrast the disaster of the children who under “the Other” adult’s care either have their life ruined or die. They point at the fatal

consequences the life of these adults can have for a child, and that they do not want the child to grow up and be a part of the same lifestyle otherness. Sherwood and Magorian point to the adult parent who has neglected their responsibility as nurturer of the child, and it is their otherness that makes the child suffer. In children's literature the family is a central element to the story because the family is also central to a child's life. When William's mother or Henri's parents, the Baron and Baroness of Bellemont, do not care for the child they are supposed to nurture, their otherness is what makes them incompetent as parents. An adult is supposed to know, is supposed to have knowledge of what is best for them and for the child, but the othering of adults signals to the child that certain people do not know what is best for the child, and they should be avoided. Sherwood often uses activities to signal otherness to the child, and it is the adult parent who engages in the activity. The most striking one is card playing. This activity is closely related to those who are not considered good Christians, "the Other", and one of them is the Nobles: "After the company had all drunk tea, several tables were set out, and the ladies and gentlemen began to make parties for playing cards. As Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild never played at cards, they asked for the coach" (Sherwood 101). The Nobles are a middle-class family, who have a daughter, Miss Augusta Noble, who dies in the novel. When they talk about her death, the family is spoken of in terms of otherness. Augusta had been brought up "without fear of God or knowledge of religion: nay, Lady Noble would even mock at religion and religious people in her presence; and she chose a governess for her [Augusta] who had no more of God about her than herself" (155). The night Augusta dies, "Lady Noble was playing at cards in the drawing-room with some visitors . . ." (156), and Augusta is assumed to have taken a candle to admire herself in the mirror. The dress catches fire, and Augusta burns to death. Her death, should be "a warning to all children how they presume to disobey their parents!" (156). Another story containing cards is the story of Henri. In the descriptions of the Marchioness and Marquis, card-playing is related to their immoral

lifestyle: "The Marchioness never staid at home a single day, but spent her whole time in visiting, dancing, playing at cards, and going to plays and musical entertainment . . . and never thought of God" (201). The next page continues with the description of the Marquis: "Nor was the Marquis any better than his wife . . . He spent all his time amongst a set of wicked young men of his own rank: they sat up all night, drinking and swearing, playing cards for large sums of money, mocking at their king, and scoffing at God" (202). After their son Theodore dies, the Marquis handles his grief by "drinking and playing at cards and blaspheming God" (203). The stories of Augusta and Henri show how they, "the Other" who do not believe in God, spend their time on activities of no value. The image she wants to pass on to the reader seems to follow a certain pattern: People who play cards only care for themselves, they do not love God, and they are rich. This is the pattern that leads them to disaster; both of the card-playing families lose a child. Their deaths are seen as a direct consequence of the ungodly lifestyle of their parents. It is not solely the playing of cards that causes the children to die, but the sum of their parent's behaviour, and the absence of God in their lives, which in turn makes them alienated from a Christian lifestyle. In Sherwood's novel, playing cards is related to drinking, swearing, dancing, and playing for money, and the perfect Christian lifestyle of Mr and Mrs Fairchild becomes the opposite to the rich non-believer's self-centred way of living. Everything the card-playing families stand for is not found within the Fairchild family. When the narrator states Mr and Mrs Fairchild's opinion of card-playing as something they never do, card-playing is a signal, a hint that points out to the reader that these people, the people who play cards, are not trustworthy or have a lifestyle that good Christians do not approve of: they are not one of us, they are one of them; they are "the Other".

In contemporary literature, card-playing is no longer a signal for the child to recognise otherness. Leerssen notices that stereotyped images change over time; they become

inadequate, which gives rise. “to the very opposite” (278). The images of national character exist within this extreme points, and national characters change over time and are constantly moving within the defined polarity (279). An example from the novels that exemplifies this shift in a stereotyped image is the othering of Catholics. In Sherwood’s text of 1818, the Catholics are represented as “the Other”. In Magorian’s text of 1983, the stereotyped image of the Roman Catholics of 1818 is still alive as seen when the children have to share school with the Catholics (132) because they cannot be at school at the same time. In Magorian’s text, the Catholics are just left to be different from the other. The distinct othering of Catholics found in Sherwood’s text has softened and the harsh vocabulary is removed, but the Catholics are still representatives of otherness. To explain what happened between the two publications, Leerssen says:

Stereotypes and prejudices may be defined by that very aspect: they are the kind of things we cannot place as to where precisely we have learned them. They were infused into cultural literacy at an early, informal stage of our socialization process, in early childhood, as part of texts that by themselves are ephemeral and unmemorable . . . The schemata that remain in our awareness as a residue of all these small, individually unmemorable cultural socialization experiences are therefore unclearly source-anchored. (286)

When “the Other” is in change, it explains how a text written in 1818 that praises evangelicalism becomes popular, and how another text written in 1983 that describes evangelicalism in negative terms wins an award. Leerssen’s statement gives an explanation to why the authors of *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* can write about the same topic, but from a different point of view. Both Sherwood and Magorian write based on what they have learned and been raised to think and believe. They also form their statements based

on the audience—the discourse of the western society at the time of publication. Sherwood’s text is written after an awakening, while Magorian wrote her text after the 1960s and a strong secularisation of the society. For the Evangelicals, it was a matter of life and death, heaven or hell, and with a death rate far above the one we have today, there was no time for questions or reflections related to “the Other”. The Christian life had to be implanted in the child as early as possible, and to inform the child of other religious groups could bewilder them. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the contemporary child seeks freedom from any oppression, and in such understanding of the child and childhood, religious subordination does not fit in. Therefore, information about the possible consequences of such a life has to be given to the child.

Otherness is frequently used in children’s literature, and there must be a reason behind the use of it. Perry Nodelman tries to explain why otherness is used in children’s literature, and uses the example of minority writers to describe the communication of otherness to the child. He says that “those members of oppressed minorities who are most adamant about their own need for freedom from oppression are often among those who are most vociferous about controlling the image of the world presented in children’s literature, trying to ensure that children adopt their own correct attitudes” (Nodelman 33). In Britain, the Evangelicals were not a minority group in 1818, but the need to control the image of the world that Nodelman refers to here, describes the importance that the Evangelicals of the nineteenth century felt, to pass on the notion of the Catholics as “the Other” to the child, and to promote the Evangelical Movement as representative of true Christianity since the position of Catholicism was strong in central Europe. To control the child’s worldview, Sherwood uses every aspect of the conflict to make sure the children see the Catholics the way she wants them to. One of the stories where she confronts Catholicism and draws upon the conflict between the two branches of Christianity, is the story of Henri found in the chapters called “The Story in



Lucy's Book" and "Second Part of the Story in Lucy's Book". In this story, Henri and his parents, the Baron and Baroness of Bellemont, are reunited. Henri has been raised outside the family by the Waldenses, a group of people who "retired from the sight of the rest of mankind . . . [and] led innocent and holy lives for many ages, serving their God in purity, and resisting all the wicked desires of the Roman Catholics, who wished to turn them to their own corrupt religion" (Sherwood 198-99). The Baron and Baroness live in France, are very rich, and lead a debauched life, which is possible if you live in a land where people are Catholics, such as France, "and there is a great difference in the way and customs of the French and English" (197). Sherwood then continues to describe the political system of France, which "[a] few years ago . . . were governed by a king who had so much power, that if he did not like any person he could condemn him to be shut up for life . . . The religion of the French at that time was Roman Catholic" (197). Sherwood polarises the situation between the Catholics and the Protestants by creating a negative image of France, and draws similarities between their religious practice, culture, and political system. She questions the democracy of France by referring to a King who killed the people he was supposed to govern. The story of the Waldenses is historically true, but when she set the conflict to "a few years ago", she sums up a conflict that started as early as the twelfth century, but had its peak with the massacre called "The Piedmontese Easter" in 1655. The massacre created massive support from Protestant Europe, claiming justice for the Christian minority ("Waldenses"). This is the essence of Sherwood's religious otherness. She is coloured by centuries of conflict between Catholics and Protestants. To make sure the child reader adopts her attitudes Sherwood uses the Child. Henri, was born, but later abandoned by the Baroness of Bellemont since she "shewed no affection whatever for him" (Sherwood 200). A good mother does not abandon her son, but a Catholic mother does. Henri then grows up among the Waldenses who care for him and love him. When the firstborn son of the Baroness of Bellemont dies, Henri is called for. In contrast

to the Baroness's heart, Maria, the Baroness's cousin, who had cared for Henri, prepared his things for the journey "with many tears" (208) and the family is filled with sorrow when he leaves them. The story of Henri ends with the imprisonment of the Baron and Baroness, due to their disrespect for the King. In jail, Henri's parents are capable of listening to him, and he converts them to Christianity, and "Henri had never been happier in his life than he now was" (230). Sherwood plays on the emotional aspect to create sympathy for her attitudes in the child reader. No one would like to grow up among people like the Baron and Baroness. Despite their wealth, Henri does not experience happiness until they are converted and they all can live a Christian life together as a family. Sherwood plays on the image of the Christian family as loving and caring, and contrasts it in the depiction of the Baron and Baroness before and after they convert. The child sympathises with Henri, and does not want to have Catholics as parents. When Sherwood states such a strong hostility towards Catholics, it is grounded in history as well as society. Sherwood keeps the conflict alive by implanting an understanding of Roman Catholics as "the Other" and portrays them, here in the characters of the Baron and Baroness of Bellemont, as superior to the Protestants. Sherwood is passing her worldview on to the child reader. She does not camouflage or cover her point of view, but is straight forward, and the children are left in no doubt as to what to think of Catholics.

Magorian's portrayal of William's mother is just as hostile towards Evangelical Christians as Sherwood is towards Roman Catholics. Like Sherwood, she states her opinions about evangelicals openly. The religious mother of William is a threat to the innocent child, who is victimised due to his mother's misuse of religion. Not to be too stereotypical Magorian also gives an alternative explanation for the mother's inhumane treatment of William: she may be mentally ill. The reader understands that something is wrong with the mother since she acts the way she does, but William does not see it until later when William goes back to London to live with her. Then he sees that "[i]t was her that was ill, not him" (Magorian 257). At the end

of the story, this is repeated when the people from London come to tell him that his mother is dead:

“I’m afraid we’ve brought you some rather bad news, William”, she said. “It concerns your mother.”

“William”, she hesitated. “I’m afraid your mother is dead. She committed suicide . . .”  
“Killed herself? But . . . but why?”

“I don’t know. I suppose she just didn’t want to live any more.” (380)

William’s mother is mentally ill, but the novel does not emphasise this condition. His miserable life with his mother is emphasised as having its origin in her religion more than her mental illness. When William and his mother meet at the railway station, the narrator describes the meeting from both the mother's and William’s perspective. This is the first time his mother is given a visible face: “She was very pale, almost yellow in colour and her lips were so blue that it seemed as if every ounce of blood had been drained from them” (252). This description would never have been used for a good mother. This is the face of someone who is ill, but they work together with the image of the mother as someone who is not good when she is described as one who does not like touching, her body has an iciness, she has an alarming smile, and colourless eyes. This description is a supplement to the reader’s already negative image of the mother as cold and evil. When the narrator describes the mother’s side of the meeting, William’s new confidence is described as a threat to her: “The smile frightened her. It threatened her authority” (252). He is “[t]oo cheeky by far. She’d soon discipline it out of him” (254), and “[s]ilence him into obedience” (264). Through her thoughts, the narrator again fulfills the reader’s expectations of the mother as a character; she has not changed since he saw her the last time; she will continue to beat him. The last one to add information, is the London neighbour when she says that “[s]he keeps herself to herself.

Bit of a Madam. Thinks she's a bleedin' saint if you'll excooth me languidge . . ." (282), which all underlines her religious lifestyle. She also says that she has gone away [t]o the coast. For a Bible meetin' or somethin'. She told me last week. Dunno why. She don't usually condescend to even look at me" (283). The neighbour's opinion forms an image of a woman no one likes and who thinks herself better than the rest. Together with William's statements of his mother and the mother's own statements of her role, her otherness is confirmed. William's mother does not even have a name; she just becomes the religious fanatic woman, the mother of poor William, and that is Magorian's purpose. She wants her to represent the evangelical group, and with a name, she would become a person, and individual. The narrative voice plays an important role in the process of signposting otherness to the child reader for both Magorian and Sherwood. The narrator is the author's vessel to practice covert ideology and didacticism (Nicolajeva 180). Othering is ideology camouflaged in didacticism and then neutralized to fit into society's view of who "the Other" is, and it works. The children are in the hands of the narrator who takes them through the story and controls their emotions and thoughts, and make them believe that the Catholics and the Evangelicals are people whom they should stay away from.

Another reason for writers to use otherness is propaganda. Enkelena S. Qafleshi notes in her research, that othering in Albanian children's literature serves as propaganda: "Didactic literary techniques help to conceal overtly visible communist dogma, and convey socialist doctrine through the figure of the new man—the ideal character who condemns non-patriots through rituals of othering" (22). The New Man figure is the first of three methods of othering that are used. The second method used is to construct a foil to the New Man image (23). The foil is a character who presents an opposite, someone who is distinct from the New Man image. The third method is strangeness and foreignness—an exploitation of foreign context—used "to point out contrast in encounters with the other to construct . . ." (24) the wanted

ideology favourably. The same methods of othering can be recognised in *The Fairchild Family* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* and be used to explain and prove the purpose behind their use of otherness. *The Fairchild Family* is didactic in style, and Sherwood does not try to hide the novel's purpose, and her novel could be seen as Christian propaganda. When the child is exposed to propaganda, propaganda's function is to shape and control the mental development of the child. They are shaped to think within the ideological framework of the society they exist in, and Sherwood's novel does that. The children in the story or the child reader are not encouraged to ask questions about "the Other" or to think in new terms about otherness. They are given an answer, and the answer is the truth. Catholics in general are not good, and rich people who play cards are not good Christians. That is the way it is, and that is what children are going to think when they have finished the book. Qafleshi's three methods of othering also fit into Magorian's use of "the Other" in *Goodnight Mister Tom*. Her novel is not outspoken didactic propaganda, or else it would probably not have gained its success. But her crusade against Evangelical Christians is. Magorian's text is in accordance with the discourse of her society, and may not stand out as portraying otherness for anyone other than those who have a positive relation or connection to the Evangelical Movement. For them, *Goodnight Mister Tom* is a crusade and propaganda against what they consider to be the foundation of their life and what they base their understanding of the world upon. Neither their voice and their perspective are given space in the novel, nor is religion as a foundation for the majority of the people in the world. When Magorian creates an ideology of the New Man, it is both Tom's parenting and his care for William compared to the motherhood of William's mother, but also the new William compared to the old. He becomes the ideal child and a representative of the ideal childhood; he is the child figure who explains to every child reader what a childhood should be like. When the nameless mother of William is the foil to Tom's care for William, and the childhood of the old William is the foil to his new childhood

with Tom; the mother and everything she stands for, becomes the evil other, the enemy of every child. She is the enemy of every good childhood and parenthood, and everybody who belongs to the group of Evangelical Christians is like William's mother. Magorian does not want to create a mixed, nuanced image of her; she wants her readers to think that all religious fanatics are evil parents who beat their children and do not love them. She wants the child reader to adapt to her image of Evangelicals, and like Sherwood, Magorian contrasts the image of the other, the Orient, with the average village people, the Occident. The neighbour of William's mother in London describes her as one that "[d]on't fit in here at all. Never have. Over-religious type, bible-thumpin', you know what I mean" (Magorian 283). The control and invisible grip William's mother has over him is linked to her religious conservatism and it is made clear; the type of conservatism William's mother represents does not fit into British Society.

Otherness is about making the child think according to the adult's understanding of the world. According to Nodelman, the child readers are provided "with a "realistic" description of people and events that insist on the reality of one particular way of looking at the world and themselves – *our way*" (32). Both Sherwood's stories and Magorian's novel describe otherness in stories that are realistic and likely-to-have-happened. The writers offer the child reader a claimed knowledge about childhood and the world "in hopes that they will take our word for it and become like the fictional children we have invented—and therefore, less threatening to us" (Nodelman 32). The child is supposed to separate the good from the bad, and sympathise with the ideologically correct characters; they are meant to identify themselves with them. This is the main purpose of otherness in *The Fairchild Children* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*; the writers want to implant a fear of "the Other" so that the child reader inherits the writer's perspective of the world, and becomes their ideological disciple.

In 1952, Olivia Robertson posted a concern for children's literature when she said that "the modern generation have become so squeamish that on the wireless, in books and children's magazines, death and suffering and sickness and even religion itself are looked upon as taboo" (8-9). Her perspective on post war writings for children was spot on and knowing today what came in the 1980s related to children's texts dealing with new and difficult topics, she would have applauded their coming. The post-war removal from religion, a counter reaction has been built up. Critics and contemporary writers present Christianity and religion in general as the enemy of humanity. Religion is a hindrance to intellectual development and equality between genders, an instrument of political oppression, and also to blame for the inequalities of many societies today. There are many arguments that support their point of view, and cannot be denied, but still, the approach to the topic describes an understanding of religion as otherness. Said discusses religious otherness when he talks about Islam in relation to Orientalism and says:

Insofar as Islam has always been seen as belonging to the Orient, its particular fate within the general structure of Orientalism has been to be looked at with a very special hostility and fear. There are, of course, many obvious religious, psychological and political reasons for this, but all of these reasons derive from a sense that so far as the West is concerned, Islam represents not only a formidable competitor but also a late-coming challenge to Christianity. (Said)

If Islam had been replaced with the word Christianity, and at the end of the citation replaced Christianity with intellectual thinking, this statement describes Christianity's position and situation in Western society today. This article was written in 1980, but since then, it is not only Islam that is looked at with fear and hostility and which represents a formidable competitor, Christianity is also in the same group. Contemporary writers and critics may see

their point of view related to Christianity as correct, but it just reflects otherness in the twentieth century and is not different from that of Sherwood's fear of the Catholics in 1818. Magorian draws on society's stereotypes of Charismatic Christians, and like Sherwood, she does not leave space for the children to reflect or ask questions related to the correctness of the representation of "the Other". She uses her text as propaganda against Evangelical belief, and like The Albanian children's texts, she uses *Goodnight Mister Tom* to shape and control; she wants to form a negative opinion in the child's mind about Evangelical Christians. The changes in society today towards religion, makes it easier to question Sherwood's mix of religion and didacticism because it is so obvious and open, while Magorian's contemporary correct attack on religious conservatism is overseen. She does not express a direct negative attitude towards religion; Tom and William are going to church, but not necessarily for a service and Tom teaches William the stories from the Bible in a less strict way, not literally. *Goodnight Mister Tom* does not express a clear hostility towards religion in general, only towards radical belief. If Magorian or Sherwood had been asked why they express hostility towards a religious group, the answers would probably have differed. Sherwood, who in her novel points at historical and doctrinal aspects of Catholicism as wrong according to the Protestant, Evangelical understanding of Christianity, could have pointed at such elements for her hostility. Magorian, as a post-war child, may have claimed various post 1960 conflicts between feminists, lesbian/gay groups and Bible-thumpers to be her backdrop for confronting the Evangelicals. Leerssen's statements of national stereotyping explain, that we do not always know why we stereotype and hold prejudice. Prejudices come with upbringing; they are implanted in us as we grow up, and we continue to be influenced by the forces that work on a society in the process of making the other. This aspect sets children's literature in a specific position. If adults—the writers of children's texts—are not aware of their stereotyped characteristics, and if contemporary society supports the stereotyped prejudices, who is then



to ask critical questions? This has been the role of literary critics. Today's critics tend to claim a neutral position in criticising texts. According to Leerssen's statements, a neutral position is a Utopia. We are all bearers of stereotypes and prejudices, and we bring them with us and express them verbally and through different texts. It is possible though, to change in interaction with others, but it means exposing oneself to otherness and trying to understand someone else's perspective. In relation to criticism, Amanda Rogers Jones points at a working culture within English departments related to religious beliefs. She calls it academic agnosticism, and claims that the privileged position Christianity may have had previously has today been reversed, and Christianity has become "the Other" (Jones 46). Earlier, the position of Christianity made critics read such literature with different eyes. With the existing working culture, and the position Christianity has in the Western world, she claims that an important aspect of Christian literature is lost. While Sherwood's novel is read with scepticism today, Magorian's portraying of Evangelicalism is applauded. Since "the Other" and otherness are in constant change due to social change and development, one thing is sure: it will not last—a counter reaction is likely to come.



## Chapter 5.0 Teaching the Child

In every society, children are expected to learn and be taught a set of skills before they reach a certain age. Some of these skills are related to education, like reading and writing, while others are connected to gender, class, religion, and social norms. This kind of knowledge varies from family to family, from culture to culture, and within different time periods. In children's literature these skills are often expressed to the reader through the narrator who functions as a guide, or in children's interaction with adults who set the standard for social norms and who also are the ones who respond to a child's behaviour and who teach and encourage the child to do or participate in certain activities. Sherwood and Magorian both focus on education of the child, but have different approaches to that education. For Sherwood, it is important to pass on the Evangelical culture to create an Evangelical identity in the child, while Magorian presents the ideal school to the reader, and as such states a counter-reaction to the existing school system of 1983. For both of them, education of the individual as to their responsibility towards society is essential.

In the eighteenth century, there was a great concern with the poor, and different churches established charity schools and Sunday schools to meet the needs of the children. The children were given food, and they were taught to read and write. With the industrial revolution, the situation changed when the need for child labour became crucial. Then, both non-conformists and the Church of England that ran the schools became active reformers in limiting working hours for children ("Elementary Education in the 19th Century") and fought for the child's right to be a child, and for education. Not until the 1870 Education Act, was public education raised as a national concern ("The 1870 Education Act"). *The Fairchild Family* reflects the social commitment to educating the poor that was prominent in the nineteenth century and within the Evangelical Movement.

Like other Evangelicals, Mrs Sherwood believed that education should subserve one major purpose, religion. Everything she wrote was in accordance with this understanding:

Moral tale; allegory; dialogue; question and answer; child and mentor; the academy—all the familiar devices reappear in her works with but one essential difference: for eighteenth-century dependence upon reason, Mrs. Sherwood substitutes the Evangelical assumption that all learning is of necessity rooted in and directed towards religion. Education thus becomes preparation for eternity; rational and moral elements are subordinated to lessons of faith, resignation and implicit obedience to the will of God; and the material concerns of everyday life are thinned out. (Hilton and Nikolajeva 12)

While Sherwood's education was primarily for a religious purpose, the children in *The Fairchild Family* learn more than biblical scriptures. The education that Mr and Mrs Fairchild gives to the children serve three major purposes: teach the children basic educational skills, teach the children practical skills and finally, educate the children in Evangelical culture to make the child adapt to and identify with its characteristics. The first pages of the novel describe how these three aspects of education were interlaced, and that the basic education of the child was not seen as an arena away from the education of psalms related to Evangelical culture. All of it was seen as a part of the general education of the child:

These little children never went to school; Mrs. Fairchild taught Lucy and Emily, and Mr. Fairchild taught little Henry. Lucy and Emily learned to read and do various kinds of needle-work. Lucy had begun to write, and took great pains with her writing: their mamma also taught them to sing psalms and hymns, and they could sing several very sweetly. Little Henry, too, had a great notion of singing. (Sherwood 1)

The children learn to read and to write, and both boys and girls are taught skills. The novel shows that they started to read early (Henry is reading the books they buy, and he is between five and six), but they did not learn to write until they were eight (like Lucy). It was useful when they should read the Bible or other proper literature. For Henry, learning Latin before he turned six was considered proper because it was needed to become a clergyman. Again it demonstrates that Sherwood's main purpose for theoretical education is to develop the child as a Christian. The novel starts with a basic introduction that explains to the children that reason can never replace religion, but still, basic scientific knowledge is presented to the children although with the Bible as a backdrop. In the first chapters, the children learn that the Earth is round when they see the globe, that the sun is "a million times larger than this world: it shines upon this world and gives us light and warmth . . ." (Sherwood 5); they learn about creation in general, and that the world has many countries and races. It is all taught from a biblical perspective, and the origin of the world and nature are seen through the stories from the Bible. The curiosity of the eighteenth century is replaced with a biblical understanding, so when the children ask questions, they are answered according to the belief that every answer is to be found in the Bible. The world within the Christian sphere is safe, but the world outside, like the one Mr Fairchild describes, could seem quite scary for a young mind: "[M]ore than one-third of the inhabitants of the globe are supposed to be idolaters: there are numbers in Africa, in Asia, and in America: and the Roman Catholics in Europe, and other parts of the world . . . Many people in England are very wicked; but the people in those countries which serve idols are more horribly wicked . . ." (23). Teaching like this encourages the child to remain a Christian, and not mingle with non-believers. It also informs the child of the world outside the house, and as such, prepares him or her for an adult life on their own; they have to know what is out there and what to expect, and be prepared for it. The

theoretical education is not given much space in the novel, while the intention of learning—religious education—is what Sherwood emphasises.

The second aspect of Sherwood's education—practical skills—is closely related to expectations connected to middle-class children, and is also common in other children's books written around the same time or after *The Fairchild Family* was published. The girls learn needle-work, while Henry is taught “every thing that was proper for little boys in his station to learn” (Sherwood). In the novel, the children are not only taught typical middle-class skills, but also housework. This mix of practical skills and education was not common for middle-class children at that time. For the Fairchilds, a middle-class life also means working in the garden, feeding the fowls, and making the beds; the working child is just as highly valued as the child who can read, write and do needlework. The common situation among middle-class families was to have servants do these types of housework. In the opening page, Sherwood states in the second line that “Mr. Fairchild kept only two servants . . .” (1). The Fairchilds are presented as simple people, and the children are not posh, but show a flexibility and simplicity when it comes to life and fitting into all kinds of social classes. Sherwood's narration makes the Fairchilds exist in the gap between middle-class and working-class, and as such, her focus on different types of education makes the story suitable for children other than those of the middle-class. She may write for the middle-class, but her values are with all types of people: rich and poor, young and old, scholars and workers, as long as they are a saved soul who works on his or her salvation and prepares for heaven. This is the basic idea behind all her knowledge. The third element of Sherwood's education is related to an Evangelical upbringing to make sure the child associates with typical Evangelical characteristics. Therefore, she ends every chapter of *The Fairchild Family*, with a prayer and a hymn that underline the nature of Evangelical Christianity. The hymns are well selected from famous hymn writers within the Evangelical movement: Philip Doddridge,

Isaac Watts, Guillermo Cowper, and Charles Wesley among others (Cutt 66). Metrical psalms had for a while been the form used for worship in the church, but one man, Isaac Watts, found them inadequate (Marshall). He created new hymns, more than 600, which has given him the title “Father of English Hymnody” (Wright). His influence on English church life can best be described in the fact that his collection of psalms and hymns was selling more than 60,000 copies every year over 100 years after the first publication (Townsend). Despite his popularity, “singing of hymns was not officially approved in the Church of England until 1820” (Townsend). With the Evangelical Revival of the 1730s and 40s, the politics and practice of hymnody changed, and the Wesley brothers, Charles in particular, became important in this change. His “task was distinct. Many of the Revival masses were virtual newcomers to Christianity, unfamiliar with Scripture or basic doctrine. The educational charge was heavy, and many of Wesley’s hymns simply versify basic Christian education” (Marshall). Hymns became identical with the Evangelical movement, and it is likely that adults who read Sherwood’s novel, knew the hymns by heart and could pass the melodies and hymn tradition on to their children. With this background knowledge, Sherwood’s use of the hymns makes better sense. The basic intention was to educate the child in basic doctrines like Wesley had done. The songs were scriptures from the Bible told with a melody. The hymns also mark the division between Evangelical Christians and other Christians; they were not only songs, or hymns, but they represented the nature of the revival; the hymns represented the change. The hymns expressed what the revival meant for the people within the Evangelical Movement, and for most of them, the revival was a life-changing episode.

As for Charles Wesley, Sherwood used the hymns for an educational purpose. Together with the stories in her book and the prayers, they created a unity that made her novel a didactic masterpiece in children’s literature meant for religious education. Sherwood is known for her religious didacticism that in detail describes to the child what is right and wrong and how it is

supposed to behave according to Evangelical practice. Her religious education has in *The Fairchild Family* three elements: the stories, the prayers and the hymns. To create a unity between the three elements, Sherwood creates themes. First she gives the child a story he or she will experience to be relevant to their life. At the end of the chapter, she adds a prayer that is connected to the content of the story, which is written in first person narrative and is therefore experienced to be a direct communication with the reader. Then she adds the hymn, which theme is connected to the story and the prayer. It creates a red thread, and the educational didactic purpose is invaluable and clever; the child will have a link between the psalm, the prayer and the story that will make them all easier to remember when the child might need them. They become more than words and melodies, they come alive through the stories and are connected to images that the story has created in the mind of the child. In addition to the thematising, Sherwood communicates through the first person narrative directly with the child reader. The novel in general is written in third person narrative, but at the end of every chapter, before the prayer and hymns, the narrative point of view changes to first person. The narrator is now talking to the reader, such as when he or she says that: “I will put down Mr. Fairchild’s prayer in this place, as it may perhaps be useful to you at any time when you may be troubled with . . .” (Sherwood 69). This I/you pattern is often used, and gives the narrator a superior position compared to a third person narrator who is a passive spectator to the story. The first person narrator was there when it happened, but nowhere in the novel is the narrator identified. When reading, the feeling is that the narrator is an adult. The narrator can write, and has knowledge of what is good for the child and acceptable conduct. Since the narrator knows everything, it also gives an idea of an all-seeing God who knows everything you do and from whom it is impossible to hide. The first person narrator claims to be of help to the child: When “you” are in a difficult situation, “I” have written down something that you will find helpful in dealing with it. The first person narrator serves



the purpose of drawing the child reader into the narrative and to create a connection between the story told and the child. In doing so, it makes a place for the child reader in the story, and the didactic purpose of the novel is achieved: to teach the child Evangelical doctrine and morals.

The first person narrator does not communicate only with the child reader. The reading parent is also a target. The novel opens and closes with the father's prayer for his children, and holds up the responsibility of the parents to raise the child to become a good Christian, bound for heaven. This responsibility is underlined when the Fairchild parents teach their own children to pray and sing hymns in the book, and also guide them in matters related to their spiritual journey. When the first person narrator talks to the reader, both child and adult become a part of the same, good, Christian education that the Fairchilds represent. The novel becomes the evidence that this education works, and when the narrator talks to "you", the child reader can identify with the Fairchild children, and the adults with the Fairchild parents. They can use the book as an example, and be a similar good child or parents if they stick to the manual described in the novel. The I/you pattern is also mixed up with another viewpoint in the prayers. In most cases, there is an adult and a child present when they say the prayers. It is the adult person who says the prayer, and who prays in the place of the child. An example here is Mrs Fairchild when she prays:

The fear of my father and mother, and of being punished, often keeps me from breaking out into open sins; but, if my parents and teachers were to be taken from me, and I was no longer under fear of punishment, then, O Lord, I should break out into open and shameless wickedness; and be no better in appearance (as I am no better in heart) than the poor little wicked boys and girls in the streets, who lie, and swear, and steal. (Sherwood 82)

It feels a bit strange that an adult is saying these words, but the excerpt is representative of many of the prayers in the novel. In some places, the first person narrator tells the reader that the prayers have been adjusted to fit the child better, though without saying what the original prayer was like. The practice of repeating had been common in church related psalm singing before the hymn-revival of the eighteenth century (Leaver), and as such reflects a didactic method of learning, and in this case related to praying. Despite this practise, in the case of *Sherwood*, it is most likely to be another attempt to include the child reader into the story by putting the words in their mouth when they read. Cutt claims the novel to be “an ideal book for Sunday reading. No work for children to date had so thoroughly subordinated instruction and amusement to religion” (66). The novel was meant to be read out loud, and to be a part of the Sunday reading. The Evangelicals wanted a personal commitment to faith. The involvement of the child and the parents, the first person narrative and the different elements of the book—story, prayer, hymn—encouraged exactly that.

When Michelle Magorian focuses on education of the child, a personal commitment to religion is not essential. To describe Magorian’s focus on education, it is important to look at Britain in the decades before *Goodnight Mister Tom* was written. Magorian wrote *Goodnight Mister Tom* in 1983, forty years after the Second World War. In this period the British school system had been closely examined in order to create comprehensive schools. To do so, the traditional grammar school had to be replaced. Questions related to class, curriculum, qualification of teachers, local and/or national responsibility for funding and quality, and new informal teaching methods, sum up a decades-long discussion, that made the British school system into what it is today (Chitty 31-35). One of the main contributors to this change was Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan, who in 1976 gave his famous speech at Ruskin College. His speech has later been regarded as the beginning of “The Great Debate”, where the nature and purpose of public education would be debated. Reading it, it is striking to see

how different elements from his speech are reflected in *Goodnight Mister Tom*. What he considers to be the ideal school is more or less the school in Weirwold. He talks about enthusiastic and dedicated teachers, courses in art and crafts, new informal methods of teaching, replacing learning for living and catering for a child's personality, learning basic tools like “basic literacy, basic numeracy, the understanding of how to live and work together, respect for others, respect for the individual . . .”(Callaghan), developing lively inquiring minds with an appetite for knowledge, and mitigating disadvantages suffered through poor home conditions (Callaghan). Magorian has created the ideal Labour party school of 1976, and set it in World War II Britain. Her portraying of the Weirwold school, and William in it, is a political statement and a counter-reaction to the existing school system in Britain. There are two elements she points at to be changed, elements which Magorian sees as basic elements for educational progress in a child: the teachers attitude towards the students, and the parents role as supporters to the child. If these two elements work, the child will perform better, and William is the example thereof.

Magorian's teachers are not like the boarding school teachers that are known from history, literature and TV, whose purpose was to scare knowledge into children and punish them if they did not obey. William's favourite teacher is Mrs Hartridge. He adores her character from the first time they meet: “Mrs Hartridge and her uniformed husband entered. Willie gazed at her, quite spellbound. She was beautiful, he thought, so plump and fair, standing in the sunlight, her eyes creased with laughter” (Sherwood 87). She is more than a teacher to William; she comes to represent everything his own mother is not. Attending Mrs Hartridge's class is the driving force behind William's wish to learn. Even Tom has noticed that: “Since Willie was so desperate to be accepted into Mrs Hartridge's class Tom had been helping in every possible way . . . He hoped that Willie would manage to get into Mrs Hartridge's class before she left” (178). Mrs Hartridge is pregnant, and will stop teaching when the child is

born. After a while, William's skills are at an acceptable level, and he is admitted into her class: "He adored being near Mrs Hartridge and he watched her stomach gently expand with each passing week. He loved the way she moved and smiled and the soft cadence of her voice" (240). In a way, he is in love with her, but it is the mother figure she represents that catches his attention. She becomes his teacher not only at school and in educational matters, but also in motherhood and in life. In her, he sees the mother that he never had. When he is told that he will have to go back to London, he tries to visualise what the meeting with his mother would be like, and "[h]e began to fantasise around her, only her face was very vague. She became a mixture of Mrs Fletcher and Mrs Hartridge" (248). Mrs Hartridge as a mother figure helps William develop in areas where his own mother has failed: in his education, in his personal development, as an artist, and in social acceptability. Mrs Hartridge is the teacher that every child would like to have. She makes every child glow, and represents something different in this school as well. He likes Mrs Black, the other teacher, but it is something about personal commitment that Magorian is pointing at. The connection between teaching and seeing the child is in this novel described as a valuable skill in a teacher, and one that the pupil will benefit from. For Magorian, a distant relationship between teacher and pupil can make a child learn basic educational skills, but if the child is to develop as a human, he or she needs teachers who see the children as individuals and not as a group. The difference is elucidated in William's school experience in London compared to Weirwold. In London he was afraid, did not learn to read or write, and had no friends. In Weirwold he flourishes and manages in a short period of time to develop acceptable skills, and one of the keys to his progress is Mrs Hartridge's commitment to her work.

The other element that Magorian sees as essential for a child's development of educational skills is the importance of parental support, and Tom is in such an excellent example. It is revealed early on that William does not know how to read and write, and his journey to

literacy remains a theme throughout the book. He cannot write his own name when he arrives, and Tom is alarmed by the fact that William is soon to be nine years old, and compares him with “[t]he village children [who] were reading at least some words by the time they were six” (Magorian 44). William’s school experience in London is not good. He has been bullied, has no friends, and his teacher, Mr Barrett, “spent all day yelling and shouting at everyone and rapping knuckles” (11). School is normally something he dreads. Starting school in Weirwold, his hope is to be in class with Zach and the other neighbouring children of his age. His first day at school becomes a defeat when he, due to his reading and arithmetic skills, is placed together with the smaller children. His dejected figure gives Tom a hint of what the day has been like when he comes home, so Tom asks:

“How was it then?”

Willie scraped the toes of his boots together.

“Bad, was it?”

Willie nodded.

“Best tell me then.” ...

”I’m with the babies.”

“Oh, and whose class is Zacharias in then?”

“Mrs Hartridge’s.”

“Why ent you? You’re near enuff the same age, ent you?”

“Yeh, but he can read.” He paused. “And write.”

“And the ones that can’t are with Mrs Black, that it?” ...

”We’ll begin this evenin’,” he said sharply. “That do?”

“Wot?”

“Learning to read and write. I’ll teach you to write yer own name fer a beginnin’.”

(135-37)

Tom takes William's needs seriously and offers William a solution to his problem. Every day after school, the two of them sit by the table to teach William the skill of writing. In addition, Tom takes William to the library to create an interest in books, and he also reads to him in the evening. In doing so, they get the result they want: some months later he is at an acceptable level, and is allowed into Mrs Hartridge's class with the rest of the children his age. Tom's participation in William's education states to William, and to the readers, that education is important, and that the acquisition of educational skills should be valued and acknowledged as important by adults in every family.

Similar to the Fairchild children, practical skills are also seen as valuable for the child in Weirwold to develop, and here too, Tom is the key person for William's development. When William comes to Tom's place he is paralysed when it comes to practical skills. He does not know what to do, or how to do it, so Tom needs to instruct him and teach him. Tom's compassion for the boy is what makes it possible for William to grow. Tom has a mantra that he keeps repeating for William: "Everything takes its own time . . ." (Magorian 231). This mantra, or understanding of the process of learning, keeps William in motion and ables him to push himself forward. Boiling tea, hanging up the jacket, putting shoes on paper when they are muddy, closing the gate in the field, building the shelter, feeding the dog, walking the dog, learning to cycle, doing the garden, are all practical skills that William is learning from Tom, and he grows into them as he grows in confidence. This knowledge is important for William, and it makes him feel normal and a part of the local community. When Tom, William and the neighbours start to dig the shelter for air raid protection, the neighbours call him "townee" (94) because he squealed when his spade came in contact with a worm (93). As they keep on working, he becomes a part of the working company, and when the rest leave in the evening, he and Tom cover the top of the shelter. When he has almost finished, "[h]is hands and fingernails were filthy, his face and legs were covered in muck, his clothes were sodden and

he was glorying in the wetness of it all” (97). This is a personal victory for William. This is a “townee” becoming a country boy. He has proved that he is strong enough to do manual labour, an important skill if you want to be a part of a pre-war village community where manual labour was a central element in daily routines.

Tom helps William develop practical skills, but he also discovers and develops the artistic child in William. It is not only Tom who contributes; Geoffrey and the school also acknowledge this skill in him. The evolving child is for Magorian closely connected to a freedom for the artistic child to develop. Magorian has stated a concern for the development of today's schools that she saw when she visited them to promote her books: “When I went round the schools I discovered that there was no art, there was no dance, there was no drama, there was no music . . . Fifty percent of state schools have no music.’ . . . ‘We’ve lost a generation of musicians; it’s mad” (Giles). In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the artistic education of William is given more space than his learning of basic skills; they only serve as a platform for his artistic development, and he basically needs them to be able to read novels and plays. For Magorian, the development of the creative child is just as important as the learning of basic and educational skills. Lack of educational skills is what holds William back, while his artistic skills enable him to develop as a human being and realise his value. William proves to be talented in drawing, which pays attention to the fact that people can be talented without knowing how to write and read. He also has a talent for acting, and he also sings in the choir. In *Goodnight Mister Tom* artistic skills are related to fun, friendship and happiness; the artistic child is the foundation for a happy life and human growth. Her novel is the story of a boy’s personal development through a release of artistic, educational, and practical skills, and she wants to create an understanding in society for the importance of art for children, and also art’s influence and position in society. The picture Magorian paints of the village school as one that has enthusiastic teachers who teach reading, writing, arithmetic, art and drama, is not

realistic according to historical records of the British school system. It does not mean that it could not have been the situation, but still, it is too glamorous. She is an active contributor to the debate of the 1970s and 80s, and her didacticism points in the direction of a child centred school where the children are given respect as evolving individuals, and the teachers are there for the children to develop and not the other way around.

Sherwood and Magorian's approach to the education of the child is different, but they have a common understanding when it comes to the child and people's place in society; if people contribute to society, society will take care of them. Today this is recognised as socialist ideology and likely to be what Magorian would be associated with, but for Sherwood, it was an ideology that was based on the biblical understanding of charity: a responsibility to take care of those in need. The Fairchild's success in the community is based on their capability to step outside their middle-class comfort and share their abundance with those in need. They offer help and comfort for the poor, education for the least, and even spend time with those who are below middle-class, and enjoy their company. The community expresses thankfulness for the care and help they receive, and the fact that they spend time with all their neighbours, expresses a community that shows care and support. Even Augusta Noble's death makes the children and the family cry and mourn, though her behaviour was not highly valued. They also offer work, which helps support the families, and stay with their friends and neighbours in good and bad times. This was not a common attitude among the middle-class in 1818. The Fairchilds use their time and money to support and care for people of lower class, and even address them in a humane way, which make them appear as equal to the Fairchilds. In Sherwood's story, it is the Fairchilds who take responsibility for the community, and serve as a spring for the people who live there, but we are not presented with stories where the tables are turned, where people less privileged help the Fairchilds. *The Fairchild Family* is written for a middle-class audience, and it would probably have been outrageous at the time to



introduce such situations. Some of her stories touch upon the topic, such as the one where the children are allowed to go with Betty, the maid, to see Mrs Bush, a poor pious woman that “Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild were not afraid of trusting their children with . . .” (247) The children bring food, and she is happy and welcomes them to her cottage. The narrator describes the tea party to the reader: “I wish you could have seen them all drinking tea at the door of the cottage, round the little table; the two old women sitting in the armchairs, for Lucy would have them do so. She did not despise them because they were poor. Betty making tea, and the three children sitting on stools!” (251). It is a common respect that is described here; all of them have something of value to give to the other, but the standard is that the rich and resourceful help the poor.

Sherwood is critical towards the hypocrisy of the middle-class and their self-centred lifestyle. Mrs and Mr Fairchild feel obliged to visit their middle-class neighbours, because it is expected of them, but they do not gain any pleasure from it. In criticising the middle-class, she sets a standard for social engagement among the likeminded, and urges them to take on social responsibility. Cutt notices in her study of *The Fairchild Family* an intention to make a representation of the ideal Evangelical family, and that this image was accepted for a time: “There was, on the surface, no sharp break with the past: adults brought up on the eighteenth-century moral tale recognised the familiar pattern. But moral tales, recast by Mrs. Sherwood, sounded a deeper note, in this case, vital religion in the home, clearly explained, brought to bear upon every situation, every action, every thought” (64). In her novel Sherwood creates an expectation towards other evangelical middle-class Christians to act according to the biblical standard of charity and not to be like the examples in the stories. This was not the standard in the nineteenth century, when you remained within, and nurtured your own class. By writing stories for children that exemplified the injustice of society and the lack of action among the middle-class for social change, she created awareness in the child related to the

situation and tried to influence the child to think in new terms about its place in society. She dared to raise the topic, and together with other people within the movement, she set a standard that would lead to a change of social conditions among the poor in England and in western society in general.

Magorian also points at social participation to be an important quality in humans, and both Tom and William succeed in life because they manage to adapt into society. Their previous abnormal behaviour had made them lonely. Both had acted in contrast to the norm of social interaction, when they had withdrawn from society due to the misery of their personal condition. Their lives change, because they change their view on what society is, and their role and place in it. It is Tom's need for help with William's basic needs that makes him go to the community for help. He does not know how to knit William a sweater, and does not understand why William wets his bed every night, but the community can help him with all his needs, and society responds to his needs because the people of the village are people who care for each other.

Magorian is clear in her view on society; everybody needs fellowship and is interdependent with society and what it offers. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the Weirwold society is based on social democratic ideas; everybody contributes to and takes part in the community. Class distinctions are not much spoken of, only the Barns family who "own Hillbrook Farm. Biggest round here fer miles" (Magorian 87) are named and gives an idea that some are in a better position than others. Even the doctor is called Dr Little, and is a down to earth man who contributes and helps in the community and takes his share in housing the evacuee Zach. Weirwold is a small village where everybody knows everybody and when something happens, good or bad, they step in to help. The people of the village have obviously formed an opinion of Tom based on his interaction with the other inhabitants. They all pity William who has to

live with him and his muttering and grunting. The story is set before and after the outbreak of World War II, and the need for all people to contribute to society is made visible. When Tom needs to build the shelter, he asks the neighbour for help, and they come. When they have finished, and leave for home Mr Fletcher says it well: "We must all help one another now" (97). The community opens up for Tom's transformation and begins to see him as a resource. He responds by taking responsibility, first for William, then "he volunteered for fire-watching duties, but he had also volunteered the services of Dobbs and the cart since there was news of petrol rationing" (106). Tom also starts to play the organ in the church choir, and help his neighbours when he can. The message Magorian posits here is clear: first take care of the ones you have close by, then reach out to help others. Tom's solitary life has made him bitter and lonely, but the help he gets from the community and his contribution to it, creates a fellowship that makes the character Tom develop. His contribution also stands as a visual example that his old life as lonely is over, and a new one has begun. Tom's character is strong and individualistic, but through his contribution and change, he is accepted as a part of the community. When Magorian focuses on the importance of the community, it must be seen in relation to changes in the British society in the 1970s and 80s. It was a time of unrest that made people dependant on the community, but development also created a stronger focus on the individual's place in society, which made more people remove themselves from the communities and manage on their own. Setting her story in the war, Magorian demonstrates what a community can mean to people in difficult situations, but also, through the story of William, what a community that does not care can hold and cover by not caring for each other.

Sherwood's and Magorian's novels show a concern for the education of the child. Sherwood wants to educate in religious matters and implant Evangelical culture to make the child associate with it. Magorian has a great concern for the future of the contemporary child in Britain's institutions for education, and the artistic child in particular. When they both focus

on the individual's responsibility towards society, they both show a concern for the development of society; Sherwood for the selfishness of the middle class, while Magorian reflects a contemporary concern among adults related to indifference among the younger generation. They are both aware of their position as writer and use their pen to state to the child what they think is important for the child to learn and be taught.

## Conclusion

The previous chapters have provided evidence confirming that children's literature has not altered as much as it appears to have done and that literature still presents the child and childhood in quite a similar way today as it did nearly two hundred years ago. The child is still pre-adolescent, and is placed within the family, under adult care. The texts give the adult narrator a position of influence on the child and a claim to a superior position through knowledge and language. The biblical Garden of Eden is still the place where the child can explore and develop as a person under adult care, but it is also the place where the child can learn about evil and death as a consequence of man's fall. Children's literature is seen as an important arena for informing the child about otherness and how to recognise otherness and "the Other". The purposes are to influence the child and to ensure that they adopt the same religion or ideology as the author belongs to, or as the society they exist in. Education of the child is essential in children's literature, and the focus is on educational, practical, and social skills. In addition, specific educational elements, which are important to the writers, such as Sherwood's focus on Evangelical culture and Magorian's focus on artistic skills, are given space.

To provide a better understanding of the development, or rather lack of development, of the child and childhood image in children's literature, four areas have been chosen to emphasise that Sherwood's strongly didactic literature is not much different to Magorian's contemporary correct novel when it comes to the presentation of the child and childhood. The contemporary reader of Sherwood's novel will naturally focus on and criticise her writing due to its pervasive religious style that many readers are unfamiliar with today. The differences that first strike the contemporary reader, have to be overseen in order to find the child and the childhood that are actually presented in the literature. Contemporary readers of religious

literature from the eighteenth century can easily fail in their interpretation of the child and childhood due to a lack of understanding of religious language or lack of knowledge about the nature of Evangelicals that are used in the text. In making a wider comparison which involves several elements rather than just one, the sum of the elements proves that the nature of children's literature—presentation of the child and childhood—is still the same, but the way they are presented has and will continue to change; a book cannot be judged by its cover.

A wide approach to children's literature has eliminated the narrow ones. Some of the topics, such as the change in narrative voice that has taken place over the last two centuries, could lead to a study of the effect this change has on the child as reader. The narrative voice is also related to the power balance in the texts, and a study of the didactic function of the narrator—if the contemporary way of writing is actually less didactic than it seems compared to writers such as Sherwood—could possibly shed light on some ideas related to the narrator's role in contemporary children's literature. However, a limited approach gives a limited understanding of the similarities in literature, and by focusing on fragments, the general outlines can be overlooked. The elements pointed at here show that a wider perspective reveals a general understanding of the similarities that exist in presentation of the child and childhood in children's literature that could have been overlooked in an in depth study of the texts.

Religious children's literature is by many people today often seen as second-rate literature today due to its religious didactic focus. Thus to state that Sherwood's literature represents a real family situation and a real childhood, will not be acknowledged as an acceptable attitude within this group of people because her religious writing speaks louder than her view on the child and childhood. Reading *The Fairchild Family*, it is understandable that the contemporary reader finds the story to be far from the reality that is our life today. It is

unpleasant to read that Mr Fairchild brings the children to the gibbet to teach them the consequences of hate, and that poor Miss Augusta Noble burns to death because she plays with fire, and she is not even saved before she dies. Still, from a contemporary perspective, it is easier to feel sorry for Sherwood and the Evangelicals' limited understanding of Grace in the nineteenth century, than to disown the horror and cruelties of the story. For, if it was the other way around, and Sherwood was placed in 2014, what would she say about our way of living and ideas of progress? It is difficult to imagine her praising a divorce rate that splits families and makes children live with one parent one week and the other the next week. It is hard to imagine her understanding why children sit in front of a screen playing violent computer games for entertainment. It is also difficult to see her standing in a supermarket while she is told that a large percentage of the world's population is living below the poverty line, and that we know it. The truth is, that the only thing Sherwood would recognise in the contemporary society is the Sunday service . . . and the way we love and care for our children.





## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, William has three names: William, which is the name given him by birth, Willie, which is the name his mother uses for him, and Will, which is the name given him by his friend Zach. Since his names are changing with him, it became problematic to talk about him in general terms, and a certain structure related to the use of his name would be needed as well. Therefore, in this thesis, the name William will be used to address him in the text unless the discussion refers to quotes or specific situations where one of his other names is used.



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