DOCTORAL THESIS

Writing as Self-creation: An Examination of Characters Who Write in Selection of Texts for Children post 1960

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Chapter One: Introduction

My interest in the characters who write within books was kindled when I started my MA in children’s literature course at Roehampton University in the year 2000. I realised that I encountered a number of characters portrayed in novels as being involved in the act of writing. My research for the MA dissertation ‘Writing & The Self: The act of writing as used in the work of two contemporary children’s writers’, focused on a limited number of case studies, but, in my current project, I had the intention to explore the phenomenon of these writing characters on a much bigger scale, and to try to gain some understanding about the effect of this literary pattern, including the reason for its employment in many recent texts for young readers.

Since the beginning of this project, I have been speculating that there is some influence on this literary phenomenon resulting from the emphasis on individualism and the celebration of a unique self-identity within the culture and society where the books are read. I clearly remember that immediately after I arrived in the U.K. from Japan I was very surprised when I went to a big bookshop in central London, and found the main area of the ground floor was dedicated to a section on ‘Autobiography/Biography’. Around the same time, I learned of the existence of a London art gallery devoted to portraits of people, called the National Portrait Gallery. At that time, I was even less familiar with art history than now, including the period when the artists often received commissions to paint portraits of those with status and wealth. I simply linked these two discoveries to the image of people in the U.K. who seem to be obsessed with ‘individuality’ and their ‘self-identities’. From the Japanese viewpoint, this obsession is something of a
stereotype, regarding people in the West, including the U.K. Reading texts for children published in the U.K., during my MA course, the impression I gathered is that the emphasis on the importance of individualism and achieving self-identity seems to be, on the whole, a common message. For me, the writing characters in texts for children appeared to be the embodiment of ‘role models’, who express their feelings, opinions, demands, and, ultimately, themselves, to claim their existence.

Initially, I had as my aim to conduct a comparative study regarding these writing characters in texts, comparing English children’s literature and Japanese children’s literature. I began to explore the characters who write within stories in English children’s literature, as a starting point. This is partly because I wanted to examine the literature of the place where I commenced the research, and also partly because I felt that, if there is some link between contemporary Japanese children’s literature and English children’s literature, it is in the influence that English literature has had on Japanese children’s literature. However, I soon realised, at this preliminary research stage, that the topic was spread over a wide area, and it would be difficult to establish a precise research question. Consequently, I reached the decision to focus on children’s literature in English. I thought that my background in Japan would give me a more objective perspective in this study, rather than being a disadvantage. Ideology is described by Terry Eagleton as ‘ideas and beliefs which helps to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation’ (1991:30), a quotation often cited, but in addition to this obvious kind of ideology, there is a more subtle kind of personal ideology that everybody has, consciously or unconsciously. The
latter ideology is possibly found in the texts for young readers written by authors who do not necessarily put forward the ‘interests of a ruling group or class’. I believe ideologies, in both senses, must be clearer for bystanders to recognise than for participants, who perhaps take such notions for granted. Eagleton also refers to the nature of ideology which tends to be hidden from those involved; in these terms Ideology is not in the first place a set of doctrines but rather signifies the way people live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them form a true knowledge of society as a whole (Eagleton, 15). This issue will be discussed further in Chapter Two. I also decided to limit the time span of the publication dates of the children’s literature examined to post 1960. This decision is based on the characteristics I have identified among texts with writing characters, in relation to the issues of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘self-identity’.

The subject of this research: writing characters

This thesis explores the phenomenon of writing characters in children’s literature in the English language, post 1960. The words ‘writing characters’ suggest fictional figures getting involved in some kind of writing action within the texts. These characters can be represented in more than one way. One category includes characters appearing in texts which depict them, in third-person narratives, such as Jo in Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868). Another possibility is that of characters appearing in texts which involve personal writing formats, such as diaries, journals, letters, and autobiographies. Thus, these characters are represented by their ‘own’ writings in the texts; a notable example is a journal writer, Cassandra, in
Dodie Smith’s *I Capture the Castle* (1949). The reason not to limit the choice of texts for this study to one of these categories is because some texts employ more than one category of narrative style. The ultimate purpose of this project is to explore the function of the use of the images of writing as an act, in texts for young readers, in a range of different narratives. However, the narrative styles will be examined in the relevant section.

The period selected as the subject of this research, post 1960, was determined through the creation of an annotated database of texts with writing characters (see Appendix), which indicates an increase in such texts after 1960. The nature of the characters’ writing action, in texts post 1960, also seems to be different from that in the earlier examples. In this thesis I hope to show that the earlier instances suggest that these texts tend to benefit from the literary functions generated by the characters’ writing action, such as the creation of intimacy, immediacy and reality. On the other hand, the more recent texts seem to carry an ideological implication regarding writing activity, in relation to the creation of ‘self’. The issue of self (subjectivity and identity) is one of the most significant issues in recent children’s literature. The increase in the use of the image of writing activity in the texts also suggests the ideological implication concealed in this image, and an expectation that the target audiences of these texts will come to have an understanding of this message. The issue of ideology will be discussed in the following chapter. For these reasons, this research focuses on texts post 1960, although earlier examples in the history of writing characters will be mentioned, in

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1 This was written originally in 2004. As my database indicates, the increase has slowed in the second half of this decade to date. I feel that this does not affect the central contention of this thesis.
order to present an overview of the topic of this research, and to demonstrate the
different nature of the more recent texts.

Methodology
As I have mentioned above, this research was triggered by the topic of ‘writing
characters’ in children’s literature. At a very early stage in this study, I wanted
boldly to explore the phenomenon through the whole of children’s literature,
therefore this research commenced with collecting the titles of texts which included
writing characters. The database in the Appendix shows my attempts to collect
texts including characters who write within children’s literature. Regrettably I need
to start with stating that I am aware of the limitation of its nature. In particular in the
early days the number of published stories especially written by female authors
was limited. For this reason, the database only reflectS published texts and the
literary works which would qualify my conditions of writing characters, but did not
get published inevitably do not appear in my database. My database was
compiled from the results of key word searches in several catalogues of book
collections, and search engines connected with publication. These include: The
Book Trust’s database, the catalogue of my local library (London Borough of
Wandsworth), Catalogue Engine results from the Centre for Literacy in Primary
Education collection, Book Find (database for publishing), Red Light Green (search
engine for publication, which is now part of WorldCat.org., www.worldcat.org),
Through the Looking Glass Children’s Book Review (online children’s book review

2 See Appendix.
journal, http://www.lookingglassreview.com), the Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database (online children’s literature database, http://clcd.odyssey.com and Amazon (online bookseller’s list, http://www.amazon.com and http://www.amazon.co.uk). It is difficult to know the total number of books for the young reader in these databases and search engines, since not all of them have sophisticated enough search functions to limit the research subjects to children’s fiction, and to exclude the different editions or translations of the same book. The purpose of using these databases and search engines was not to create a numerical analysis, but to discover as many writing characters as possible.

The keywords used for searching texts with writing characters included words such as: diary, diaries, letter, letter format, epistolary novel, e-mail, autobiography, Künstlerroman, embedded/imbedded text. However, not all of these terms were recognised in the above mentioned catalogues and search engines. It is necessary to take into account that these catalogues and search engines were created by people; therefore, their subjective judgements about how to describe and categorise books are not avoidable. For example in the case of Robert O’Brien’s Z for Zachariah, which will be examined in Chapter Four, I focus on the character’s act of diary keeping, since my interest is in characters who write. However, it can be described as a story of nuclear disaster or dystopia, and does not appear in a keyword search of ‘diary’. Once I had the results of the searches, I then needed to examine each text, since not all results were necessarily relevant for my study. It therefore follows that my collection of titles is not definitive, in terms of quantitative research. It is also worth mentioning that these websites can
contain inaccurate information, for example, a mistake in the title of a book is seen in *Crimea: Michael Pope, 100th Regiment, 1853-1857* instead of *Crimea: Michael Pope, 110th Regiment, 1853-1857* in http://www.lookingglassreview.com/html/crimea.html). Such inaccuracy made the creation of the database slightly less straightforward. I only accessed some of the above mentioned sources of data at the initial stage of research, due to the limits of accessibility, whereas I have regularly checked some of the search engines, in order to update the information, regarding characters who write. However, this preliminary research on writing characters has contributed to my decision to set a certain time span to focus on in this project, as stated above.

In spite of an initial ambition to obtain a view of writing characters throughout the history of children’s literature, it soon became apparent that this time span was too wide, and that, consequently, the variations of images of ‘writing as act’ in the texts would be too numerous. It was necessary to narrow down the specific topics to focus on the texts with writing characters in order to produce a manageable corpus and because of the increasing focus on self-identity. The database in the appendix shows the increase in publication of texts with writing characters. My database is made up of texts which deal with this in some way or other, so that it follows that my case study texts are fairly representative. However, I refrain from making a numerical analysis such as by what percentage writing characters increase in a certain year. This database was created to obtain a general view regarding writing characters and not to be used to lead to an absolute quantitative result. Also noteworthy is the complexity of popular series which include writing characters. Whether or not to count such popular series of writing
characters as one example of writing characters or each text of the same series as an individual piece of data within the database is controversial. In the end I chose the latter method to represent the popularity of a certain style. By collecting the titles of texts with writing characters, it became clear that more and more such texts have been appearing, particularly from the 1960s onwards, and the number seems to have been growing even faster, more recently. For this reason, one of the criteria for the primary texts for this research became to limit the time span of their year of publication to post 1960, as I indicated earlier.

After setting the focus on texts with writing characters published post 1960, several attempts were made to analyse and examine the subjects. For instance, categorising the texts according to the medium of the kind of writing the characters are involved in within the texts was tried. The focus was on whether a protagonist writes a diary, letters, stories, etc. However, this did not produce satisfying categories, as some protagonists write more than one kind of writing in texts. As criteria, the motivation of the characters for writing and the functions of writing activity depicted in texts were also examined. However, examining these points again did not create clear results. Through the examination of potential primary texts published post 1960, and several attempts at classifying them, I reached the realisation that the most interesting patterns among writing characters was, for me, characters who actively write, and whose writing action helps them to establish their self-identities. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
Once I began to focus on the writing characters whose writing activity has strong influence on their self-identities, I identified a few characteristics which have contributed to creating further subcategories among these writing characters. As will be explained in a later section, some common features appeared in the texts with similar settings, regarding characters’ age and gender. The term age here does not mean a specific age. The degree of development or maturation of the characters becomes a standard to classify characters. However, this development is often regarded as being associated with a certain age, in studies of psychology and child development. Erik Erikson (1977, Chapter Seven ‘Eight Ages of Man’) postulates eight stages in human development, and states the approximate age group for stages before reaching adulthood. J. A. Appleyard (1991) also suggests there are different stages in a child’s development, which are roughly associated with age groups, in terms of their reading experiences. These studies suggest the relevance of distinguishing characters according to their levels of development, which are approximately linked to age groups. In the end, this study examines writing characters according to three groups: pre-pubertal male and female characters; adolescent female characters, and adolescent male characters. The reason for this classification will be explained in the section of ‘Categorisation of texts: age, gender and the structure of the thesis’ in p.45-52. Similarities found in each category led me to speculate that the characteristics may have been caused
by the different ideological implications for each group. At the same time, regarding writing characters as a whole subject, I started to develop a theory which became my hypothesis, that ideological messages regarding self-identity are central to the creation of writing characters in texts for young readers. Thus, in this thesis, I intend to uncover the ideological use of the device of writing characters, who exist only in fiction, created by the authors. This research explores how the image of a character’s writing activity is employed to convey a certain type of ideology in each category. The case studies for each category are conducted in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six.

As a methodology for analysis of the texts for this study, textual analysis is the most appropriate. Textual analysis, which is also known as content analysis, is defined by Earl Babbie as, ‘the study of recorded human communications, such as books, […]’, and also signifies ‘any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages’ (Ole Holsti, 1969:14). Since I am interested in the representation of fictional characters and their writing activity presented in texts written by adults for younger readers, via the medium of writing, this type of analysis is most suitable for examination of the messages implied in children’s books as communication tools. Textual analysis is also appropriate in terms of my focus on characters’ developmental aspects represented in texts. The development of characters is seen in the characters’ self-knowledge as it develops through their writing; therefore it is significant to scrutinise the texts. The questions to be asked in the analysis include: What the writing characters go through in each story; how the experience and writing activity are related; what influence writing activity has for the characters; how these issues
are represented in the text; whether they are presented with voices that are supposed to be real. As mentioned above, the issue of self-identity is one of the key elements of the chosen primary texts. Thus, the link between the act of writing and the fictional writing characters’ sense of self is also examined. In order to trace the developmental psychology of the characters, I examine texts bearing in mind the question of how characters see themselves, and, most importantly, how they express the perception of themselves in their own words. Since textual analysis requires a significant amount of space, in the thesis it is crucial to narrow down the number of selected primary texts for scrutiny. As listed in the next section, I have therefore classified the potential primary texts including writing characters according to types of texts. This has been very helpful in producing another criterion by which to select primary texts.

A common feature found in some texts was the protagonists’ active involvement in their writing. As a rule, the texts represent the positive effect of writing activity on the protagonists for their development. One of the characteristics of children’s literature is the image of development, and this image seems to be even more emphasised in whole range of the texts with writing characters generally speaking. For this reason, primary texts were selected on the basis of whether or not they have such images. In other words, texts which feature casual writers who have not recognised the significance of their writing activity such as Louise Rennison’s *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging. Confessions of Georgia Nicolson* (1999) have not been scrutinised in depth in this study. However, in order to demonstrate the difference between these texts and those
which are the subjects of this study, a later section of this introduction, ‘The types of texts’, will list these briefly.

The description of my main subject, ‘the texts with writing characters who are actively involved with their act of writing and consequently benefit from it for the establishment of their self-identities’ is very long and unwieldy. Therefore, I propose to introduce a term to describe a certain kind of writing. Initially, I intended to coin the term ‘autologos’ to describe diverse forms of writing which represent discourses of a self, such as diary, journal, letter, autobiography, creative story, poem and so forth. Although these discourses are often represented in first person narrative, they are not necessarily in that form. I saw this term as a concise one for referring to and distinguishing between various forms of writing. Additionally, I felt the term made it clear that, whatever style they may adopt, the characters’ writings are used to reveal aspects and influences of the writing persona, and, in that sense, they are comprised equally of discourses (logos) and the self (auto). However, I re-examined the term and to rename it ‘autologous writing’ following the English linguistic pattern, instead of simply combining two Greek words. I then discovered that the word ‘autologous’ already exists in the Oxford English Dictionary, but with a somewhat different sense. According to the OED it signifies ‘derived from the same organism’ in a biological sense. I also came across an instance in a recent medical article in The Sunday Times Magazine, where it was rephrased as ‘containing patient’s own DNA’ (Cornwell, 2006:28). However, in the sense that the characters’ writing activities are represented as helping the creation of self-identities, to call their writing ‘autologous’ seems to be suitable. I would claim that my usage in a literary sense is in fact analogous to the established
biological usage. When it comes to introducing a term into a different discipline, it is similar to Bakhtin’s use of ‘chronotope’ in a literary sense, which will be referred to later in this study. Chronotope was initially used in the realm of mathematics, and was introduced in Einstein’s Theory of Relativity (Bakhtin, 1981:84). Texts which include writing characters demonstrate that the characters’ written words represent the characters themselves. In other words, characters’ words are a part of them, thus their words create themselves. This image of their words/writing/themselves is indeed similar to the way in which DNA is/creates/represents its owner. Although ‘Autologous’ writing is not limited to writing where there is a search for identity, it appears to be especially common in such texts. Accordingly, this study at least attempts to incorporate this concept of ‘autologous writing’ in the examination of texts with writing characters. Questions as to whether this term works or not, and whether or not the concept identified by this term could be applied to all of the writings of writing characters, will be considered in the Conclusion to this study.

**Writing characters in the narratological sense and in relation to the history of the novel and narrative**

So far, the topic of this project has been described in two terms: 1) writing characters appearing in texts which employ third person narrative depicting characters; and 2) writing characters appearing in texts which apply personal writing formats. These two different kinds of texts have distinctive characteristics, in terms of narratology. It is useful to introduce narratological terminology as a
means of approaching this topic. It also provides an explanation as to why it is relevant to include both of these kinds of text in this project.

The most fundamental issues in the realms of narrative are often associated with the view regarding speech of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato in Book Three of the Republic (2003:85-95). Plato considered that stories are conveyed in two ways, either by ‘mimesis’, or ‘diegesis’. Mimesis signifies an imitation of an action by performance including dialogue, in particular an act in drama, since drama was the major art form at that time. Diegesis is the representation of an action by telling, that is to say, by a poet’s words. Generally speaking, these two kinds of representation are regarded as being the equivalent of the ‘direct’ rendering of speech and ‘indirect’ rendering of speech (Rimmon-Kenan, 2004:107). Following these concepts, texts which employ diaries, letters, journals and autobiography etc., are represented by the words/voices of the fictional writers, and, therefore, become mimetic. The texts which deliver stories by employing descriptions are categorised as diegetic.

Rimmon-Kenan points out the effect of changing narrative levels in fiction, stating that it blurs the boundaries between one level of narrative and another, which simultaneously implies the existence of a boundary between the literary world and the reality where readers belong (2004:95). This technique ultimately

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3 Plato’s student, Aristotle, who deals with drama, considers ‘mimesis’ as ‘an imitation of an action’ (summarised in Rimmon-Kenan, 2004:109). This view simultaneously implies that ‘mimesis’ has a wider sense than it has in Plato’s view; therefore, ‘diegesis’ becomes merely one type of ‘mimesis’. On the other hand, Gérard Genette also blurs the polarisation of mimesis and diegesis. He considers that representation is also a kind of imitation, and reaches the conclusion that ‘mimesis is diegesis’ (1982:133). Although Genette keeps this same sentence in his later work Narrative Discourse Revisited, he claims that the pair [diegesis/mimesis] is unbalanced unless the definition of mimesis is limited to quotation, as in the writing of Plato (1988:43). (Note: the spelling of diegesis/mimesis in Narrative Discourse Revisited is diégésis/mimésis but I will stick with the earlier spelling, as the earlier versions are still adopted by other scholars in texts written in English.)
leads readers to interrogate their own existence. This characteristic is often noted in metafiction, and the use of these characteristics is seen in the realm of children’s literature. As Maria Nikolajeva suggests, texts with metafictional features interrogate our own existence and reflect the chaos and ambivalence of our lives and the loss of absolute values and truths (1996:206). Nikolajeva further argues that the use of these metafictional features in children’s literature is ‘most daring and disturbing’, yet, ‘the most radical step away from convention and didacticism’ (206). The issue of metafiction in texts with writing characters will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Six.

Returning to the fundamental concepts of mimesis and diegesis, I find that contemporary literary critics also discuss them by using other terms such as, ‘showing’ and ‘telling, or ‘summary’ and ‘scene’ (David Lodge, 1992:121-124). 4 Rimmon-Kenan indicates the vicissitudes in the evaluations of these two concepts over time, such as Percy Lubbock’s preference for ‘showing’ (1921) and Wayne Booth’s defence of the ‘telling’ style in fiction (1961). However, Rimmon-Kenan concludes that these modes should not be judged on the basis that one is better or worse than the other in a theoretical and descriptive study of narrative fiction, since each has its own advantages and disadvantages (2004:108). This view contributes to my decision regarding the choice of primary texts in this project. I did not concentrate on texts with the same narrative style. 5 Although the literary styles of the texts, such as the kinds of narration, formats and structures will be

4 In his Narrative Discourse Revisited Genette objects to the terms arguing that, ‘telling/showing’ is not equivalent to diegesis/mimesis, since “showing” can hardly be applied legitimately to a quotation of words’ (1990:45).
5 I am aware that some scholars view ‘showing’ or ‘telling’ as more suitable than the other terms, in the realm of children’s literature, as referred to later in this chapter.
examined in the relevant sections in this thesis, the style of the texts is not the only element taken into account in the examination of the primary texts. The ultimate goal of this project is to try to understand the implication of the image of writing as action, in texts for young readers. This study does not focus on a specific narrative style, as it is important to have an overall view regarding images of writing activity in texts, irrespective of the styles of their representation. Therefore, this research deals with texts regarding the character’s writing action, both in mimetic and diegetic narratives, in other words, first-person narrative and third-person narrative. Furthermore, in some texts, it is not easy to judge which style is used, as in some texts the different kinds of narrative style overlap. On the other hand, the issue of variations in narrative style can be interpreted as an expected phenomenon, in terms of the history of the novel, or transitions in narrative over a period of time.

In the realm of children’s literature there are many characters involved in some kind of writing within the books in which they feature. These characters include both of the categories discussed in the previous section: writing characters appearing in texts which mainly depict them less subjectively in third-person narration, and writing characters appearing in their personal written accounts. This is not a unique phenomenon in children’s literature, but is also frequently to be observed in mainstream English Literature. Early examples of this phenomenon, in particular, belong to the second of these categories. An example is Daniel Defoe’s *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York Mariner: who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on*

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6 In particular, the use of first-person narrative in texts for young readers will be examined in Chapter Three.
the coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pirates. Written by Himself (1719), which includes a journal presented as being written by the protagonist Robinson Crusoe to record incidents in his adventurous life, as the title suggests. Defoe also produced a fictional journal, A Journal of the Plague Year (1724), while Samuel Richardson wrote several epistolary novels, notably Pamela (1740-1), and Clarissa (1747-8). The use of the personal writing format is significant in terms of the development of the novel as a genre. The definition of novel is varied and complex; here I understand novel to mean a piece of prose fiction of some length and written in a realistic style and mode. This view corresponds to the view generally taken by ‘a critic who regards the novel as essentially or predominantly a realist form, which emerged in association with the decline of romance and the rise of the middle class’ (ed. Roberts, 1994:7). Wallace Martin (1986) who regards the study of the novel as interchangeable with that of narrative, also lists the several definitions of the term novel before he focuses on the topic of narrative. Definitions referred to by Wallace suggest how the novel has been evaluated and how its history is viewed. Wallace introduces various interpretations of the novel from different approaches and standpoints: the ‘combination of plot, character, setting and theme’ by Mark Schorer (16); having a ‘point of view’ (16); as ‘a “realistic”

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7 According to H. Porter Abbott, Crusoe’s journal only functions to insert the retrospective view in order to render the text as ‘the imitation of a Puritan spiritual autobiography’ (89). The issue of the function of journal style is examined in the section on ‘Personal writing format/ writing character, in relation to the history of the novel and narrative’.

8 However as Roberts suggests, there is another way of interpreting the term as literary fiction which is ‘less tied to psychological realism and embracing the grotesque, the fantastic and the playful’, such as texts of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.
genre' by the post second World War critics (18); as having 'originated in the eighteenth century [...] when the society began to emphasize the autonomy of the individual' (19)⁹; and as 'a depiction of social reality’ so that its appearance suggests ‘the emergence of the middle class’ (19). ¹⁰ These interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe is often thought of as one of the first examples of the novel form. ¹¹ Richardson also used this mode, employing personal writing formats, to insert psychological aspects in the above-mentioned two novels. His other epistolary novel, The History of Sir Charles Grandison (1773-4), also shows how letters can create ‘realism’, as well as having many functions, such as organising the settings regarding time and space in a story. ¹² Richardson’s texts were generally directed towards young readers, particularly teenage girls, in a didactic attempt to educate them in manners and behaviour. ¹³ The letter format is also seen in a gothic novel, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (1818), as a part of the triple layers of its main framework. This is

⁹ Arnold Weinstein (1981) also argues that the development of literature moves from mimetic to generative fiction, from the power of gesture to that of word, by examining the interaction between self and world. He suggests phases of, firstly, marginal self (the picaresque); secondly, recognised self (literary works by Defoe, Fielding); thirdly, self growing defiant and trying to impose its will on society and the other (literary works by Richardson, Goethe); fourthly, self as prophetic inward turn (literary works by Rousseau).

¹⁰ Wallace also refers to several critics, who pay attention to the theories of narratives such as Frye, (novels as development from other forms. Novel as subclass of fictions in prose); Scholes and Kellogg (novel as a mixture of historical, mimetic, romantic, and didactic elements); Girard (choosing role modes in literature: freedom of choice is an expression of individuality, but it also means loss of self-identity); Robert (Psychoanalytic- novel as representation of development of human being: Family Romance), and finally Bakhtin (novel as heteroglossia) (1986:37-54).

¹¹ Martin Wallace suggests that, normally, English and American critics hold this view, whilst Continental critics regard Cervantes’ Don Quixote (1605) which was inspired by an eleventh-century military and political leader, El Cid, as the first novel (1986:42).

¹² Harris, 1986:xvi S. Richardson, Sir Charles Grandison with an introduction by Jocelyn Harris, OUP

¹³ Richardson’s preface to his Clarissa shows his instructions for parents, not to exercise excessive control over their daughters, regarding marriage, and for girls, not to prefer ‘a man of pleasure to a man of probity’ (1985: 36)
formed by a story of the monster/creature itself; a story of Dr. Frankenstein, the creator; and a story of the sea captain Robert Walton, whom Dr. Frankenstein encounters. The first-layer (outer) frame of Shelley’s fiction, Walton’s letters to his sister, adopts the style of the popular eighteenth-century format, the adventure of a sea captain. Many adventure stories also adopted a similar style as a technique to create realism and add suspense.

As briefly stated above, for a long period, mainstream literature has been employing personal writing formats as a literary technique, in order to represent the psychological aspects of characters, as well as to manipulate the setting and the flow of the story. The fictional written accounts, which include the ‘diary novel’ and fictional autobiography and epistolary novel, normally imply the existence of the writers, and simultaneously represent the reflective nature of human beings. However, the trend of narrative style has not been continuously in favour of first person narrative which includes writing accounts of fictional personae in texts. Following Elizabeth Ermarth’s suggestion that the realism of the nineteenth-century novel results from its recognition that no single perspective is adequate for the representation of reality (Ermarth, 1983), Wallace speculates that this may be the reason for the employment of omniscient narrators by the novelists in that period (Wallace, 1986: 79). Wallace points out that Jane Austen changed her style from first-person narrative to third person narrative. Yet, in many detailed studies regarding narrative, Austen’s style, in which the voice of characters is embedded in

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14 It is interesting that the later Gothic masterpiece, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), also uses voices, by employing a series of first-person narratives including letters and diaries. It is thus possible to create suspense in the story.

15 The term is defined by H.P. Abbott as ‘fiction cast in diary format’ and includes ‘diary novel’ (1984:15)
the voice of the narrator without quotation marks, is often called ‘free indirect discourse’, and regarded as located between indirect (often third-person narrative) and direct discourse (often first-person narrative), to show several voices by embedding them in one narrative. The Brontës often employed first-person narratives, which are sometimes in personal writing formats, as the use of letters seen in Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë and in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Brontë. George Eliot and Charles Dickens, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, also used first-person narrative in some of their writings, yet employed more third-person narratives. There is a relative sparsity of such an approach by early twentieth-century writers. In early twentieth century Henry James employed first-person narratives as a main narrative style in The Turn of the Screw (all in first-person narrative) and ‘The Aspern Papers’, and ‘Brooksmith’ and partly in The Ambassadors and The American. Virginia Woolf used literary techniques which blur the distinction between first-person narrative and third-person narrative, such as stream of consciousness, in various works. Third person narrative was more popular in particular after the 1930s. Wallace speculates that the reason may be that third-person narrative offers an easy way of creating a screenplay for film, which would promise more profit (1986:130) This seems to be a logical outcome, as Stanzel has claimed that when films are based on novels, those made from

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16 See Shlomit Rimmon-Kenan’s discussion on Free Indirect Discourse in her Narrative Fiction 111-117. Rimmon-Kenan gives the example of Free Indirect Discourse as ‘he loved her’ when Direct Discourse is ‘he said “I love her”’ or ‘he said “I loved her”’, and in Indirect Discourse ‘He said that he loved her’ (italicised as original, 2003:113)
third-person narratives are closer to the original literary works than fiction employing first-person narrative (1984:86).  

Following Wallace’s theory regarding the increase in the use of third-person narrative, it can also be considered as the result of the influence of other art forms and media on literature. Recent texts also show some influence from the video game, which often includes role-play, with unlimited chances of trying out other lives. The Internet also expands the links and connections between society and individuals. Contemporary texts, notably those described as post-modern, some of which have metafictional characteristics, have more complex narrative features. It can be argued that they display the effect of the differences in people’s lives, as well as art-forms and the media, all of which are strongly influenced by technology. Conversely, this phenomenon can be interpreted as representing the nature of people’s lives and their existences becoming more fluid, rather than being fixed and stable.

In addition to the author’s intentions of commercial success, Wallace suggests narratological grounds for the use of third-person narrative. Although first-person narratives were useful in terms of creating immediacy, tension and points of view, they can be classified into either ‘authorial narration, which could create a varied fictional world lacking in authenticity’ or ‘the first-person form that claimed to be true’ (Wallace, 1986:132). The gap between two extreme cases of first-person narrative, one lacking authority, and the other claiming to be true, was solved by a third-person perspective. Instead of narrating the ‘summary’ of the

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17 However, according to some scholars, the choices of the narrative styles in children’s literature seem to have further implications, so I will explore this issue in the realm of children’s literature later.
story, which simultaneously implies the existence of a narrator, the third-person perspective enables presentation of ‘scene’, and it also makes it possible to project the story from only one point of view. This ‘third-person limited point of view without self-reference by the author’ is rephrased by Stanzel as ‘figural narration’ (1984:5), referred to by Wallace (Wallace, 1986:134), the opposite of ‘authorial narration’. This figural narration, one type of third-person narrative, became characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, first-person narrative was also more frequently employed, in the form of ‘interior monologues’ and ‘stream-of-consciousness techniques’, in the twentieth century. These are regarded as characteristic of Modernist literature.

As the brief summary thus far implies, it is not possible to give a straightforward chronological description regarding the vicissitudes of narrative styles in mainstream literature, and thus no simple summary can be made regarding the representation in narratives of characters who write. But there have been instances of writing characters throughout the history of the novel. The following section focuses on the topic of writing characters in the realm of children’s literature.

**Writing characters in children’s literature**

When it comes to the topic of this research, ‘writing characters’, it remains to be determined whether there are any characteristics which are particular to the history of such characters in the realm of children’s literature. I have speculated generally speaking that the earliest genre in which many writing characters appeared in children’s literature might be adventure stories, in relation to the above-mentioned
Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, which famously includes writing in the form of a journal, and was also popular with young readers. First person narrative is a very effective means of conveying exciting drama directly and immediately, through the voice of witnesses experiencing such incidents. Adventure stories such as R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral island* (1858) and Harold Avey’s *Highway Pirates* (1904) and *In Days of Danger* (1909), Gordon Stables’s *Out in the Silver West* (1908) employ first person narratives. They are often memoirs of older narrators looking back. The school story was also a popular genre in addition to adventure stories. As seen in James Brinsley-Richards’s *Seven Years at Eton* (1883), this genre also sometimes employed memoir-style first-person narrative. Both genres, adventure stories and school fiction, which were very popular among boy readers, can be seen to have been influenced by the contemporary expansion of the British Empire (Bristow, 1991).

However, such first-hand accounts, in fact, generally turn out in the book to be the words of adults who look back at the past. *The Coral Island* starts with the grown-up protagonist’s reminiscence reflecting his life as: ‘Roving has always been and still is, my ruling passion, the joy of my heart, the very sunshine of my existence. In childhood, in boyhood, and in man’s estate, I have been a rover; […]’ (1967:1) Even when the writers of these personal accounts, in other words the narrators, are not fully-grown adults, but relatively young, they still tend to be aged between sixteen and the early twenties, so that they are usually mature enough to convey ‘a comfortable adult perspective’ (Wall, 1991:69). Australian critic Barbara Wall points this out as a difference between the first-person narratives, in these adventure stories, and those in texts written in the twentieth century. The attempt
to create child personae with their own perspectives is more common in the twentieth century. Fictional writing figures continuously appear throughout the history of children’s literature; however the number of examples is relatively small, until the next rise in the use of this format appears, in the 1960s. ¹⁸

Fictional letters written by adults to the child reader are more common than letters written by fictional child characters in the early days of children’s literature. An example of another writing format, autobiography, is seen in Juliana Ewing’s *Six to Sixteen* (1876). This text takes the form of an ‘autobiography’ of a young girl, yet the voice clearly suggests the adult narrator who is looking back to her past. This is similar to the above-mentioned adventure stories, taking the style of adults’ memoirs. Another early example of a female writing character is Jo, in Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868), who is depicted in a third-person narrative as a character who writes plays and stories within the text. Other female writing characters emerge after those mentioned above, including Judy in Jean Webster’s epistolary novel, *Daddy Long Legs* (1912), Emily in L.M. Montgomery’s *Emily of New Moon* (1923) and Cassandra in Dodie Smith’s *I capture the Castle* (1949). These characters reveal younger voices, than the reminiscing adult selves often seen in the above-mentioned adventure stories. ¹⁹ Not only are these writing characters female, but the authors of these texts are also female. These children’s family stories are often considered to be related to the domestic novel, and female

¹⁸ As the database of primary texts in the Appendix shows, there are not many texts containing writing characters or texts in personal writing formats until the 1960s.
¹⁹ Some of these texts with fictional writing characters are categorised as ‘young adult fiction’ by critics, in spite of being written in different periods of time and different places. The definition of ‘young adult fiction’ is diverse, and it is not directly related to this project. However, young adult fiction as a genre will be examined further in the section on the classification of the primary texts in this project, in terms of content, the features of characters, and the expected readership of the texts, in order to establish the categorisation of the texts.
authors in both areas are often analysed in the light of feminist theory in terms of their vocation as writers; the characters themselves are frequently examined as semi-autobiographical figures or alter-egos (Gilbert and Gubar: 1984). The phenomenon of these female authors’ creation of female writing characters might be dismissed as merely coincidental. However, the use of similar story patterns of female writing figures in more recent texts may imply the significance of their proto-feminist message, and, furthermore, it may confirm that this phenomenon is related to the feminist view; this issue will be examined thoroughly in Chapter Four.

A significant growth in the use of fictional personal writing formats appears to start in the 1960s where this mode seems to be used for the same reason as in the adventure stories of the past, in order to create realism. However, the expressed contents are very different in the two cases. The adventure stories require this format, in order to develop the dramatic plot, as well as unusual and exotic details, in a realistic manner, whilst texts employing personal writing formats in the 1960s, many of which were often called ‘problem novels’, employ the format to illustrate the deep psychological aspects of characters who suffer from various social problems. In his discussion of the connection between the novel and realism, Wallace suggests the difficulty in defining ‘realism’ (1986: Chapter 3). He indicates that it may be inappropriate to look in literary convention. Instead he suggests that it may be better to seek the definition in social structures and discourse. Here Wallace (1986:79) concurs with both Lodge and Ermarth. Lodge defines realism as ‘the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to description of similar experience in non-literary texts of the same culture’ (1977:25, italics original). Ermarth claims the necessity of
consensus for the creation of reality (1983). Following from Ermarth’s point, it is significant to remember that realism is also the creation of an illusion, in particular, in the classic realist novel, such as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Real life is far more fragmentary, chaotic and inconclusive than the content of a novel. For example, in the case of texts in diary format, although there are some texts which are realistically composed of random diary entries in terms of the length of writings and the time when they were written, many texts show artificially systematic diary entries by characters, to produce a compelling plot in fiction.

Texts in realistic mode adopt many formats. As will be discussed further in Chapter Three, the characteristic of being plot-driven, often with a linear storyline, is frequently seen in texts for young readers with the pattern of a Bildungsroman. The Bildungsroman, which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘A novel that has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual education of one person (a type of novel traditional in German literature)’, is a term first applied to novels for adult readers in Germany in the eighteenth century, to show how a character finds his or her way in life. However, a similar pattern also appears in texts for young readers, and these texts are described as Bildungsromane by some critics.\(^{20}\) A subcategory of the Bildungsroman is the Künstlerromane, literally ‘artists’ novel’, which features the development of an artist, writer or musician. The young age setting of the protagonists of the primary texts, which are *Harriet the Spy, Dear Mr. Henshaw, The Story of Tracy Beaker* and *Love My Dog*, would be categorised as specifically Künstlerroman, since the focus is on the development of artists, may

\(^{20}\) More specific use of this term is referred to in Chapter Three. Regarding the term ‘Bildungsroman’ I will use the original German spelling throughout this thesis.
suggest that a linear and organised story line is regarded as suitable for young and immature readers.

Perhaps diary entries are successful in representing the vicissitudes of ‘real’ life because of their fragmentary nature. In that sense, the diary style in more recent publications can be interpreted as signalling the acceptance of ‘self’ as less coherent and united, according to the postmodern view, as discussed in Chapter Six.

However, the concept of ‘realism’ in the realm of Children’s literature seems to be mainly content-oriented rather than oriented towards literary form. One of the main subgenres of the ‘realistic novel’ is the ‘problem novel’, which clearly shows its subject matter as the main feature (Cart, 1996:36-39). In that sense, the use of personal writing formats, diaries, journals, letters, autobiographies, etc. may not be the most important element in rendering the texts realistic. However, these formats have the above-mentioned literary functions, to give first-hand accounts directly and often promptly, which are often considered as making the texts ‘realistic’, and, as we have seen here, employed in the above-mentioned nineteenth-century adventure stories. The personal writing formats enable presentation of voice/word from the specific points of view of the characters, which often creates immediacy and intimacy between the texts and the readers of the texts.

Although early examples of texts post 1960 which employ personal writing formats or writing characters tend to deal with serious social problems and reveal the agony of youth, their formats seem to be applicable to various genres. Many humorous and comical fictional diaries and journals have been published. Due to
the popularity of the style, the sequences were often written and made into series. As we see from the column ‘series’ in the Appendix there are a number of series which employ the format of diary, letters and e-mails, in various genres, including humour, romance, mystery, horror story, etc. The most well known diary of an adolescent boy will undoubtedly be The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 14 3/4 (1982) by Sue Townsend. Regarding the diary series of young girls’ romances, such as Louise Rennison’s Georgia Nicolson series,\(^{21}\) there is a speculation that the success of Helen Fielding’s Bridget Jones’ Diary (1997), published for adult audiences, had some influence on them.\(^{22}\) However, the use of the diary format in the realm of children’s literature had often been seen before the publication of Fielding’s fiction, as stated above. The popularity of the use of these personal writing formats is not merely a result of the influence of a trend in mainstream literature. The number may have grown, in the short term, because of the success of Bridget Jones’ Diary, but this phenomenon can be argued as simply the convenience of using the already existing formats which had gained more credit than before, rather than children’s literature copying adult literature.

Historical fiction is another genre which has recently employed diary formats. Regarding the answer to the question as to why the diary format is used

\(^{21}\) The series includes Angus, Full-frontal Snogging (2000), Dancing in My Nuddy Pants (2002), and That's When It Fell Off in My Hand (2004), ...Then He Ate My Boy Entrancers (2005). Although critics have compared these texts by Rennison to the novels by Fielding, Rennison denies the influence of Bridget Jones’s Diary on her books as according to her she read her novel after she wrote her first book. (Andronik, 2002).

\(^{22}\) It is not my intention to conduct a study of recent diary fiction in the realm of mainstream literature. However, a general view of the trend of fiction for adults is useful for the study of similar texts in the realm of children’s literature. The amount of fiction written in English which employs a diary format for adults has dramatically increased since 1997, when Fielding’s successful title was published. This conclusion is derived as a result of an approximate search of the publication database, BookData, regarding texts which fit into the category ‘modern fiction’ and ‘historical fiction’ and also a general keyword ‘diary’.
in this genre, the influence of adult literature would not be a sufficient explanation. The exploration of the use of personal writing formats in historical fiction, or fiction set in the past, will reveal further implications for the use of writing formats, such as educational and didactic intentions and ideologies.  

The increase in texts with personal writing formats since the 1960s is one of the reasons for setting the period of the publication dates for the selection of primary texts. As will be examined later, the employment of these formats in texts for young readers suggests the effectiveness of the formats within the texts, and the popular elements of these formats, for young readers. In addition to the above reasons, I consider that the image of characters who write in children’s literature seems to carry some implication in relation to the characters’ development of self-identity, which I examine in Chapters Three, Four and Five. The topic of self, identity and subjectivity, in tandem with the examination of the act of writing and the establishment of self, identity and subjectivity will be explored in the next chapter of this thesis.

**First-person narrative in children’s literature**

Although I have mentioned earlier that in this study I will deal both with primary texts employing first-person narrative and those using third-person narrative, this section further explores first-person narrative in children’s literature. This is because it is the predominant narrative mode in my case studies, and also most of the texts with writing characters include first-person narratives, as in the case of diary fiction and epistolary novels. To clarify I am not claiming that all ‘writing

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23  This will be discussed in both Chapters Four and Six
character’ is illustrated in first person narrative nor, on the contrary, that all first-person narrative is about ‘writing/voicing character with self-recognition’.

For the interpretation of certain types of narration, Barbara Wall’s examination (1991) of narration in terms of the issue of adult readers and child readers of children’s fiction is significant. Wall examines the voices of narrators included in various texts from the Victorian era to the twentieth century. She introduces terms with regard to the anticipated addressee of the texts as follows (1991, 9-10, 13-36),

- ‘double address’- A text with ‘double address’ has both child and adult readership and addresses them differently according to readership. It often has different qualities appealing to both of these audiences separately. The text with this narrative style addresses the child audience overtly in a ‘writing down’ manner, while it simultaneously is aware of an adult audience and either overtly or covertly addresses them equally, as addresser and addressee are equal. This style was common in texts written in the Victorian era.

- ‘single address’- A text with ‘single address’ has a single level of readership, the child reader, and the text ‘writes to’ a child audience, rather than ‘writes down’. This style has emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, and Wall discusses this narrative mode as at the publication date of her book, 1991.

- ‘dual address’- A text with ‘dual address’ is the fusion of the above-mentioned

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24 Wall’s study is based on her conviction that ‘adults […] speak differently in fiction when they are aware that they are addressing children’ (1991:2). However, there are various views about how to define ‘children’s literature’ as seen in Lesnik-Oberstein’s article ‘Essentials: What is children’s Literature? What is Childhood?’ in Hunt (1999).
two kinds. For child audience, the narrator either uses a ‘tone of seriousness’ (1991:35) characteristic of addressing an adult audience, or the text includes interests which are shared by both child and adult audiences. Both audiences respond to the same aspects in this style. The difference between this style and ‘double address’ is in the treatment of the child audience. This style may be found at any time, yet it is very rare.

Following these categories of narration, texts which take the form of a child character’s first person narrative, as often seen in Jacqueline Wilson’s texts, are often seen to be direct ‘single address’. However, this raises the question as to whether Wilson only manages not to ‘write down’, which is a feature of a ‘double address’ text, simply because she has employed a child’s voice in her texts. Ultimately, her first-person narratives carry the adult author’s messages. Wilson comments, regarding her choice of first-person-narrative in her books, that:

If I’m writing about a ten-year-old who is so miserable at home that she decides to run away, then, as an adult, I have to make it subtly plain that this is not a good idea, but because I’m speaking through the child it doesn’t, I hope, sound too doctrinaire. If I were to write in the third person, then the adult view would always be leaking in.

(quoted in Dickson, 2005)

This indicates that the use of the child’s voice in her texts functions as a disguise, in order to be more friendly and familiar to the child reader. Wilson’s claim that the third person narrative will always leak in the adult view paradoxically suggests that first-person narrative does not do this, or rather that it conceals the adult’s messages. My interpretation of the use of first-person narrative in Wilson’s fiction for young readers is similar to Anne Scott Macleod’s observation about fiction for adolescent readers,
Surely it is significant that the first-person narrative, which fuses the voices of author and protagonist, is all but universal in recent teen fiction. [...] First person was rare in earlier children's books; then adults stayed firmly in their adult place, protecting, instructing, assuming the superiority of adult knowledge and judgement, and translating that sense of superiority into an unargued acceptance of responsibility for children. Even if it is no more than a literary device, the use of the first-person voice has effectively diluted the separate adult presence one could always detect in children’s books of the past.

(1985:113)

Following this, the first-person narrative can be used negatively to give young readers an illusion of peer view, which is in fact, the adult author’s message.

Other scholars of children’s literature, besides Wall, have paid attention to the difference between first-person narrative and third-person narrative. Andrea Schwenke Wyile analyses the kinds of narration into further categories: first-person, second-person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient, and, in particular, expands first-person narration into three categories of immediate-engaging-first-person narration, distant-engaging-first-person narration, and distancing narration (1999:185). The three variations in first-person narrative are distinguished depending on the relation between the narrating agent and character/focalizer [sic] (189). Fiction in diary formats and epistolary novels, which are relevant to this study, are typically categorised as either ‘immediate-engaging narrative’ or ‘distant-engaging narrative’ depending on the time gap between when things happened and when they are narrated. Immediate-engaging narrative takes place when the event is narrated soon after it has taken place, whereas distant-engaging narrative does so when a much longer time has passed since a time event happened. In her more recent article, Schwenke Wyile defines the former, as happening ‘within one year’ (2003:123), and the latter as doing so after a longer time. So a typical
example of the former is seen in diary fiction or the epistolary novel. These are, generally speaking, the only genres in the realm of mainstream literature which also have immediate-engaging-narration, while this kind of narration is fairly common in children’s literature (1999:197). In immediate-engaging narration the implied author’s voice is either absent or blended with the narrator-focaliser’s voice. Therefore, this type of narration tends to lack other voices and information, and, consequently, has a problem in conveying reliability (187).

The same narrative technique contains another problematic aspect in addition to the issue of reliability. As Rimmon-Kenan suggests, in narratives narrated by a narrator who is also a focaliser, the ‘ideology of the narrator-focaliser is usually taken as authoritative, and all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this “higher” position’ (82). Rimmon-Kenan subsequently points out that this is opposed to Bakhtin’s concept of ‘polyphony’ in the novel (83). ‘Polyphony’ is literally ‘many-voiced’. Novels are typically polyphonic and represent the interaction of various voices. In a more recent article, Schwenke Wyile, cited above, not only suggests the terms, but she also develops the judgement of narrative styles. She states that immediate-engaging narration should not be overused in texts for young readers, because of its very limiting nature (2003). Her view is similar to the reaction of Mike Cadden (2000), concerning the use of first-person narrative in YA fiction, as its limited perspective does not reveal the existence of irony, which young adult readers need to recognise by realising there is more than one viewpoint, as part of their maturation. These comments point out the issues not to be overlooked in this study of texts with writing characters, as many primary texts employ similar narrative techniques.
Readers of texts

The manner of communication between addresser and addressee proposed by Seymour Chatman in his *Story and Discourse* (1978:159) and indicated in the diagram below, provides a useful tool for the examination of fiction, which is also employed by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2004:87). Wall also uses the revised version, which removes the brackets from ‘narrator’ and ‘narratee’ in her book (1991:4) as in the diagram below.

![Diagram of Reader and Text Relationship](image)

Wall has reached the conclusion that all of these categories exist in children’s fiction, although she focuses on the narrator-narratee relationship, rather than on the implied author-implied reader relationship. Here, I understand these terms as follows: Real author is interpreted as the person who wrote the words in a text, and similarly Real reader is the one who holds the book and reads it. Implied author and Implied reader, using Wall’s summaries, may be defined respectively as, ‘silent instructor, but also, the all-informing authorial presence, the “face behind the page”’ and ‘the reader for whom the real and implied authors have, consciously and unconsciously, shaped the story, who is always there, and whose presence and qualities [...] can be deduced from the totality of the book’ (1991:6-7). I consider that her study is valid in terms of examining the mode of address in children’s fiction. The categories of implied author and implied reader are treated as less significant by Wall. This is because the narrator is the only element which,
in fact, ‘speaks’, and the narratee is the only participant, with whom the narrator communicates within the communication system from ‘real author’ to ‘real reader’ in the above figure 2. 25

In my research, primary texts, which I have chosen on the basis of having protagonists who write, share similarities such as the style of the narration. The texts examined in this study often include young writers, who are simultaneously the narrators of the texts. In the examination of such texts, it is essential to consider the existence of the implied author and also the accompanying implied reader, in order to understand the reason for the adult authors’ choices to employ ‘child writers’ in their fiction. Similar to the above-mentioned Wall, who points out the authority in the implied author, Rimmon-Kennan comments on the role of implied reader, in particular in relation to the insertion of narrations including personal writings,

Even when a narrative text presents passages of pure dialogue, manuscript found in a bottle, or forgotten letters and diaries, there is in addition to the speakers or writers of this discourse a ‘higher’ narratorial authority responsible for ‘quoting’ the dialogue of ‘transcribing’ the written records. 

(2004:89)

In that sense, those texts which appear to contain child characters’ voices are deliberately organised by an implied author. In the case of the addressee, it is even more complex in such texts. Some texts have narratees within texts who read personal writing such as diaries and letters, and some do not, yet these personal writings in texts are ultimately intended to be read in context by the implied reader, who should have an understanding of the whole texts. It is important to take into consideration these issues, in examination of texts with

25 Wall does not think ‘the implied reader must be depersonalised’ (1991:6).
In reader-response criticism, the terms ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’ are understood as the construction existing in the process of communication of a text, between the author of a text and the reader of it. Since neither implied author nor implied reader have substantial existence but need to be conceptualised by those who read and examine the texts, the interpretation of them has been varied. Overall, reader-response criticism gives an impression of being more liberal and less authoritative than the traditional view regarding children’s literature, since it considers the involvement of the readers as being as important for the reading process as the text itself. An example regarding the concept of ‘implied reader’ is to be found in Aidan Chambers’ article ‘The Reader in the Book’, which is often considered to be a pioneering study in the criticism of children’s literature (Hunt, 1991, Benton, 1996). Chambers was influenced by the work of Iser (1978) and developed the idea that ‘the reader’ realises and appreciates ‘the book’s true meaning’ (Chambers, 1985:56). However, John Stephens (1992) interprets reader response by arguing that both the terms, ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’ carry ideological implications, pointing out that Chambers gives priority to the text, whilst what Chambers calls ‘the implied reader’ merely means ‘the ideal reader’ who reads the text according to the author’s ideological intention. It is noteworthy that Chambers is himself a novelist and it is possible to speculate that he may wish for an ideal reader to appreciate his works.

A plural possibility of reading texts is also related to the role of reader. As Sutherland states, Umberto Eco (1981) develops this issue of multiple reading,
and, in particular, its ideological aspects which are contained in any text, either overtly or covertly. Eco mentions readers’ three options for the treatment of ideological implications in texts. Firstly ‘they can assume the ideology of the text and subsume it into their own reading, secondly, ‘they can miss or ignore the ideology of the text and import their own, thus producing “aberrant” readings’, and thirdly, ‘they can question the text in order to reveal the underlying ideology’ (summarised by Sutherland in ed. Hunt, 1999:49). These views support the concept of readers’ independence and autonomy regarding texts written for them. However, whether this view is equally applicable to the child reader’s case depends on the interpretations regarding what is a ‘child’ and what is ‘children’s literature’. This question is relevant to all case studies in this research, and thus I will return to it in my Conclusion.

Types of texts

As I have suggested in the narratological section, texts which include writing characters can appear in various categories. There is no intention of limiting this study to only one type of narrative style. However, it is important to clarify precisely what types of texts are the subjects of this study. The recent increase in the number of texts in personal writing formats is clear in the database in Appendix. The formats themselves become critical characteristics of these texts, particularly in recent publishing trends. Some texts include more than one type of personal writing format, as well as the combination of personal writing formats and third-person narratives involving the writing figures. These variations may imply the rich diversity of fiction as well as the changes and transitional phases of fiction written
for the young reader. To clarify such characteristics, the types of fiction regarding writing characters are listed below. Here, my intention is to show the variations, so I do not necessarily discuss all the texts in the following chapters as case studies. A number of approaches to categorisation are possible but not all of these lead to fruitful analysis. Broadly speaking, the texts examined in this research are from one of the following categories:


- texts which use third-person narrative and depict fictional characters who write within the texts. The readers are informed of the characters’ writing activity by third-person narratives rather than characters’ writings. This kind of text is different from the previous kinds by virtue of the fact that the readers of the text cannot read the character’s supposed writings. *The Tricksters* (1986) by Margaret Mahy, *The Frozen Waterfall* (1994) by Gaye Hicyilmaz)

- the combination of inserted personal writing format and third-person narrative. The text depicts character’s writing activity in third-person narrative, but at the same time inserts characters’ writings as well. *Harriet*
the Spy (1964) by Louise Fitzhugh)

- the combination of inserted personal writing format and first-person narrative. The texts are written from characters' perspectives in first-person narrative, but the texts also insert their writings. The insertion of characters’ writings has several functions, such as manipulating the time setting; representing different modes of characters’ narration (it is possible to represent characters’ contemplation and reflection in standard first-person narrative, but the characters’ writings themselves indicate that the characters made the decision of representing reflection in words in a physical way), and, in some cases, representing the existence of an addressee within texts. (A Gathering Light (2003) by Jennifer Donnelly, Hard Love (1999) by Ellen Wittlinger, Kit’s Wilderness (1999) by David Almond, The Ballad of Lucy Whipple (1996) by Karen Cushman)

I have listed the above categories in order to show my awareness of the differences. In spite of this, I decided not to focus on any one particular category, but to include examples from all of them. As mentioned earlier, my intention is to understand the implication of the image of characters regardless of its presentation in texts for young readers.

The above-mentioned personal writing formats have various types which include:

- diaries/ journals, in which the incidents in life and reactions to them are recorded relatively soon after they happened. 26 (The Secret Diary of Adrian

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26 The distinction between diary and journal is not clear-cut. A journal is sometimes also seen as a more elaborate extended narrative than a diary. The sense of a small, pocket, diary is probably
- letters, which are written directly to the addressees in most cases (Letters from the Inside)

- e-mails, which function in the same way as letters do, but are delivered instantly despite the distance between the sender and receiver. The use of e-mail is more common within recent texts since e-mail has become widely accepted in modern day society. (Snail Mail No More: A novel by e-mail (1999) by Paula Danziger and Ann M Martin, P.S. He’s Mine!: A Nobel in E-mail (2000) by Rosie Rushton and Nina Schindler)

- text messages, which similarly appear as a communication tool within recent texts, as do e-mails. (This is All (2005) by Aidan Chambers)

- autobiographies, which are often written in more reflective mode than diaries and journals. (The Story of Tracy Beaker)

- notes, which are either written for the receiver or are written in order to record information. (Feeling Sorry for Celia)

- combination of several formats mentioned above (Dear Mr. Henshaw (1983) by Beverly Cleary)

determined by its 'diary' nature, whereas the 'day' aspect of the word 'journal' is more easily forgotten, in English. However Scholastic’s historical fiction seems to make a distinction according to the gender of the writing protagonist of each text. The term 'journal' is only used to indicate writing written by male characters, whereas the term 'diary' seems to be mainly used to describe accounts written by females. Interestingly, Zadie Smith’s On Beauty contains a scene in which a male character responds to his mother’s question ‘you just going to sit in all day, write your diary?’ by an indignant, ‘Not a diary, Journal’ (45). This also indicates that a male character makes a distinction between a diary and a journal.

27 I name the authors only the first time the books are mentioned in this chapter.
Some texts include writings which purport to be intended for others to read, including some official writings, such as:

- newspaper articles, which are intended to be read by numerous and various ranges of people. (*Harriet the Spy*)
- official documents (*Dance on my Grave* by Aidan Chambers)
- zine (magazine) (*Hard Love*)
- web pages, which have public characteristics in terms of openness towards the readers, as with the above-mentioned three types, and appear in recent texts as e-mails and text messages do. (*Gospel According to Larry*)

In some cases multiple formats are employed within a text. Such cases are often related to the issue of address. However, with regard to the medium of writing, there is a certain amount of influence from the development of technology. The complexity of texts can be regarded as characteristic of recent fiction, and the issue of metafiction will also be discussed. The following two types of writing have strong links with the creativity of the writers, and they can be both private and public writings.

- creative writings (*Dear Mr. Henshaw, Kit's Wilderness*)
- poetry (*Love that Dog* (2001) by Sharon Creech, *This is All*)

The fictional texts with the above-mentioned personal writing formats can also be categorised according to the narratee or addressee of the writing, as follows:

- to oneself
- to a specific (fictional) reader in text
- to non specific readers in text
In addition to these, it is important to bear in mind that these texts are ultimately written to be read by readers who actually hold texts, so the narratee or addressee of the writing also includes,

- readers of the texts who exist outside of the texts and hold them in their hands

The issue of whom the characters address is often related to the characters’ relationships with other people and the characters’ attitudes towards the act of writing. For example, in some cases, protagonists start writing in order to communicate with other people, then move on to write to themselves and discover who they are, as Leigh in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, who started his writing with a letter to Mr. Henshaw and gradually moved onto writing for himself. In other cases, protagonists who are isolated and keep a distance from other people gradually learn the pleasure of communication once they learn to express themselves in their writings, as John in *Hard Love*.

The use of the diary format in series fiction is mainly explained by its literary effects. The diary format creates realistic, convincing and familiar voices of the diary writer. Fictional diaries in various genres reveal suitable topics and vocabularies, according to the genre of each series. This prospect/format facilitates the inclusion of various potential perspectives. The diary format can generate intimacy by showing a character’s insight directly. It suggests the temporal and physical existences of the writing and of its writer, who is the
character. These effects of the style of texts seem to be related to the popularity of the texts among young readers.  

In relation to the content of writing, another possibility is to study the purpose of writing for the fictional writers within the text. This is not always clear, yet common reasons are as follows:

- to communicate
- to record incidents
- to express feelings
- to reflect and to deepen understanding of their own and others’ situations
- to escape/ to create an alternative world

The categorisation of the purpose of writing can also be applied to the authors of these fictional texts. As a part of the exploration of writing characters, in this research, it is useful to consider what is represented as the effect of writing activity for characters in texts, thus the textual analysis will include this point.

Historical fiction is predominant in the recent trends of these texts applying personal writing formats. The expected effects from such texts are as follows:

- to illustrate the psychology of a young character
- to show the suffering of young people by means of the issues and to draw out the empathy and understanding from actual young readers concerned, as well as encouraging them, often with positive and happy endings
- to inform the readers from today’s world (who may belong to a different

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28 Wall indicates that the first-person child-narrator, which includes diaries of child characters, was receiving a successful response from child readers, and, therefore, dominated the then contemporary market, in particular in the U.S. and Australia. (1991:249). British writer Jacqueline Wilson also employs first-person narrators, in her texts. The success of her texts for young readers may prove the popularity of first-person narrative.
world as in the case of migration stories) regarding details of the life and way of thinking of the people in a certain era, nation, culture or racial group.

As mentioned above, the literary functions of personal writing formats, such as intimacy, immediacy and reality, appear to be the reasons for the choice of styles, in particular in popular fiction, with its clear modes such as humorous, entertaining, thought-provoking and so on. At the same time, there is another common element found in the texts regarding writing characters. Strong links between the characters’ writing activity and their creation and achievement of self-identity are often depicted in texts. Protagonists often show their realisation of their development at the end of each story. They learn more about themselves and the differences in themselves before and after of writing action, in fact showing the emergence of a new kind of identity. The image of writing activity can be interpreted as carrying ideological implications regarding the construction of the self, an object which needs to be attempted, and which is achievable. Perhaps, in our literate society, this may often be represented through the act of writing, in relation to the creation of ‘self’. The increase in the use of the image of writing activity in the texts also suggests the further emphasis on self as the creation of individuality, and messages for the target audiences of these texts.

So far, various kinds of texts with writing characters have been listed, in terms of narrative styles, types of writing, the issue of narrative communication with real and implied readers, the motivation of writing for writing characters, genres which frequently employ writing characters, and the potential reason for employing the personal writing formats. Listing types according to the characteristics of writing characters facilitates the development of a general view of the writing
characters. The main focus of this research is the texts I have chosen from my corpus of post 1960 texts, texts which, in my opinion, show the link between writing activity and the issue of self, subjectivity and identity. Whilst I am conscious of the fact that other texts from the corpus may not demonstrate this link, I feel that my choices typify the autologous writing which is at the centre of my theory, and which demonstrates the characteristics of the representation of selfhood in the pattern of writing characters most clearly and aptly.

Categorisation of texts: age, gender and the structure of the thesis

The ultimate purpose of this study is to explore the link between the image of characters’ writing actions and their achievement of a sense of self. In Chapter Two which follows, the concept of self will be investigated, including the vicissitudes of its implications over the long term, from the time when René Descartes claimed ‘I think, therefore I am’ in 1637 (2000:25) to the present day. In exploration of the texts which have writing characters in connection to the issue of self, there appear to be several characteristics. How the characters seem themselves is often related to their age and gender. Thus, in order to understand the patterns, I reached the decision to classify the subjects according to the character’s age and gender groups. As will be explained further below, the categories of age and gender will be applied to the choice of primary texts in this study. In Chapter Three, I therefore discuss selected texts with younger, pre-pubertal characters, both male and female. Then, in chapters Four and Five, I discuss adolescent female characters and adolescent male characters respectively. These are all directly linked to the age and gender of the protagonists, while
Chapter Six is significantly concerned with narrative style and includes various protagonists irrespective of their age ranges and sexual/gender identities. (See Figure 3)

As indicated, Chapter Three deals with pre-pubertal male and female writing characters. As mentioned earlier, they are not distinguished from adolescent male characters and adolescent female characters by the question of whether or not they reach a specific age within each book. They are categorised rather in terms of the developmental stage they are at. According to Erikson’s theory of personality, there are eight stages in the development of human beings through their lifespan (1977). In each stage there is conflict between two issues, from which progress occurs with a successful solution. These stages are termed as having conflicting qualities: ‘basic trust v. (versus) basic mistrust’; ‘autonomy v. shame and
doubt'; 'initiative v. guilt'; 'industry v. inferiority'; 'identity v. role confusion'; 'intimacy v. isolation'; 'generativity v. stagnation' and 'ego integrity v. despair'. The crucial stage for determining whether the protagonists are pre-pubertal characters or adolescent characters is Stage Five, where 'identity' and 'role-confusion' conflict with each other. The subject of Chapter Three is pre-pubertal male and female characters, those who have not reached this stage yet.

In some cases, the distinction between pre-pubertal characters and adolescent characters is subtle, as ultimately, on the whole, books for young readers are about the development of the young characters, no matter how much difficulty they encounter in the stories. The difference between, and the reason for, a joint chapter on pre-pubertal characters and separate ones for male and female adolescent writers is the kinds of difficulties the protagonists encounter. The difficulties adolescent characters frequently experience are based on the difference between their sense of identity and the role they are expected to take in society, as they suffer from the confusion caused by this difference. To this extent, although there can be psychological and sexual differences between pre-pubertal boys and girls, it is clear that the characters' gender/sexual orientations become even more significant for adolescent characters.

Pre-adolescent writing characters will therefore be treated as one category in a separate chapter. The common elements include the young age group (before puberty), a linear storyline, successful development as an artist, the conquest of problems, and a mentor figure, irrespective of their sex/gender. The chosen primary texts for Chapter Three are Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) with a female protagonist, Beverly Cleary's *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983) with a male
protagonist, Jacqueline Wilson’s *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) with a female protagonist and Sharon Creech’s *Love that Dog* (2001) with a male protagonist. (It is a coincidence that all of the authors of these texts are female.) In this research I have attempted to choose primary texts from different published dates as much as possible in order to cover the period post 1960. However, it is not always easy to find suitable primary texts which satisfy my criteria, and include the elements I focus on, such as published date, characters’ positive involvement with writing activity, characters’ gender and age identity. It is inevitable that my personal preference is always involved in the selection of any primary texts. Most importantly the chosen primary texts satisfy the criteria of having characters who are positively involved with the act of writing and also are aware of the effect of the deed on themselves. Clearly, the texts I have chosen were selected in order to demonstrate my theory, but, at the same time, I believe that the selected texts are a representative sample. Each primary text is primarily representative within each category in terms of the protagonist’s act of writing, which contributed to the decision of classifying them into several categories.

The primary texts I have selected for Chapter Three involving young writing figures follow the patterns of the *Bildungsroman* or formation novel.\(^\text{29}\) The point that the selected primary texts share the same pattern can be interpreted as a mere coincidence, yet it is a natural outcome of being selected on the above-mentioned basis of having characters who show positive involvement with writing and awareness of the importance of writing for themselves. It is not surprising that these texts similarly depict that committed young writers develop into more

\(^{29}\) The definition and the use of the term Bildungsroman are fully explained in Chapter Three.
accomplished writers by the end of the stories. The interpretation here, in the realm of children’s literature, regarding the classification of texts as Bildungsroman, is different from the original context in German literature. The development pattern of these protagonists is simpler and more straightforward than the older characters examined in Chapters Four and Five. These young characters have not reached the stage where the authors can show them reaching fulfilment through relationships with someone of the opposite sex or developing a strong self identity, because they are still too immature. Chapter Three also discusses the image of young protagonists and their voices, in the light of ventriloquism, a concept which has a strong link to the discussion of the use of first-person narrative in this chapter.

The reason for separating female and male adolescent characters in Chapters Four and Five is that in the light of feminist theory the gender issue is seen as essential for identity development. In Chapter Four, regarding female adolescent writing, characters also explore a unique characteristic of female characters, which is a strong link with the tradition of female writers and their writings. Writing as action is often associated with the process of achieving and expressing ‘voice’, which symbolises self, voice, subjectivity and agency.

The primary texts chosen for Chapter Four are *Z for Zachariah* (1975) by Robert O’Brien, *The Tricksters* (1986) by Margaret Mahy, *Hard Love* (1999) by Ellen Wittlinger and *Witch Child* (2000) by Celia Rees. It was not my conscious decision to include texts written by both male and female writers. I interpret that the protagonists are literary creations not necessarily reflecting the author’s gender. The protagonists of these texts are all female adolescent writers who are seriously involved with their act of writing, but, at the same time, they represent variations,
such as a survivor of nuclear disaster, an insecure modern writer, a confident lesbian writer and a persecuted heretic. These primary texts show the distinctive tendency that the stories of fictional young female writers do not necessarily use present-day settings to convey feminist ideologies. Judging by the texts I explored for this project, in fact, the chronotopes or the settings of the stories, which provide particularly difficult circumstances for young females, seem to be employed in the texts in order to give an effective feminist message. This explains the recent trend towards series of fictional diaries set in various historical periods.

Chapter Five focuses on male adolescent writing characters. In contrast to the young female characters’ strong images, male adolescent writers give relatively less powerful impressions through their act of writing. The difference between the nature of writing for female characters and male characters would seem to lie in respective perceptions of self-identity. Whereas female characters awake to a lack of the sense of ‘self’, and thus create ‘self’ through writing, the male characters examined in Chapter Five demonstrate that they start realising the loss of self-identity through some tragic experiences, attempt to regain it, and finally compromise, by inventing a new identity through their writing. The possibility of regaining self-identity also seems to help the characters to establish their non-mainstream sexual/gender identity, as seen in some texts examined in Chapter Five. The protagonists of the primary texts, *Dance on My Grave* (1982) by Adrian Chambers, *Ironman* (1995) by Chris Crutcher, *Brothers* (1996/2001) by Ted van Lieshout, *Kit’s Wilderness* (1999) by David Almond and *The Gospel according to Larry* (2001) by Janet Tashjian represent the possibility of types of male writing characters. It was not my objective necessarily to choose texts which were
published relatively recently, not earlier than 1980, but it was almost as if the texts chose themselves, since I did not find adolescent male writing characters in the texts compelling enough to be chosen as primary texts among those published earlier. Earlier ones were typical diaries of troubled teenagers, such as for example *Confession of a Teenage Baboon* by Paul Zindel (1977). These recent publication dates appear to be as a result of selecting texts which represent varieties of male writers.

Adolescence is the common element between the characters of Chapter Four and Five. Fiction regarding adolescence is now often called young adult fiction. *Little Women* by Alcott, which includes the lively writer figure Jo, is regarded by Cart (1996:4) as the first young adult novel. Similarly, Roderick McGillis calls L.M. Montgomery’s novels, which again contain writing figures, early versions of young adult fiction (in Hunt, 1995:337). The definition of ‘young adult fiction’ is varied, as some suggest its start is in the 1960s and others claim its origin as early as the eighteenth century. These remarks raise questions regarding the essential conditions for young adult fiction. Does a text become young adult fiction when the protagonist is a young adult or when a text depicts a young adult’s thoughts and feelings? Is it a coincidence that characters in such texts often get involved with the act of writing, or, instead, is such a pattern

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30 According to McCallum (2006), ‘The category of young adult literature generally refers to texts addressing an audience from about thirteen upwards, including books whose themes and writing strategies suggest that their audience is at the upper end of the teenage years’. She also states that typically the genre conveys the dominant values and assumptions in the culture when the texts were produced. Another characteristic of the category is its ‘central concerns and interests, characteristic subject matter, narrative strategies, and [category]’. As the narrative strategies, first person narrative as well as the use of ‘poetry, diary entries, letters, postcards, and official forms’ are suggested. In particular the latter examples belong to what I call personal writing and the use of these formats in texts for young readers is scrutinized in this thesis.
employed as a source of characters' self revelation so that it depicts young people who express their own thoughts, and develop and mature gradually themselves? These questions become important when examining the increasing number of such texts in the twentieth century. I would like to keep this issue in view throughout this project, and return to this point in the Conclusion.

Chapter Six examines texts which have metafiction as their main feature, in relation to postmodernism, irrespective of the age and gender/sexual orientation of the characters. Postmodernism, which emerges within present day society’s culture, has the possibility of overturning any interpretation of the texts in a conventional way. Some primary texts which have been examined in the other chapters are analysed again here in a different light. The total number of primary texts mentioned in Chapter Six is greater than the other chapters, but the analysis of the individual texts is not as lengthy and detailed as in the case studies in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Contemporary texts show more and more complex narratological features. The fiction styles which have been used since the early stages in the history of the novel, such as diary fiction and epistolary fiction, also suggest wider ranges of interpretation. Metafictive features in the texts suggest a postmodern view of the world and of self, and that neither is necessarily fixed or stable. I am aware that it is necessary to speculate on the exact intention of the authors in writing these texts. The increase in numbers of these texts may firstly be interpreted as suggesting the growing interest in relaying such messages to young readers, in order to help their survival in the world. Secondly, since metafictional texts often have several possibilities of interpretation, they are also employed to offer ‘active’ readings to audiences. Thus, metafiction can be
interpreted as representing the expectation for the target child audiences, so that they become aware of the postmodern interpretation of the representation in books of the contemporary scene. These postmodern texts, where the content specifically anticipates the interpretation by the reader, are created by adults, including the author, publisher, critics, teachers, parents and so on.

**Conclusion**

As demonstrated in this chapter, there are a number of characters who write within children’s literature. The variations of the writing characters are also rich in terms of the narrative style, genres in which writing characters appear, the functions writing characters create, and so on. It was necessary for the in-depth analysis of writing characters to narrow down the research area. The result of preliminary research in creating an annotated database of texts which feature characters who write, shows the increase of these texts after 1960. Therefore, the time span for the research subject is limited to post 1960. While I was reading primary texts and adding information to the database, I gravitated towards a hypothesis as follows:

**Positive images regarding self-identity are central to the creation of writing characters in texts for young readers.**

In this sense, other conditions in the primary texts to be scrutinised are the characters’ positive involvement in their writing as an action, and their realisation of the beneficial aspects of writing action. The term ‘autologous writing’ is introduced to describe a kind of writing when the creation of such writing simultaneously represents the development of the fictional writers’ sense of ‘self’.
The issue of ‘self’ is significant throughout the thesis, and later chapters will present the case studies, to explore whether or not my hypothesis will be proven, by identifying further detailed ideologies, according to the characters’ gender and age conditions. These ideological messages relate to the developmental pattern in pre-pubertal characters, feminist ideology in adolescent female characters, and the possibility of alternative masculinity in male adolescent writing characters. Chapter Six will deal with many of the primary texts examined in the previous chapters, from the point of view of postmodernism. It makes it possible to have a different interpretation of the texts from the traditional approach, as well as to generate new types of texts. In that sense, it is significant to examine whether the postmodern approach simply contradicts the above mentioned hypothesis, or whether, perhaps, postmodernism itself starts to offer some beneficial functions for child readers by promoting interaction, which will conform to the ideological messages conveyed by these texts. As a bystander, I sense their ideological message regarding the creation of self in their writing, which seems to have developed more in the last forty or fifty years, examined below in the section dealing with Western culture in that period, ‘Ideology and characters who write’ in Chapter Two.
Chapter Two: Writing as act and issues of self and subjectivity

書くという行為は、誰かに伝達する行為でもありますが、それ以上に、何か大切なことを言葉で定義することです。それは、そのものが言葉の形で存在になることです。

「手紙、栞を添えて」より「書くことの根源的な意味」 89 ページ 辻邦夫

To write as a deed is an action to communicate with somebody, but more than that it means to define something important with words. Writing means that the important thing which the writer has wished to convey, comes into an existence by taking a form of words.

Tsuji, ‘The fundamental meaning of to write’ from Letters with bookmarks p.89 (translation by myself)

It is in and through language that man [sic] constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of ‘ego’ in reality, in its reality which is that of being.

Benveniste, Problems in General Linguistics

The subjects of this research are characters who write, within texts written for children. In addition to mimetic fiction, which illustrates characters by adopting third-person narrative technique, there are diegetic texts which take the form of diaries, letters and autobiographies, written in first-person narrative. The significance of presenting such characters who write and the production of these fictional personal written accounts for young readers is examined throughout this study. This chapter in particular examines this phenomenon in terms of the issue of subjectivity (and self). Generally speaking, personal writings such as diaries, letters and autobiographies, written by individual writers, are ultimately about these writers’ selves. In other words, it means to interpret the writings or words which belong to the expresser, instead of considering that the person who expresses these words exists via these words, as post-structuralist thinkers such as Barthes, Derrida and Foucault would suggest. 31 The phenomenon of fictionalising such

31 The latter view, seeing the existence of the individual depending on language, is also significant
writers who write about themselves within texts for young readers generates questions such as: what implications do these fictional figures carry, and what is the reason for adopting these fictional writing characters in literary fiction for young readers? In particular, the recent growth in the number of examples with this style in the realm of children’s literature,\(^{32}\) may suggest that there are significant connections between the act of writing, which naturally involves thinking, and ‘self’, in other words subjectivity in children’s literature. It is necessary to examine a range of positions regarding the nature of the self and subjectivities in this project, as this issue is related to every primary text. Some of these theories will ultimately be found to be more helpful than others to the topic undertaken here.

The word ‘self’ as used above carries significant meaning for human beings, in addition to its function as a reflexive pronoun. For the general understanding of the word, referring to a dictionary, self is defined as ‘A person’s essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action’ (Concise Oxford English Dictionary). This implies that the concept functions to prove the essential element of a human being. The French seventeenth-century philosopher, René Descartes, suggested that people owe their own existence to their act of ‘thinking’, his principle being, ‘cogito ergo sum’ (‘I think, therefore I am’): the ability to think and reflect makes a human being different from an animal. Self as a sense of identity, which is separated from the outer world, and from other people, is also considered to be ‘the product both of natural processes of maturation, and of the process of socialization, in which maturation is

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\(^{32}\) The growth is revealed in the database in the Appendix.
inscribed' (*Dictionary of the Social Sciences*). This may already explain why this ‘self’ is one of the most important topics in current children’s literature. It has often been argued that children’s literature carries a humanist, often liberal-humanist, ideology (Hunt, 1991:147, Chapter 8, ‘Politics, Ideology, and Children’s Literature’), with the intention of supporting the young reader’s growth into a human being who can take part in creating a better world in the future within a social context. Stephens says, ‘children’s fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience’ (1992:8).

The concept of a ‘self’ is also related to children’s literature in terms of its origin. Child/childhood as a concept has achieved its significance alongside the development of the sense of ‘self’, since a sense of ‘self’ is dependent on childhood as its formative period. Also, the discipline of Psychoanalysis, which was primarily developed by Freud, recognises the influence of childhood on the later life of individuals. For these reasons, in this research, it is relevant to examine the issue of ‘self’. (The term ‘self’ here is used in the sense of ‘subjectivity’ or ‘identity’, terms preferred by some critics.) These two terms, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘identity’ are often used interchangeably; however, in terms of the two ways of defining the sense of self, external and internal, identity is often associated with social factors, therefore regarded as having external factors, whereas subjectivity, which is closely linked to language, is considered to represent the internal element.

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33 Joseph Zornado suggests his view of the child as a manipulated and controlled existence by adults, in his *Inventing the Child*, referring to historical studies of the child and childhood, such as those of Phillip Ariès, Lloyd DeMause, and Linda Pollock. Zornado’s view implies that the mainstream concept of children’s literature also carries a certain ideology.
Since literature heavily depends on language, the term subjectivity may appear to be more suitable than ‘identity’; in this study, however, literature is also seen as a representation of society, as well as of the expectations for society. It should be remembered, however, as noted above, that subjectivity is a process which is fluid and not fixed. Thus the difference between subjectivity and identity lies in the fact that subjectivity is ‘broader and more multifaceted’ than identity, according to Hall (2004:134). Since subjectivity is closely linked to the issue of language, the link between the concept of self and language becomes the reason why writing is significant in defining one’s own existence through words.

In the previous chapter, Erik Erikson’s theory of developmental stages in human beings is used to classify the pre-pubertal stage and adolescence. The distinction between the primary texts for Chapter Three and those for Chapter Four and Five follows this method of classification. Erikson’s theory is also useful for this study in terms of taking account of the above mentioned two elements, the social and psychological aspects, in the understanding of human development. Erikson’s view of human development, in which every one of his eight stages is preparing for the following one, so that it shows constant improvement, has received some criticism for being idealised, including, as Kovel points out, Erikson’s perceived lack of a ‘sense of evil’ (1988:75) and Welchnan’s statement that Erikson’s ethics are ‘utopian’ (2000:120). In a way, criticism surrounding Erikson’s theory of human development is similar to that concerning children’s literature, which prefers optimistic evolutions with happy endings in a conventional sense. It is not my intention to make a speculation regarding a link between Erikson’s theory and the pattern in children’s literature regarding characters’
development. The similarity between the two would appear to be more than a mere coincidence, suggesting verification of an implicit awareness of many stages, by the authors concerned.

Regarding the vicissitudes of the self over time, broadly speaking, it can be said that modernity- the stage of European history involving a more science-orientated, industrialised period - had gradually fostered the sense of self. The process was not completed overnight, nor manifested by a single event or person. As will be demonstrated in the sections below, the definition of ‘self’ still continues to reveal vicissitudes today. Garrett Thomson remarks, ‘self-conscious reflection upon the sources and standards of knowledge was one of the hall-marks of the modern period’, and credits Descartes as the originator of the concept, as ‘he saw the need to evaluate methodically and systematically all claims to knowledge, to think about how knowledge is possible, and to reconcile the conflict between the new science and the old religion’ (2000:9). The development of science and industrialisation subsequently contributed to the empowerment of individuals and the decline in the influence of religion. The sense of freedom from religious constraints simultaneously created fear that it would lead to a decline in morality.

This concern was answered by ‘reason’ as David E. Hall suggests (2004:23), which was the key element in the Enlightenment. Charles Taylor notes the importance of John Locke, who made a significant contribution to the Enlightenment movement, and who developed an idea that the perfect self can be achieved through one’s ‘disengagement and rational control’ (1989:60). Taylor

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34 There are some views that the sense of ‘self’ had appeared earlier. Donald E. Hall interprets Martin Luther’s ‘Concerning Christian Liberty’ (1525), as implying individualism, and thus an indication of his subjectivity. (Hall, 2004:14).
summarises that Locke’s theory ‘generates and also reflects an ideal of independence and self-responsibility, a notion of reason as free from established custom and locally dominant authority’ (1989:167). From around the eighteenth century onwards, the self tends to be interpreted as something achievable by the exertion of a human being’s effort and will, with hope and optimism toward human kind. This view had a strong influence on Romanticism, which has an integral relationship with children’s literature.

**Self and child in Romanticism**

The Romantic period, roughly from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, when Romanticism prospered, is very important for both the issue of self and for children’s literature. Although for several centuries there had been an increasing emphasis on the nature of self and identity throughout Europe, it tended to come to the fore in the Romantic period. Romanticism, an artistic, literary and philosophical movement originating in Europe, partly resulting from rebellion against the Enlightenment and Rationalism, was influenced by the French Revolution, and was a reaction against the rationalization of nature, in art and literature. Strong emotion was highly valued, as a source of aesthetic experience, and new emphasis began to be placed on such emotions as terror, horror, and the awe experienced in confronting the sublimity of nature. Romanticism valued several areas, such as nature, imagination, and feeling. The self was acknowledged and appreciated at that time, and there was a positive sense of celebrating the autonomous mind, and the expression of the self. The focus on the concept of self was also connected to the concept of child and childhood.
Well before the Romantic period, in the sixteenth century, there had been thinkers and educationalists who considered it important for children to have pleasure and freedom through their education, instead of being strictly ruled and controlled. The demand for more consideration from adults of children in this time period is seen in humanistic books, such as Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster, or Plain and Perfect Way of Teaching Children the Latin Tongue* (1570) and Richard Mulcaster's *The Training up of Children* (1581). However, in the century preceding the Romantic period, the ‘child’ as a concept was, in particular, emphasised and reinforced by the views of thinkers, such as the above-mentioned Locke, who had expectation and hope for human beings and saw individuals as the blank slates onto which knowledge could be written, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who regarded the innate human state as being worthy of as little tampering as possible, as he considered it desirable in itself. Although they have different views regarding how a child should be treated, both seem to agree on the nature of the child as being innocent, inexperienced and a blank canvas. As Judith Plotz suggests, in the Romantic view, ‘child’ was equated with ‘nature’ in several respects: such as the child as nature's human embodiment, and then the child as indigenous in nature due to his/her vitality and power of growth. William Wordsworth, who is often credited with starting the Romantic era in England thanks to his and Coleridge’s publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), demonstrates such a concept of childhood. In his *The Prelude*, Wordsworth describes the child as ‘mighty Prophet! Seer blest!’ in his Ode ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’ (1999) He also demonstrates his interpretation of a baby as a symbol of progress for human being in ‘Blessed the infant babe’,
For with my best conjectures I would trace
The progress of our being.

(1979:78)

By the two interpretations mentioned above, ‘child’ is regarded as both representation of nature and then nature itself. Finally ‘child’ can be seen as the prophet of the developmental process of human kind, which is ever changing (Plotz, in ed. Nikolajeva, 1995:6). This corresponds to Wordsworth’s words. Subsequently, the ‘child’, combining innocence and full potentiality, started to be recognised as different from the adult. When individual selfhood started to gain some recognition as a separate existence from the mass group, a notion of the child also emerged, as a different being from an adult, and also the view of regarding the child as the origin and the future of the adult appeared. The concepts of self and child were thus not only developed in the same period, but are also inter-dependent. The self is seen as emerging in the pure and undeveloped child, and the child ideally develops into a free, able, creative and expressive self. Due to its focus on the concept of child and childhood, the Romantic period also became a period of gradual growth in children’s literature.  

In this way, a strong link was established in the Romantic period between the image of the child and that of the self. The view of seeing potentiality and prospects in the child is also linked to the humanist view, which has faith in the ability of human kind and anticipates efforts for a better future. As mentioned above, the humanistic perspective has been dominant in children’s literature until

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35 This was the time when child-centred literature and publishing for children were flourishing. However, there had been varieties of literature for children before this when the child population grew and education became an important issue, so that the market for child reading started to develop.
the present, and the implications of the celebration for power, freedom, and progress of the human being, which is also common to Romanticism, can be simply rephrased as the humanistic view.

However, in this study of young writing characters within texts for children, the context of Romanticism suggests specifically effective ideas for interpretation of these characters and their act of writing. When the image of the child is celebrated, the development expressed by their own action in writing characters becomes doubly desirable. The writing activity is also associated with another celebrated quality in Romanticism, which is creativity. In the beginning of this chapter, I have listed several questions for exploration in this study: what implications do the fictional figures carry and what is the reason for adopting the fictional personal writing formats in children’s literature? One of the answers must be the influence of the Romantic view and its ideology concerning children and creativity. The image of the child who is maturing and progressing with his or her own power is seen in those young writing characters within texts for children. Appreciating creativity certainly explains the use of creator figures, or writers within fictional texts for young readers. Thus this suggests to me that a literary genre, the Bildungsroman, or ‘formation novel’, which originated in Germany, had an impact on Romanticism in England. In that sense, it is not surprising that the texts containing writing characters, with the story pattern of the Bildungsroman, show similar

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36 It is important to note that much of children’s literature developed in the aftermath of the Romantic movement. However, in the long history of children’s literature, there have been exceptional cases such as Hesba Stretton, who delivers strong moral and religious messages in her stories, and Mrs. Martha Mary Sherwood, whose work is an instance of a contradiction of the humanistic view, because of her fundamentalist religious attitude. Humanism is not necessarily in opposition to religion. But the Calvinistic standpoint of Evangelicalism tends to be in opposition to humanism whereas much early religious writing could be seen as humanistic.
messages, relating young characters and their creative abilities to the Romantic view, as will be examined in Chapter Three regarding pre-pubertal male and female writing characters.

**Change in the concept of self/subject**

In the Romantic period, self began to be seen as something powerful, original and creative. This view corresponds to the traditional sense of self as autonomous, unique, individual, stable and continuous. Various issues in society, such as the abolition of slavery, the early feminist movement in the middle of the nineteenth century and the questioning of the class system, continued to influence the issue of self/subject, and the definition of self/subject has developed further since then. From the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of self/subject has acquired further profound implications, due to the development of psychoanalysis, particularly by Freud. The existence of his 'unconscious' suggests the limit of the knowledge of self and the amount of power or agency anyone has over their own self. Thus, it destabilised the above-mentioned positivist view regarding self. In addition to Freud, a number of thinkers and theorists, during the twentieth century, have contradicted the notion of self as autonomous, unique and stable. Mead (1934) has suggested that self is only the contingent result of roles and functions in society. New concepts, such as Laing’s ‘the divided self’ (1960), Lacan’s ‘the split subject’ (1977) and Cixous’s ‘a group acting together’ (1974) present objections to ‘unity’ being regarded as characteristic of self. These concepts of the incoherent self have also challenged the elements of ‘stableness and continuity’. Foucault summarises the further movements in the interpretation of self in other fields when
he says, ‘the researchers of psychoanalysis, of linguistics, of anthropology have
decentred the subject in relation to the laws of its desire, the forms of its language,
the rules of its actions or the play of its mythical and imaginative discourses’
(1978:13).

Foucault’s use of the word ‘decentre’ suggests to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan
(1996:13) that Foucault interprets self in a non-traditional way in two different
senses. Firstly, Foucault’s interpretation is that the individual with many different
aspects lacks a core inside to connect these aspects, and, secondly, the self exists
only in a system, instead of a human being becoming the central aspect.
Furthermore, Rimmon-Kenan points out the similar use of the word ‘subject’ by
Foucault and Lacan. Foucault replaces the word ‘self’ with ‘subject’ and implies
that the subject of a human being becomes merely a position in an overall system.
This is the same as ‘subject’, where, in a grammatical sense, it is considered to be
a structural component of the sentence. Lacan has theorised the development of
the human psyche, from the Imaginary Phase to the Symbolic Phase. Lacan also
uses ‘subject’ to signify an individual at the stage when children leave the former
stage, the Imaginary Phase. Lacan sees children in the Imaginary Phase as
regarding themselves and their mothers together. He claims that in this stage
children have no notion of self, which would be noted through the recognition of a
difference between self and others. Subsequently, the children go through a
‘mirror-stage’, where they find their own reflections in the mirror and start regarding
themselves as a unified existence, separated from others. Then they move to the
stage where they form the concept of self (or identity), through the association with
others in a social context, employing language and law, elements which Lacan
sees as paternal elements. This is because these elements provide a compensatory supplement for the loss of the maternal connection, which children had in the Imaginary Phase. In Lacan’s view, language, which is essential for ‘becoming an individual’, also destabilises the self as a united concept; as he says, ‘I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object.’ (Lacan, 1977:2) This kind of view eventually leads to the concept that self/subjectivity is detached from language, word, discourse and text.  

On the contrary, with a theory of ideology, it is possible to avoid, or rather to contradict the above argument, regarding the impossibility of representation through words. Rather than arguing whether representation is possible or not, it is important to remember that representation is separated from the objective to be represented, and is never the reality itself. To be more precise, it is connected to ideological practice instead.

Ideology, according to Althusser, indicates ‘not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they “live”’ (1971:165). This suggests that examining literary characters can be considered as part of the same process as the interpretation of ideology implied in literary texts. Thus, it is significant to consider the ideological implications in this project regarding writing characters. In the following section, the issue of ideology in this study is explored more.

37 The text is considered to be only text without hidden connotation, as Barthes claims: ‘In modern texts, the voices are so treated that any reference is impossible: The discourse, or better, the language, speaks: nothing more.’ (Barthes, S/Z: 1975, 41). This view by its nature easily destroys the study of literary characters and their action in the texts. Consequently, this approach will be avoided in this study.
As her title clearly suggests, Robyn McCallum’s *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction* (1999) argues that subjectivity is ideologically represented in texts for young readers; and in order to show this she adopts Bakhtin’s theories. Bakhtin suggests the concept of heteroglossia, which literally suggests ‘many languages’ (quoted in McCallum, 1999:11). This suggests an ‘internal stratification of any single national language’ (Bakhtin, 1981:262), as well as ‘socially typifying languages’ (290) or as McCallum rephrases it, ‘speech genres, which have a socio-ideological basis’ (McCallum, 1999:262). Not only do these ‘languages’ exist in any language, discourse and narration, but they also reflect and influence each other. Importantly, Bakhtin considers the novel as a heteroglossic genre (McCallum uses this term, 1999:10), since there are many voices in a novel. These interactions via language are described in another concept suggested by Bakhtin, ‘dialogism’, which means, in a general sense, ‘a verbal interchange between individuals where there is an exchange of words, ideas and viewpoints’ (McCallum, 1999:12). In this way, in literary texts, individuals are represented as existing in connection with other individuals, and society and language consist of the echoes of other voices.

The use of these Bakhtinian theories is very effective as a means to explore the ideology contained in texts for young readers. In her volume, McCallum also discusses what I call personal writing formats and writing characters. According to her, ‘extraliterary’ genres, which include ‘nonfiction’ materials—reports, newspapers, editorials, footnotes and citations, and diary and epistolary genres—are mainly employed to represent subjectivity within narrative with an ideological function. These materials contribute to the textual construction and representation
of subjectivity, by being ‘imbedded’ [sic] within texts and containing various points of view, and suggest social and cultural influence. They also make active implied reader subject positions by requiring profound engagement in reading for the interpretation of complex texts. As McCallum points out, not only do diary and epistolary genres suggest a textual construction of subjectivity, but they also contain paradoxical problems. The act of writing can generate a narrated/represented self, a narrating voice, which consequently may cause fragmentation or doubling of the writing/narrating subject, as well as destabilisation of the authenticity and authority of narration. In this sense, McCallum suggests that the use of diary and epistolary narrative serves to express a concern regarding the formation of subjectivity within time and in connection with represented social and cultural contexts. McCallum’s interpretation of these extraliterary genres, which include what I call personal writing accounts, is relevant in terms of the Bakhtinian view of subjectivity as social and cultural construction through narrative and language, and offers useful insights for my study.

In my view, McCallum’s study does emphasise several of the issues essential to this project, such as the significance of voice, the function of writing and the use of images of characters who are expressing themselves through writing. In the Bakhtinian view, any voice/narration is regarded as only a component among many other voices/narrations. Bakhtin considers that there are many voices or individuals in society and they influence each other. These views are reflected in the idea of the novel, therefore, and, according to Bakhtin, the novel is polyphonic and dialogic. This view owes everything to the premise that his/her own voice(s) is a central part of the human being, and it does not
interrogate the significance of a person’s self-expression by narrating and writing and the use of such an image in literary texts. The issue regarding how to interpret the significance of the individual voice in relation to other voices needs to be dealt with as well. This may suggest that each voice in literary fiction carries significance equally; in other words, the only clear difference may be the quantity of each narrating voice as a proportion of the whole text.

This discussion of polyphony and the relative weighting of narrative voices has implications for my study in relation to narrative perspective and style. Style also involves the choice between first-person narrative and third-person narrative. Furthermore, stylistic characteristics are emphasised. In particular, first-person narrative in texts, which take the form of personal written accounts, such as diaries, journals and letters, are employed in metafiction, as will be examined further in Chapter Six. In order to explore the phenomenon of the growing numbers of texts which include writing characters for young readers, it is necessary to understand the function, or, rather, the image of the function, of writing as action.

**Ideology and characters who write**

As remarked in the introduction, the issue of ideology is complex and requires further attention in addition to the brief reference to Eagleton, in the previous chapter, and to Althusser above. Eagleton regards Marxist literary criticism as analysis of literature in relation to the historical conditions in which it was created and its aim is to understand ‘ideologies- the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times’ (xiii). He later re-summarises ideology in Marxism concisely as, ‘definite forms of social consciousness […]’, the
function of which is ‘to legitimate the power of the ruling class in society, [...]’, the
dominant ideals of a society are the ideals of its ruling class’ (2000: 5). Eagleton
further refers to the difficulty of analysing the ideology in these terms: ‘an ideology
is never a simple reflection of a ruling class’s ideas’ (6), thus the examining of ‘the
precise relations between different classes in a society’ and ‘grasping where those
classes stand in relation to the mode of production’ (6) is necessary. This view is
obviously directly related to Marxism in which society is composed of different
groups and they struggle over the power relationship. However, as his preface to
the recent edition written in 2002 suggests, Marxist criticism is still relevant to the
world today where people with different views coexist and often conflict with each
other.

In the current study, the components to be examined will not be the
different classes of society but the authors of texts and the depicted selfhood of
young writing characters in those texts. The difference between these components
is less obvious than the extreme case of the difference between two enemies.
Ideology is not always a negative concept, imposed by one group on others, but
rather it is an essential of people’s thinking, feeling and living a life, and ideology is
what John Stephens calls ‘a system of beliefs by which we make sense of the
world’ (8). In this case, the messages from authors included in the texts can be
agreeable and welcome, and can thus be accepted and taken for granted instead
of being received with suspicion. Therefore the possibility of a particular ideology
affecting the text, however subtly, must not be overlooked.

As mentioned in the previous chapter I estimated the link between the
pattern of writing characters and creation of self-identity to result from their
ideology concerning selfhood, so that the image of characters who express
themselves with their words is used as an ideal model for children, characters with
a strong sense of identity. Although I initially had an impression that the
individualism and strong sense of selfhood has been always part of Western
culture, it is apparent that people’s consciousness derives from the influence of the
world they live in. The sense of self has developed over a long time, evolving
through events and eras influential for people’s lives, such as the Enlightenment
which freed people from conventional views, the Industrial Revolution, which
changed people’s way of life and, more recently, the societal changes in the
twentieth century. The recent increase in books with writing characters can be
interpreted as deriving from the cultural and social effect of each era. In that sense,
it is also important to examine the era the in which the authors were writing, while
they produced texts for young readers.

As mentioned in the Introduction, I have focused in this study on texts
produced after 1960, due to an increase in their number since that time. In order
to understand what has caused this increase, the examination of the era is
important. In his book on world history in the twentieth century, *The Age of
with comprehensive sub titles: 1914 to 1945 as ‘The Age of Catastrophe’, and after
1945 initially as ‘The Golden Age’ and latterly ‘The Landslide’. Following this
division, the 1960s belong to ‘The Golden Age’ following ‘The Age of Catastrophe’.
The word catastrophe obviously suggests the two world wars, which altered
people’s values as a result of losing or changing existing systems such as empire,
the class system, patriarchy and so forth. The changes did not stop just
immediately after the war. Physical differences also affected the psychological aspects, thus it is important to have a general view regarding incidents as well as differences in social life for the time period selected. The 1960s was the period when people encountered a new way of life and society and achieved a new psyche, or at least experienced some difference in terms of its mentality, after having recovered from war physically, financially and subsequently mentally in the 1950s. In *British Society Since 1945*, Arthur Marwick describes the extent of changes for people thus: ‘Release came, not just from post-war austerity, but from social controls going back to Victorian times’ (13). The liberal and free spirits were respected then and the individual’s rights were claimed more and more. This was manifest for example in U.K. state education, with a developing interest in child-centred education, fostered by *the Plowden Report, Children and their primary schools* published in 1967, which stressed that ‘at the heart of the educational process lies the child’, suggesting that the individual and individual development would be central to the educative process from that time on. Such an atmosphere in the era might have influenced the authors in creating texts which represent self-hood through what was supposed to be the characters own voices. After reaching the point where there was no more growth in economic achievement, the world which had enjoyed such success needed new issues to tackle, and the Cold War may be interpreted as a political strategy to achieve precisely that. Hobsbawm summarises the period thus:

*It was not so much practical as ideological --- part of the Western reaction to the troubles of the era of troubles and uncertainties into which the world had drifted after the end of the Golden Age. [...] A lengthy period of centrist and moderately social-democratic rule ended, as the economic and social policies of the Golden Age seemed to fail. Governments of the ideological*
Right, committed to an extreme form of business egoism and *laissez-faire*, came to power in several countries around 1980. Among these Regan and the confident and formidable Mrs. Thatcher in Britain (1979-1990) were the most prominent. For this new Right the state-sponsored welfare capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s, no longer buttressed, since 1973, by economic success, had always looked like a sub-variety of the socialism [...] of which they saw the U.S.S.R. as the logical end-product. The Reaganite Cold War was directed not only against the “Evil Empire” abroad, but against the memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt at home: again the Welfare State as well as any other intrusive state. Its enemy was liberalism [...] as much as communism. (248-9).

During this period, more and more emphasis was placed on individuals and individual effort and achievement, rather than the overriding achievements of the state, and interference in individual lives by the state. In one way, such an atmosphere encouraged those who had not had many rights in the past to pursue their liberties. In other ways, as the above quotation suggests, this was a politically convenient approach to avoid the burden of supporting the weak. Margaret Thatcher said ‘There is no society, only individuals’ (337). Such dogma seemed to spread on a wider scale as Hobsbawm summarises, ‘The cultural revolution of the later twentieth century can thus best be understood as the triumph of the individual over society, or rather, the breaking of the threads which in the past had woven human beings into social textures’ (Hobsbawm, 334). In this way, the connection between people became weaker than before and the priority was given to each person’s will and freedom over the group’s interests. However, after the Golden Era, the individualism, which values each person’s self-identity, paradoxically, seems to be also enforced by the separatist nationalism, (Hobsbawm lists examples such as Norway, or Britain under Mrs. Thatcher’s leadership, which sustained the regional autonomy whilst joining a bigger political group like the European Community), of this difficult period of transition in society. Hobsbawm
analyses this as a combination of three phenomena. Firstly, ‘the resistance of existing nation-states against their demotion’ (426), secondly, ‘the collective egoism of wealth, and [this phenomenon] reflected the growing economic disparities within continents, countries and regions’ (427) and lastly, ‘a response to the “cultural revolution” of the second half of the century, that extraordinary dissolution of traditional social norms, textures and values, which left so many of the inhabitants of the developed world orphaned and bereft’ (428). The stress on the individual would seem to be inevitable in the texts written in such a world, and the image of writing characters in my chosen texts seems to represent the influence of this era in terms of content and in overall ideology.

The changes in Western society from the end of the 1950s are well documented, with the rise in the emphasis on the individual and individual rights as opposed to the deferential respect for the status quo, including the essential thus far respected forms of government and social order. With the profound changes begun in the 1960s and continued throughout the period to date, including, for example the period of major political and social change now labelled as *Thatcherism* in the UK, (and which seems to have had some influence in a much wider context), authors have naturally mirrored society’s changes in their writing. One of these mirror images seems to have been the phenomenon discussed in this thesis, that of the development of writing characters, who would seem to be true characters of their time, “their time” meaning the era in which the author was writing, rather than the period in which the characters operate, which is, of course, not necessarily the same. In this thesis, as briefly summarised in the Introduction, separate chapters deal with each of the agendas reflected in the texts, but there is
one common element as the basis of these separate agendas, which is the individualism represented in the characters, and which seems to have a direct link with the sociological and ideological changes in Western society, in my chosen period.

The implication of writing as act

As Robyn McCallum indicates, there is a fragmentation of self in texts for young readers, in particular in diary and epistolary genres (1999:217). Paradoxically, at the same time, the fragmented self of writing characters is often a result of their relatively continuous writing habit or the creation of narrative. The self can mean two different existences simultaneously, one is the self which generates the action of writing self and the other is the self which is created by being written. Some thinkers claim that narrative creation is the way to solve this issue of the fragmented self. Anthony Giddens indicates:

> A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography, if she [sic] is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self.  
> (1991:54, Italics originals)

This observation suggests to me that there is the postulated idea that self is neither fixed nor stable in Giddens’s view. The nature of self may be even more ambivalent for children and adolescents who are still in the process of growing up. The continuity involves the issue of time, which is what Ricoeur has been most concerned with. In his *Time and Narrative* (1985), Paul Ricoeur discusses the
variations of identity, such as, ‘self-constancy’ and ‘narrative identity’, which can include ‘change and mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime.’ (246). According to Ricoeur, the existence of narrative identity is also confirmed by study of autobiography, as ‘the story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself’ (246).

At the same time, in this thesis I contend that this view can be applied to children’s fiction which takes the forms of fictive autobiography, diaries and letters, and texts which have characters who tell their stories through their writings. The characters who write in these texts similarly project what Ricoeur suggests, ‘the self of self-knowledge’ (247).

These views suggest that ‘story’ can be interpreted as a significant element for one’s self. Consequently, an act of story telling/writing implies functioning as creating and forming one’s identity. In her study on the connection between gender and agency, Lois McNay hypothesises a link between creativity, agency and act. As the following section regarding Judith Butler’s view (1990) suggests, gender can be regarded as an element of personal identity, and, therefore, McNay’s view can be applied to the issue of identity in a general sense. McNay states that a ‘creative dimension to action is the condition of possibility of certain types of autonomous agency understood as the ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behaviour’ (2000:22). This indicates that the act of writing may be seen as proving the independence and sovereign power of the writers.

In her discussion of gender/sexual identities, Judith Butler suggests that the theory of performative agency is the key to subjectivity. She considers that
gender/sexual identities can be created through repetitive performance, as subjectivity is variable and diverse. This theory is applicable in terms of the act of writing and the writer's subjectivity. It seems to me that, through the act of writing, individual writers are giving a performance of collecting their own thoughts, pulling together and creating their own selves. Postmodernism has a view of self as inconsistent and unstable, which may ultimately imply that the self does not exist. Such a drastic message is often considered to be unsuitable for young readers who are in the process of growing up. Butler's theory may provide a solution by indicating that self can be achieved through one's own performance or activity. Texts for young readers which include writing characters or which adopt personal writing formats, underpin the issue of self-identity, and, at the same time, promote the positive image of the characters, who create and reinforce their self-identity by themselves, by their act of writing. If that is the reason for the choice of such styles or patterns of texts for young readers, it seems to me that the recent growth in the number of such texts reflects more pressure on self-identity today.

Seeing self as neither unified nor unique has become widely accepted in recent criticism (Hall, 2004, Robbins, 2005). This is linked to the view of regarding self as a social being, a part of the world. Although the main trend of children's literature is to convey a capable, unique, independent and autonomous image of self, the message of becoming part of society is also projected as a remedy for solipsism. As will be examined in the following chapter, the stories of young writers demonstrate similar patterns in that all writing characters not only establish their unique subjectivity, but also become in the process adequate members of the community.
These are effectively symbolised by the change in the nature of the writing characters’ writing, from private to public. As Chapter Three demonstrates in detail, the writing activity of the young characters begins with personal writing such as diaries and letters, and moves on to a story or newspaper article, which has a bigger audience and a more public nature. Kim Worthington suggests that the binary opposition of liberalism which considers self as autonomous existence, and communitarianism which sets the communal authority above the former, tend to merge in recent fiction in mainstream literature (1996:72). This view seems to be relevant to texts for young readers as well. Self is created by both internal and external elements. In terms of a child’s maturation, when there is too much emphasis placed on autonomy and independence, which owe much to the child’s interiority, there is a danger of the child developing a self-centred view and solipsism. Since any human being is a social being, it is essential that one becomes part of community and society. The achievement of amicable relationships among family and friends is also depicted as an important issue, as much as the independence of characters in texts.

The child writer as ideological being

Barbara Wall suggests that changes in the use of first person narrative before and after the mid-twentieth century reflect a move away from the tendency to regard the exposure of real insight into children’s minds as inappropriate in children’s literature. In fact, she continues, ‘I doubt if the position is really very different now, in fiction written for children, although fashions have changed as regards what it is considered appropriate to reveal’ (1991:247). This observation can be interpreted
as implying that even when the first-person narrative, which is normally associated with immediacy and authenticity, is used as child protagonists’ remarks or their writings in modern texts, ‘the exposure of real insight’ will be still limited to appropriate issues encountered in texts. Considering this observation with the comment regarding the use of first person narration in her study of the twentieth-century children’s literature by Anne Scott as mentioned in the previous chapter, ‘[e]ven if it is no more than a literary device, the use of the first-person voice has effectively diluted the separate adult presence one could always detect in children’s books of the past’ (1985:113), the words generated by child characters in the text may include mostly things which are ‘appropriate’ to adult judgements without revealing the judges. As stated earlier in the Introduction, both Schwenke Wyile and Cadden warn that the immediate-engaging narration, including first-person narration, should not be overused in texts for young readers, due to its limited perspective. This limitation indicates the lack of the perspectives of the people around the central characters within texts, as well as that of adult authors. In that sense, the use of fictional ‘voice’ of children by adult authors should be treated with some caution, in order to avoid misuse. However, at the same time, it seems to me that the voice of children or the child writers with their own voices can be associated with something delightful, admirable and to be welcomed. Incidentally, fictional child writers seem to present a parallel to those children with pens in their hands in reality, whom McMaster celebrates for their ability, autonomy and authority:

“The pen has been in your hands,” Anne Elliot famously reminds a man, during a dispute in Persuasion about the relative virtues of the sexes. It is Jane Austen’s most overtly feminist statement. The child, similarly, can with
justice remind adults that the pen has been in their hands. The issue of who holds the pen is after all crucial. And when a child takes the pen in hand, that child is taking a determined step toward the control of language, of representation, of authority. The child, usually little, mostly subordinate, always subject to control by parent or baby-sitter or teacher, has a lot to gain by wresting the means of representation from the adults.

(277)

This view concerning child writers is certainly based on reality and real people, and it may be irrelevant to compare it with the fictional characters who are writing in children’s fiction. However, if this is the image of child writers, real or fictional, it is possible to interpret that the child characters who write in fiction are loaded with symbolic implications, as well as ideological images.

The familiar and intimate voices and words of young characters also become very attractive to peer readers, although the words may simply imply the ideology or expectation of the adult authors. It may be too extreme and irrelevant a view, but they can even be regarded as giving subtle and intrinsic propaganda. In that respect, these characters who write may seem to be puppets of the adult authors, and that the authors act as ventriloquists. Barbara Wall’s in-depth study of narration indicates that many unsuccessful attempts to create child voices, including some cases of child writers, only reveal adult voices which are moralistic, didactic, ironic etc. John Stephens also suggests that first-person narrations including characters who write, ‘turn[s] out to be no more than functions of narration’ (2002:39). He implies that ‘a child voice’ is employed as a narrative technique to convey the adult author’s message. Both views by Wall and Stephens may imply that to consider adult authors as ventriloquists suggests an excessively negative view towards them, as well as being an unnecessary concern. However, Stephens also indicates the significance of this pattern as, ‘the
site of enunciation offered by the mode of first-person narration, which came to
dominate the literature during [the second half of the twentieth century], has
seemed to guarantee an inner life and capacity for self-expression as images of
subjectivity’ (39). As Stephens recognises the validity and efficacy of first-person
narrative for emphasising subjectivity, it is important to examine the employment of
the above mentioned patterns of fictional writing figures, which should be
examined more seriously. The interpretation of child writing figures as puppets of
adult authors is most relevant in the discussion of younger writing characters.
Therefore, an extended discussion of the topic of ventriloquism is included in
Chapter Three, on pre-pubertal characters.

Conclusion

The issue of self, perhaps the ultimate topic for many human beings today, even
though this may have very different connotations, in Western and Japanese
societies, is also one of the most significant elements in children’s literature.
However, neither the definition nor history of ‘self’ has been steady or
straightforward. When the vicissitudes of the concept of self are taken into
consideration, the interpretation of literature which deals with the self issue
introduces further complication. The other significant element to consider is that
literature is a reflection of the reality of society, as well as the ideology of society.
An ideological element is inevitable in children’s literature, due to its unequal power
relationship between the producer and the target consumer, in other words, adults
and children respectively. Following these considerations, the understanding of
the ‘self’ in children’s literature is complex.
The concept of ‘self’, which appears to be an essential factor for modern individuals, has changed significantly over a relatively short period. Formerly, the recognition of self was regarded as the key to distinguishing people from animals. The concept of self became more and more significant through the Enlightenment Movement and changes in the way of living, where the individual became central to society, due to the influence of the Industrial Revolution, and to the development of today’s modern day way of life. The very focus of the Enlightenment Movement was this giving of value to the development of the individual within society. The goal thus becomes to achieve the sense of self, and each individual achieving this goal. This concept of self as an ultimate goal appears to have become something stable and absolute in Western thought, and this view seems to have been reflected by literature. Conventional children’s literature, therefore, which is targeted at an audience in the process of growing up and searching for self, has been depicting and promoting the significance of the process of searching for self, and of the self as definite and immutable. By contrast, contemporary society, which could be described as essentially more varied, cosmopolitan, multi-cultural and gender conscious appears to offer a notion of self which is more flexible, changeable, negotiable and open-ended. Contemporary children’s literature, therefore, also reflects contemporary society, where each individual character within the literature has the possibility of a range of developmental opportunities, regarding the self-identity issue.

‘Self’ is often rephrased as ‘subjectivity’, as in the work of various theorists mentioned above. The term subjectivity suggests that the internal and external elements for its creation are the individual’s internalisation of the search for self,
and the various external influences on the individual, such as the perceptions of others and individual social status, during this process. The link between this social element and language is a major focus of writing characters, where the character exists within its own words, in each text. In that sense, the texts with writing characters appear to be promoting the significance of creating selfhood by having one’s own voice and expressing oneself.

The issue of self is common to every text studied in the following chapters. Each chapter has a different theme, and the themes will be analysed, applying a particular theory and concept, including the discussion on Bildungsroman as a literary form, feminist theory, theories of masculinity, queer theory. Needless to say, the issue of self is central to each of these theories. The Bildungsroman depicts the development of character, thus an understanding of the maturation of selfhood is essential. Feminist and queer theories and theories of masculinity fundamentally deal with the issue of self, subjectivity and identity. These theories emerged as the result of the struggle for the possibilities of selfhood which are free from any predefined idea imposed by the majority. In this way, the issues discussed in this chapter will also be related to discussion in the following chapters.
Chapter Three: Young Writers

This chapter focuses on texts which include pre-pubertal characters who learn to express themselves through literary creation. The literary form consists of diverse elements, such as letters, diaries, autobiography, fictional stories and poems. The process of the characters’ development as artists, writers or poets is revealed gradually throughout each text. Their artistic progress often coincides with their personal development as growing human beings. This is noted by scholars, such as Victor Watson, who refers, in the introduction of *Coming of Age in Children’s Literature*, to ‘apprentice authors’ (Meek and Watson, 2003: 26-31), in children’s literature, by which he means unique types of characters whose writing deed shows a significant connection to their ‘maturation’. In terms of literary conventions, the text which shows this phenomenon can be termed Bildungsroman, or formation novel, which depicts the development of the character as an individual as defined by Trites (1997:63).  

For this chapter I have selected four primary texts which include pre-pubertal writing characters. The reason for the selection comes from the protagonists’ active and positive involvement in the writing deed, not from the very beginning of the texts, but, at least, eventually. Louise Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy* (1964), the earliest of the four texts discussed in this chapter, is considered a modern classic. The protagonist Harriet is often seen as one of the early examples

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38 The two literary terms, Bildungsroman and Künstlerroman, are often referred to in the realm of children’s literature study, in order to describe certain story patterns. This chapter investigates the terms further, in particular in reference to the connotation of the term in the original German texts.

39 As will be mentioned later in this chapter, Trites’ more recent interpretation regarding the term Bildungsroman specifically signifies ‘novels in which the protagonist comes of age as an adult’ (2000:10).
of the feminist character in children’s literature; the book is discussed in this light in the studies of Paul (1989) and Trites (1997). In that sense, it might seem to be more sensible to consider this text in the following chapter, on female characters who write. However, Maria Nikolajeva’s observation, ‘a children’s Künstlerroman portraying a young writer (Harriet the Spy) […] may focus on hardships and temporary failures, but the character’s age alone allows a good deal of optimism’ (2002:218), offers another way of interpreting Harriet the Spy. This comment focuses attention on one of the similarities shared by the protagonists from the four texts examined in this chapter. The characters are generally pre-teen in age: Harriet in Harriet the Spy is aged 11, Leigh in Dear Mr. Henshaw is aged 7 at the beginning of the story, and 12 at the end of the story, Tracy in The story of Tracy Beaker is aged 10, and Jack in Love My Dog is also not a teenager, although his age is not clearly stated in the text. The story lines of these texts show overall linear developments, different from the more complex narratives of the texts which deal with older female and male characters, explored in Chapter Four and Chapter Five respectively. I will explore the image of young characters who write with regard to the literary forms of the Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman, which will be explored later.

A valid criterion for assessing whether a text is specifically children’s literature, and for determining its quality, may, therefore, be the extent to which the

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40 Although I mention the feminist interpretation of Harriet the Spy here, this chapter focuses on pre-pubertal characters regardless of their gender identities. The following section justifies the reason for the selection of this topic.

41 The setting of this American text appears to be the equivalent of primary school. From this and the content of the protagonist’s poem, I speculated that the protagonist is not a teenager. In compiling the database, it has frequently been necessary to speculate, regarding the exact age/stage of protagonists, as this is not always made explicit, by the writer.
young protagonist is undergoing a process of development. It is also interesting that, coincidentally or not, the four texts examined in this chapter, containing writing characters who continue to develop throughout stories, have conformed to the ideals of a number of children's literature awards. If we regard child writing characters as the creation of adult authors, driven perhaps by their ideological views, novels with child writing characters might seem to be texts which convey a certain message through the useful literary device of 'child writer'. This chapter will attempt to explore the literary paradigm of the Bildungsroman thoroughly, in order to identify its nature, and to demonstrate the relationship between the Bildungsroman and the transmission of ideological messages. The nature of the relationship between author and writing character is contentious, but, in particular, the negative element will be further developed in relation to the theory of ventriloquism, at the end of this chapter.

The fact that these young writers are subtly idealistic also suggests a problematic political issue, which exists in children's literature. The appealing words or voices of these young protagonists, for young readers are not written by genuine peers, but written by adult authors. Except for *Harriet the Spy*, the texts

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42 The texts explored in this chapter reveal not only this pattern of development of the young writer, but also show a common characteristic, in that many of these novels seem to have achieved literary awards. These four texts seem (almost) to satisfy the criteria and ideals of the awards for children's books. Beverly Cleary's (1983) *Dear Mr. Henshaw* won the Newbury medal, in 1984, an award which is given for 'the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in English in the United States'. Sharon Creech's *Love That Dog* (2001) gained the Christopher Award in Canada in 2002 in the 'books for young people' (ages 8-10) section; the criteria of the award is the literary work which, 'affirms the highest values of the human spirit' (2006); this book was also short-listed for the Carnegie Award. Jacqueline Wilson's *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) was short-listed for the Smarties Prize, which was 'established to encourage high standards and stimulate interest in books for children'; the shortlist for it is drawn up by adult judges. Although the criteria of these awards are different, the coincidence of having similar character settings and young protagonists who write within the texts, may suggest that the paradigm of an artist character functions to give welcome ideological messages in texts.
examined in this chapter are composed almost solely of accounts which are supposed to be written by young protagonists. The texts have the ‘realistic’ characteristic that the young protagonists’ writings are not smooth or eloquent at the beginning of the story, but they gradually become much longer and deeper in content, and show significant developments and improvements during the course of the stories. However, at the same time, the image that an adult author creates in a young character, and, in letting the creation express himself or herself, using the authors’ words, is similar to the way in which a ventriloquist manipulates his or her dummy. The issue of ventriloquism as a concern for children’s literature in general has already been mentioned in the Chapter Two. Yet, in particular, the young age of the child writers in the texts discussed in this chapter needs to be dealt with in-depth in the following section.

The implications of the Bildungsroman: children’s literature?

As the following section explores in detail, the four texts chosen for this chapter reveal that, for each protagonist, to write has a significant meaning, as well as beneficial functions. Yet writing as the action of characters in each text seems to have further implications. It is very important to note the fact that both the adult authors of fiction and these fictional child characters use writing as their way of expressing themselves. To the question, ‘Why is becoming a writer such a consistent theme in so many novels?’ Victor Watson suggests that ‘an obvious answer is that their authors see maturation in terms of their own lives, in which writing was important’ (2003:27). He further argues that the fictional journals or notebooks within a text represent a metaphor of reflective adolescence. Similarly
to the journal owners, the journals are ‘private, self-obsessed, intelligent’ (27) and offer the potential to discover maturation as they enable their ‘writer[s] to see [his/] her life in time and context’ (27). The young protagonists examined in this chapter do not necessarily reach adolescence within the novels; however, their development is clearly shown in their writings. While a number of novels suggest that writing characters produce creative and imaginative writing, as well as direct first person accounts of their thoughts and feelings, it seems that this kind of fiction represents the act of writing as having some symbolic significance and imagery, which function to indicate the independence and power of such young writers in the fiction. This is likely to be similar to the way the experience of writing affected the adult authors of these books, possibly even at a young age.

The four novels chosen for this chapter, all of which involve a young writer/poet, have in common a more dynamic story line of the development of an artist than those texts which mainly reveal characters’ psychological developments. This characteristic of having a narrative pattern of a developing artist can be explored through a consideration of the above-mentioned literary term Künstlerroman, which is a sub-genre of Bildungsroman. These two terms seem to be used with certain implications within the realm of children’s literature study. Thus the use and interpretation of these terms will be explored here. In addition to Trites’ rephrasing as, ‘formation novel’ (1997), Bildungsroman has other definitions such as ‘a kind of novel that follows the development of the hero or heroine from childhood or adolescence into adulthood, through a troubled quest for identity’ in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms and novels ‘of “education” (in the

43 This is based on the results of the database I created. See Appendix.
widest sense)” in *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*. The German origin is emphasised with Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–6) as the best known example. Novels in the English language are also listed as Bildungsromane such as Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1849–50), Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (1902) and D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913) and James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), (listed in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* and *The Novel: A Guide to the Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*).

Maria Nikolajeva makes an observation, “[a]ccording to conventional genre definitions, all children’s literature can be labelled as bildungsroman [sic]” (Nikolajeva, 2002:ix) which is different from ‘the courtesy novel, fabliaux […], sacred myth, epic, legend, allegory, confession or satire’ (ix). Narratologically it may be a reasonable remark, but considering the most well-known interpretation of the term Bildungsroman as ‘formation novel’, and Nikolajeva’s following remark ‘[t]he nature of children’s literature presupposes a different set of rules both for the authors’ creation of characters and for the readers’ understanding of them’ (ix), the use of the term requires some caution.  

In point of fact, Roberta Seelinger Trites comments that ‘scholars of children’s and adolescent literature have tended to overemploy the term *Bildungsroman* in recent years’ (2000:10, italics original) in order to describe the stories of characters’ growth. According to Trites, this ‘novel

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44 As mentioned earlier the primary texts are Künstlerroman, and the character’s development as an artist is more significant than development into adulthood. I use the term Bildungsroman in a much wider and more general sense than Trites’s definition, as in Nikolajeva’s interpretation. In Nikolajeva’s view Bildungsroman means story of development and does not necessarily include the character’s reaching adulthood. Following these, Bildungsroman requires the characters to reach adulthood by the end of each story. The above pattern does not apply to the primary texts for this chapter.
of development’ should be termed the Entwicklungsroman (or novel of development), and the Bildungsroman signifies the coming of age novels, in which the characters reach adulthood at the end of the story (10). Within children’s literature grim social issues appear, particularly in realist fiction, such as broken-families, divorce, poverty, child-abuse, sex, death, etc. which do not uniformly lead to happy endings. The happy endings are, generally speaking, associated with the outcomes of developments of the protagonist. The deplorable topics illustrated in texts which contribute to an unhappy ending are, according to Trites, typically seen in the ‘problem novels’ which are Entwicklungsromane (2000:14) Having two terms is particularly useful for Trites’ study of adolescent literature. However, the term Bildungsroman will not be discarded in my study. It is more important to explore the connotation of the use of the term Bildungsroman in the realm of children’s literature in a general sense, than simply to follow Trites’ recommendation, and adopt Entwicklungsroman.

Following the above, I started to question whether the use of the term Bildungsroman in the study of children’s literature implies that the general assumption for children’s books is that they are about development, progress and growth, or reveal the expectation for them to address these subjects. It is worthwhile to examine how the Bildungsroman, ‘literature to show the way of life to readers’ was accepted in German society originally in order to understand the interpretation of the Bildungsroman in children’s literature. Returning to Trites, she summarises the implications of the term in the German context. In the German Bildungsroman ‘the protagonists’ growth is neither accidental […] nor simply a matter of normal developmental growth […]; rather, the hero self-consciously sets
out on a quest to achieve independence’ (11). Therefore, she sees the Bildungsroman as ‘an inherently Romantic genre, with its optimistic ending that affirms the protagonist’s entry into adulthood’ (2000:11-12). Trites clearly intends to distinguish the Bildungsroman in this sense from novels redefined as the above-mentioned term Entwicklungsroman, which depicts characters’ ‘simple growth’ where no obviously positive outcome is reached. But, what Trites would refer to as the misuse of the term Bildungsroman, in the criticism of children’s literature, may already imply that there is a general view that any growth experienced by the characters is accepted as positive in this field.

Regarding the implication of the term Bildungsroman in German cultural sense, Jeffery L. Sammons (In Hardin, 1991) provides the additional context:

traditionally in Germany the study of literature was not a compartmentalized segment of the humanities, as it has been in our universities, but was subsumed under the comprehensive discipline of Germanistik, the study, reinforcement, and transmission of the presumed cultural values of the nation. Thus a question such as the definition of the Bildungsroman is an issue not confined to academic discourse, but spreads into the ideological self-understanding of the culture as a whole.

(in Hardin, 1991:29)

According to Sammons, the concept of Bildung (in English according to Collins German – English Dictionary it means ‘education, culture, formation’(2004, Terrell)) is ‘intensely bourgeois (42) and has ‘assumptions about the autonomy and relative integrity of the self, its potential self-creative energies, its relative range of options within material, social, even psychological determinants’ (42). Furthermore, Sammons points out that in the history of German literature, the books which can be categorised as Bildungsromane were not numerous, therefore not major, in terms of number. However, they were often regarded as being representative of
mainstream, since Bildungsroman was considered to be special (43). These statements suggest that the ideological intentions have created the specific implications and status of this literary genre.

The point that there is a specific ideology behind the Bildungsroman, in the case of the original German literature, may suggest that there is a specific ideology which has influence on the interpretation of the term within the realm of children’s literature. The tendency to regard all children’s literature as ‘Bildungsroman’, which is in its most general sense, ‘novel of development’ could suggest that the general assumption that texts for children are about development and progress, and thus convey a positive tone. The four texts examined in this chapter demonstrate the clear and obvious intentions of all their protagonists and their maturation, thus these texts seem to be the typical Bildungsroman in the children’s literature sense. Furthermore, their progress is reinforced by a focus on the characters’ developments as artists, which is considered to be the characteristic of another literary form, the Künstlerroman. The Künstlerroman is regarded to be a sub-category of the Bildungsroman, which depicts the development of an artist such as a writer, painter or musician. In her earlier study (1997), Trites clearly regards Harriet the Spy as a Künstlerroman, due to the protagonist, Harriet’s desire to be a writer. However, the characteristics of the Künstlerroman reveal that children’s literature study again seems to extend the interpretation of the term. Since the protagonist of a Künstlerroman has to be an artist, the story involves development as an artist, and the story depicts the artist’s self-consciousness and often illustrates a character’s reflectiveness, which is also found in texts for child readers. However, the dichotomy represented in the divided self which is created
by an artist’s own reflection, is more common with the mainstream Künstlerroman. As discussed by Maurice Beebe in his *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts* (1964:13) one type of artists often sacrifice their lives for the sake of art, or conflict with the outside world, whereas the other type achieves both artistic and social success. However, the former type does not appear within the four primary texts examined in this chapter. The success achieved as an artist at the same time seems to symbolise the elements required of the readers in becoming ideal individuals, such as ability, creativity and independence. Considering these characteristics, the use of the term within the realm of children’s literature is explored, particularly with regards to artistic identities of the protagonists in the chosen four novels.

It would seem that these four novels do not qualify in terms of ‘reaching adulthood’. However, since the development as artist has a more major significance for the characters than the characters’ age, in terms of the obvious developmental patterns in the stories, these four texts seem to qualify within the conditions of Trites’ strict use of Bildungsroman. The ideology underlying these four texts, which is that young children have to express themselves and establish their individual identities by themselves, may be even more marked because they employ the literary pattern of Bildungsroman/ Künstlerroman more directly than does children’s literature in general. Each character’s writing appears to be ‘autologous writing’ in terms of the fact that the writing/poem itself represents and embodies the writer/poet. The image of expressing oneself with one’s own ability stands for the self-sufficiency, independence and unique individuality, which are celebrated and expected qualities for young children to achieve eventually in life in Western society. Thus, the combination of autonomous young writing characters
and the linear developing pattern of Bildungsroman/ Künstlerroman in the texts for young readers can be interpreted as being loaded with ideological messages for the audiences.

In her study of literature for adolescents within a historical context, a German scholar, Dagmar Grenz, suggests that after the period when the Bildungsroman was a major genre, the school novel emerged as a new genre; it depicts the unhappy ending of youth, with the issues such as death, no discovery of identity or meaning of life (173-182 in Nikolajeva ed.). From Grenz’s proposal, that there is another story pattern for adolescent characters, I speculate that an idealistic Bildungsroman pattern is more frequently employed in texts featuring pre-adolescent characters, which are primarily targeted at readers of a similar or younger age. The following section examines the four chosen texts, in order to demonstrate that texts which include pre pubertal child writing characters involve material carrying similar ideological implications: that children in difficult situations ultimately conquer and solve problems by themselves and then proceed to a better and happier future.

**The paradigm of the young writer**

*Harriet the Spy* (1964), *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) and *Love that Dog* (2001) all share the same premise as the Künstlerroman, in that the protagonist of each is some kind of artist: either writer or poet. Gender may be the main ground for the differences between the male protagonists, Leigh and Jack, and the female protagonists, Harriet and Tracy.

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45 Grenz considers this story pattern symbolises the crisis of the bourgeoisie.
Leigh and Jack initially show reluctance to write, as well as some difficulty in the writing itself, but they gradually reveal their development, and their transformation takes place throughout the texts. On the other hand, Harriet and Tracy already write prolifically from the beginning of each text, and they have clear visions that they will be writers in their future. It is possible to deduce that this tendency is created by each author in order to correspond to popular assumptions that girls mature earlier than boys, and that writing activity, in particular poetry making, is considered to have feminine associations, just as Jack, the protagonist of *Love that Dog*, refuses to write poems for the same reason. The influence of the author’s gender on the creation of literary character is questionable. It is possible that, when authors create opposite sex characters, those characters may carry more stereotypical images. Nevertheless, I feel the overall effect of these characters writing is the same regardless of the gender; learning to express, opening up, confronting personal problems, finding some solutions, and showing obvious progression. Therefore, I decided not to focus on gender issues among pre-pubertal characters. Equally, the influence of authors’ gender on characters’ gender is not a central issue for discussion here.

The fundamental story lines of the four texts are not very different, and similarly show the protagonists’ development as both artists and young persons. The youth of these protagonists may be the key to this phenomenon. Not only does their youth generate the above-mentioned ‘optimism’ (Nikolajeva, 2002:218), it seems to create a less complicated, sex-free situation.\(^\text{46}\) Both Harriet and Tracy

\(^{46}\) I am aware of the contradiction I appear to have created, with this sentence. Earlier, I mentioned that some children’s literature scholars have treated *Harriet the Spy* as a feminist story. The Story
are still too young to appreciate their gender and sexual identities fully, and consequently these do not jeopardise their identities as writers.47

It is also significant that the dates of the publications are scattered over nearly forty years, although these four texts have a very similar story pattern. This phenomenon may imply that ideologies presented to young readers have not fundamentally changed over this time period. In particular, a pre-teenage setting for protagonists may suggest that the ideology presented to the target audiences, who are either the same age as these characters or slightly younger than them, has not varied significantly since the 1960s. Alternatively, in other words, the first example of these texts with a young writing character, Harriet the Spy is considered as an early case of a feminist story, since feminist messages such as ‘achieving one’s own voice’ and ‘manifesting oneself’ have subsequently become widespread in the realm of children’s literature. 48 It can be explained it might be claimed that a reason for this growth in appreciation is the way that individualism has been spread and accepted in society over these years. In addition, to generalise the nature of the four texts as Künstlerromane/Bildungsromane, it is necessary to examine what exactly the young characters undergo during the composition of each of their own pieces of writing, in order to understand the

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47 The Introduction of The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development (1983), (ed) Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland summarises the conventional patterns of the female Kunstlerroman, and urges protagonists to choose either to be ‘artist’ or ‘woman’. Trites refers to this as a comparison to her examination of Harriet the Spy in her Feminist Children’s literature study, Waking Sleeping Beauty (1997), which will be referred to in Chapter Four.

48 See Chapter Four on the connection between children’s literature and feminist theory.
significance of these texts in relation to the society which receives them. The patterns common to the four texts are:

- a successful development as an artist.
- a progression, since the story pattern ends happily.
- overcoming of problems by themselves.
- the existence of a literary mentor, who encourages the protagonist's creativity.

The development of the young artist is recognised in the transformation of the nature of his/her writing from private to public. This happens either by creating different forms of literary works, or by accepting an audience for the writing. As protagonists make progress throughout the texts, the ending of each story becomes both the goal and the climax. Each text has a happy ending fitted to the fairy tale paradigm. Each protagonist has some problems to conquer in the story. The issues often require not only the direct solutions of the problem, but also the development of a state of mind which enables the young characters to accept the undesirable situation. The protagonists achieve such development through their writing activity. Not only does writing represent their artistic progress, the act also functions as consoling, healing and encouraging the young artists. In Künstlerroman there are often teacher figures either to nurture the protagonist or become an obstacle for the protagonist to overcome (in Pavlovski). Due to their

49 Moretti mentions that the English Bildungsroman, in examples such as *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, has the fairy tale characteristic of good vs. evil. Moretti further argues that these dual counterparts suggest the juridical opposition of 'right' and 'wrong'. Consequently, '[t]he Bildungsroman, in fact, seems to justify itself as a form in so far as it duplicates the proceedings of a trial' (212). This view suggests another ideological implication of the Bildungsroman that there is the possibility of clear judgement, either black or white as in fairy tales.
youth and inexperience, these protagonists are given support and guidance in each story. The mentor figures are all literary; in fact except for Ole Golley in *Harriet the Spy*, each is a professional writer, suggesting that these fictional figures are parallel to the real author of each text.

**Harriet the Spy**

Harriet, the protagonist of *Harriet the Spy* (1964) by Louise Fitzhugh, is an active and strong-minded girl, who is already determined to be a writer, and has been conducting 'spy' activity, and making notes since she was eight-years-old, as a preparation for her future dream. Harriet explains how to ‘play town’ to her friend Sport at the beginning of the novel, ‘Well, I’m going to be a writer. And when I say that’s a mountain, that’s a mountain’ (1985:2). This shows her strong personality and her passion for creativity, as well as her tendency to be solipsistic, and her self-centred interpretation of the definition of writer. Harriet is the only child of wealthy parents, who are quite busy with their own business and social commitments, but she has enough attention from other adults, as well as good friends, such as Sport and Janie.

Fitzhugh depicts a change that occurs when Harriet’s nanny, a surrogate mother figure, Ole Golly, leaves her job. This is after Harriet becomes eleven years old, an age at which she is seen as no longer requiring a nanny. At the same time, Ole Golly also decides to get married and move away to start a new life with her husband.

Initially Harriet remarks on her enthusiasm for becoming a spy and writer, saying that ‘I want to know everything, everything, […] Everything in the world,
everything, everything, I will be a spy and know everything’ (1985:13-14). This could be interpreted as symbolising her relationship to society. Harriet is not in harmony with the rest of the world; instead, she tries to be opposed to it, in order to capture the other people as the object of her interest. This may suggest that Harriet is capable of being separated from other people and isolated. However, she clearly suffers from the separation from Ole Golly as:

*I feel all the same things when I do things alone as when Ole Golly was here. The bath feels hot, the bed feels soft, but I feel there’s a funny little hole in me that wasn’t there before, like a splinter in your finger, but this is somewhere above my stomach*

(1985:80-81, italics original)

Harriet clearly understands the differences she is encountering, since Ole Golly has left.

The change in Harriet’s life does not finish with the loss of Ole Golly. Harriet becomes completely alienated from her classmates at school, when they become hostile to her, as a result of discovering her honest and sometimes unkind observations regarding them in her precious notebook, which they have stolen from her. Harriet struggles with isolation and loneliness and loses confidence in herself, which consequently leads to her nearly losing her ability to write. Although her writing has caused the whole problem, the writing also becomes the solution to the situation. Fitzhugh mainly employs third person narrative, but what Harriet writes in her notebook is written in the first person and is shown in an italic font. The amount in italics increases as Harriet’s isolation grows within the story. In her notebook she often reveals her agony as well as her determination, as if she is talking to somebody whom she can trust. She tries to re-establish her confidence and dignity through writing when she faces total negation by other children. She
reassures herself of her own existence by writing ‘I love myself’ (128), and encourages herself, ‘whatever happens don’t let me cry’ (132). These actions illustrate that her writing activity contributes to creation of her ‘self’. When Harriet realises her difficult situation, in which she is against the rest of her classmates, she clearly indicates how significant writing is for her:

_They have a club and I am not in it. It is also a club against me. They are really out to get me. I have never had to go through something like this. I will have to be very brave. I will never give up this notebook but it is clear that they are going to be as mean as they can until I do. They just don’t know Harriet M. Welsch._

(136)

Later, when Harriet is deprived of her notebook or the act of writing itself, the desire to write becomes even stronger, as she is less capable of thinking without writing, ‘The thoughts came slowly, as though they had to squeeze through a tiny door to get to her, whereas when she wrote, they flowed out faster than she could put them down’ (144). However, the story relates that she cannot simply keep to the same kind of writing, thus remaining isolated from others, in order to find a solution to this situation.

Harriet, having gone through this difficult situation, and consequent processes, (which are indicated by many of her experiences and symptoms, such as being isolated at school, rebelling against parents, cook and teachers, having counselling with a psychoanalyst, and having nightmares), finally receives some advice from Ole Golly, whom she has missed the most. According to Ole Golly, (who functions as a mentor), Harriet needs to apologise to her friends over her honest and often unkind observations, and to tell lies, as ‘writing is to put love in the world, not to use against your friends’ (Fitzhugh, 169). This advice is
controversial, in a moral sense; it has been argued by Trites (1997:67-8) that this is
the weakest point of the whole story, whereas Lissa Paul celebrates the ‘little lie’
as a feminist trick. With the ‘little lie’ Harriet manages to alter and edit her private
and self-centred writing into a public story which will satisfy others. The
unconventional method, that of pretending to be a different thing, or in other words,
the use of deception, is employed in order to succeed in a patriarchal society
(Paul, 1989:70). However, the advice of Old Golly may simply reflect the time of its
publication, the 1960s, when the collective good had more value than individual
rights, as well as the fact that feminism was not yet widespread. Nevertheless, I
simply interpret this as a part of the power of writing as act. Nonetheless, most
significantly, Harriet manages to resolve the situation by writing again, but this time
not only with her egotistic attitude, but also with a more understanding, broad-
minded approach toward other people.

Author Fitzhugh shows an ironic treatment of ‘writing’, so that it becomes
both the cause of the problem, as well as the solution for Harriet. However, Harriet
the Spy clearly shows that Harriet herself matures while she goes through a
number of experiences and records them in her notebook. Harriet’s development
as an artist is not only seen in the transformation of her private spy note into a
public article in the school newspaper, but also in her realisation of her ability as a
writer. As Harriet notices towards the end of the story, ‘description’ (182) is her
weakest point, despite the fact she has been spying and writing down what she
has observed since she was eight-years-old. This indicates that she has finally
recognised that she has not understood the existence of other people’s
perspectives but only her own. Following the advice from Ole Golly, Harriet also
realises that she has reached the point where she can move on from notes towards another kind of writing, the kind of story that a real writer writes, in her view of what a real writer produces. It implies that Harriet has completed the period of being an apprentice at that point. This is revealed in her final sentence, ‘Now that things are back to normal I can get some real work done’ (183). In this way, the text positively describes how Harriet, who has now achieved wider perspectives, as well as regaining confidence, has a sense of subjectivity, which keeps developing and maturing from now on.

In the light of the Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman theory, which I have discussed above, it is clear that Harriet the Spy could be considered as demonstrating a clear example of the specific characteristic use of the Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman pattern in children’s literature. It includes the clear development of Harriet as a writer by depicting the changes in her writing, from the ego-centric spy book to a public article which is sympathetic to others. It is also depicts her as solving a problem with a little advice from her mentor figure, but on her own by her act of writing. With the image of a character who gradually creates her self-identity coinciding with her writing activity, the text emphasises the Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman characteristics described above.

**Dear Mr. Henshaw**

From the beginning of the story, Harriet the Spy portrays Harriet as having a strong identity as a writer, as well as presenting the ability to write. By contrast in Dear Mr. Henshaw (1983), Beverly Cleary shows how, firstly, the protagonist Leigh gradually nurtures his interest in writing, then what writing means to him, and,
finally, how he develops as a writer throughout the text. In contrast to *Harriet the Spy*, *Dear Mr. Henshaw* takes the form of a combination of epistolary novel and diary fiction, and only consists of first-person-narrative, written by the protagonist Leigh. Consequently, the change or development occurring in Leigh appears more significant in his writing throughout the text than that of Harriet in the novel mentioned earlier.

At the beginning of this story set in America, Leigh is in the second grade in elementary school. As a part of his schoolwork, Leigh needs to write a letter to the author of his favourite book, *Ways to Amuse a Dog*, but Leigh is not at all interested in writing. Unsurprisingly, in the initial four years, the correspondence between immature writer Leigh, and a busy professional writer, Mr. Henshaw, is very limited and irregular. However, when he starts the sixth grade in a new school, following a move caused by his parents’ divorce, Leigh shows some changes in his attitude toward writing to Mr. Henshaw. It is possible to conclude that as he gets older he can write more easily as well as more profoundly. However, at the same time, he is in a situation where he has many issues to consider, such as being the new boy in school, and having a new home life with his mother alone. Compared to his previous attempts, when he again starts writing to Mr. Henshaw, in the new school, he is now much more capable of saying what he thinks, although he is still very immature as a writer, and does not enjoy or understand the significance of the act of writing. Leigh again writes to Mr. Henshaw in order to make an author report (as a part of his school work), for improving his writing skills.
The reply from Mr. Henshaw does not necessarily please Leigh, as the author does not simply answer Leigh’s question, but also includes a list of questions for Leigh himself to answer. The author of the text allows an author character, Mr. Henshaw, to ask ten questions which offer significant opportunities for Leigh to think and write more; they are: 1. Who are you? 2. What do you look like? 3. What is your family like? 4. Where do you live? 5. Do you have any pets? 6. Do you like school? 7. Who are your friends? 8. Who is your favourite teacher? 9. What bothers you? and 10. What do you wish? (1983:14-29). These questions not only urge Leigh to write replies for Mr. Henshaw, but also let him reflect on himself and lead to some answers about issues concerning Leigh. He is feeling unsure and insecure in the new situation where he feels less at ease in both family and school, the backgrounds which normally help young children to define themselves. Leigh’s writing is not necessarily voluntary in the initial stage, as he has required much encouragement, or rather a command from his mother, to reply to Mr. Henshaw. However, by the time he finishes the answers to the questions, the habit of writing has become part of him and important for Leigh, as he confesses, ‘I even sort of miss writing now that I’ve finished your questions’ (31-32). Soon Leigh continues that, ‘I get lonesome’ and explains that his mother is working away from home a lot. His solitude is also seen in his question for Mr. Henshaw, whether they could be pen pals or not. Mr. Henshaw suggests that Leigh keep a diary instead of becoming his pen pal. However, Leigh finds it difficult to keep a diary and creates an imaginary pen pal, Mr. Pretend Henshaw, to whom to address his letter. The pretend correspondence suggests that the communication is of much significance to Leigh at this stage. But as Leigh
declares later, ‘I don’t have to pretend to write to Mr. Henshaw anymore. I have
learned to say what I think on a piece of paper’ (73). Thus, ultimately, the text
illustrates the fact that he has learned the benefit of writing for himself.

The text seems to suggest that types of writing correspond to the ability or
the development of a writer. Cleary depicts Leigh attempting to write in order to
join the competition for the Young Writer’s Yearbook but fails to finish his fictional
story, The Ten-Foot Wax Man and is unable to find a solution to his semi-non-
fiction, The Great Lunchbox Mystery. As Mr. Henshaw has advised, Leigh finally
completes a piece of written work for the competition, and this is, in fact, a memoir
of his real experience with his father. Mrs. Badger, an author with whom the
children who win the competition dine, comments on Leigh’s writing. As another
mentor figure, who can be interpreted as a substitute for Mr. Henshaw, she
describes his story as ‘splendid work for a boy your age. You wrote like you,
and you did not try to imitate someone else. This is one mark of a good writer. Keep it
up’ (119-120, italics original). Here the idea of what a good writer should be
suggests the ideal image of a child who is being original, with a strong sense of
identity, instead of imitating others and losing him/herself. At the same time, the
content of Leigh’s writing, which is his memoir of a good but lost past, shows that
Leigh is well able to reflect on himself, and accept the fact that the loving memory
of his time with his father has become merely a thing of the past.

Geraldine Deluca (1990) interprets Leigh as a hero who goes through a
journey, by referring to a Jungian psychological text, Personal Mythology: The
Psychology of Your Evolving Self. A hero passes through adversity by losing an
initial paradise, becoming stronger from the experience, and, finally, following a
victorious climax, achieving at least the hope of a new paradise. In his writing, Leigh demonstrates just such a journey; he loses his paradise, the ideal happy family of himself, his Dad, Mum and their dog, Bandit, and goes through a number of difficulties, gradually learning to accept the situation so that he can be hopeful for his future. His connection with the past and the present are revealed in his writings. When he hopes to avoid harsh realities, he tries to escape into an unrelated fiction, *The Ten-Foot Wax Man*, which turns out to be a failure, as does his next attempt, *The Great Lunchbox Mystery*. In the end, Leigh writes about a day with his father, and this results in his recognition as an ‘author’. When Leigh writes *A Day on Dad’s Rig*, he may not have a sense that he is confronting his past, but, as the previous two trials were unsuccessful, writing about a happy event in the past is the inevitable final step for him in order to be an author or a hero who is aware of the self, and, therefore, ready for a better future. Deluca explains concisely the meaning of writing for Leigh:

> with his recording, and with his final achievement of writing about his own lost paradise, his own decision to recollect a joy of his past that is now gone and [...] by dealing with his sadness, transforming it into a record, he also reclaims his present and his future.  

*(1990:65)*

This shows the whole process: Leigh overcomes his problem by himself, rather than relying on his relationships with others in his mental and psychological development. In this way, the text suggests that writing as an act plays a significant role for Leigh’s development and celebrates his maturation into an autonomous figure. Leigh’s recognition and acceptance of the lost paradise might imply that the text has an unhappy ending. However, Leigh’s reaction to the fact that his parents will never get together, ‘I felt sad and a whole lot better at the
same time’ (134), in fact suggests he has achieved some degree of maturation as well as his positive view after his writing experiences, at the end of the text.

Again, I would suggest that this novel demonstrates the characteristics of Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman as described above, in that the protagonist Lee’s development and maturation as an individual and as a writer are, for me, typical of the use of the device in children’s literature. The use of his own writings seems to be particularly effective to represent and thus emphasise such development.

**The Story of Tracy Beaker**

Jacqueline Wilson’s *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) is about a girl who identifies herself as a writer, and writes the text as her autobiography. The book has been very successful, both with young readers and with adult critics and reviewers, and it has been dramatised on TV as a serial. Wilson is a prolific writer and extremely popular with child readers. Despite this popularity, and the cheerful and colourful cover, with pleasant illustrations by Nick Sharratt, many social issues of contemporary society are dealt with in her texts. Another characteristic of her texts is the use of first-person narrative, as well as multiple perspectives. In that sense, *The Story of Tracy Beaker* can be seen as an example of first-person narrative style. Equally, apart from the correctness of grammar, and the debatable plausibility of the content of the text as the writing of a ten-year-old girl, the text consistently reveals that it is written by Tracy, by taking the form of a ‘Life Book’, filled by her.  

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50 Some of Wilson’s other work, for example *Double Act*, which is in the form of a notebook, written by twin sisters, Ruby and Garnet, suggests that the text only adopts multiple first person narrative as a stance, but does not take the trouble to become realistic. For instance, when the twins fight
A more recent work by Wilson, *The Worry Website* (2002), also consists of chapters featuring different individuals who speak for themselves, in each chapter, and confront their own worries. This style can be interpreted as reflecting a society in which individualism is expected to exist. Even as an expression of concern and anxiety, it is still the representation of unique individuality. Interestingly this text seems to reveal Wilson’s personal ideological view, regarding children’s books in general. The text also contains a chapter written by a twelve-year-old, Lauren Roberts, a winner of a writing competition, organised by BOL (Books On Line) and the *Guardian* newspaper. Although Wilson praises the child’s work, and was involved in the selection process of the award, she actually changes the structure of the whole book by adding another story, after the one by Lauren Roberts. Wilson mentions in the text, ‘I’d planned to make Lauren’s the last story in the book but it ends so sadly that I decided to add one more story myself, just to try to end things on a happy note’ (2002:100). This remark reflects Nicholas Tucker’s observation on her work, ‘[W]hile some of Wilson’s stories can be quite sad they are never actually despairing, an important point in their overall appeal’ (2001:70).

*The Story of Tracy Beaker* also suggests the same tendency. 51

Ten-year-old Tracy, the protagonist, who lives in a Children’s Home, is represented as dreaming of becoming a famous writer. She is already a prolific writer at the beginning of the text, similar to Harriet in *Harriet the Spy*. Tracy writes in her Life Book, which has several sections, such as ‘About Me’, ‘My Own Family’

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51 However, there are different opinions regarding Wilson’s books. In particular regarding her choice of social issues, Hume describes her books as children’s victim-lit[erature]’ (2006).
and ‘Being in Care’, containing questions to be answered. Wilson reveals in *Talking Books* that she has obtained the idea of a Life Book from booklets filled in by children in care, which a social worker showed her (in Carter, 1999:252). The use of such booklets may suggest that, for children in care during the latter half of the twentieth century, there is an increase in the attention given to the development as individuals, which lead to them being asked to compile their own books, depicted by Wilson in the character of Tracy. Coincidentally, these questions in Life Book, which Tracy has to answer, are quite similar to the ten questions by Mr. Henshaw to Leigh Botts in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, in terms of promoting children to focus on themselves. The nature of these questions seems to be essential for children who are trying to find out who they are, in other words, their self-identity. Just as Leigh keeps writing, after finishing answering Mr. Henshaw’s questions, Tracy, who likes Story-writing best (19), continues writing in her Life Book in the section of ‘My Own Story’.

Tracy is depicted as writing her story in a very smooth and chatty way, moving from one topic to another quite quickly. Her style can be interpreted, in one way, as typical of the inexperienced or untrained writer, who cannot write concisely, comprehensively and in an orderly way with a clear structure. In another way, it may be considered as suggesting Tracy’s lively and talkative characteristics, as well as her enthusiasm for telling things and expressing herself. Tracy’s writing overall is, at one level, humorous, funny and sometimes cheeky, and it is easy to imagine it quickly catching the attention of the young reader. However, beneath the casual and friendly surface of Tracy’s words, there are, in fact, a number of significant, and, sometimes difficult issues, to be noticed by peer
readers. Tracy is in care, as she does not have a father, and her mother has hardly ever had contact with her, in spite of Tracy’s extremely positive view of her mother. It gradually appears that the time when Tracy starts writing her own ‘Story of Tracy Beaker’ is immediately after she returns to the Children’s Home from her second foster family. The fostering couple has cancelled fostering arrangements regarding Tracy, after having found out they are expecting their own baby, and reaching the conclusion that keeping Tracy, who does not have a good record with small children, is impossible. Tracy is obviously hurt by this experience, but, the author of the text, Wilson, does not say so clearly, but instead lets the reader read between Tracy’s obstinate lines:

[...] then I had this other couple. Julie and Ted. They were young and friendly and they bought me a bike and I thought it was all going to be great and I went to live with them and I was ever so good and did everything they said and I thought I’d be staying with them until my mum came to get me for good but then... I don’t want to write about it. It ended up with me getting turfed out THROUGH NO FAULT OF MY OWN. I was so mad I smashed up the bike so I don't even have that any more. And now I’m in a new children's home and they've advertised me in the papers but there weren't many takers and now I think they’re getting a bit desperate. I don’t care though. I expect my mum will come soon anyway.

(16-17, upper case as in original)

Tracy’s words are sharp and direct, but, at the same time, she is very sensitive about several issues which she cannot even refer to fully. In fact, the aspects unsaid and most avoided by Tracy hide the most emotionally damaging and difficult issues for her. Tracy has a special expression to describe her crying, ‘[...] I had these silly watery eyes. I didn’t cry though. I don’t ever cry. Sometimes people think I do, but it's my hay fever’ (29). Wilson repeatedly uses the words ‘hay fever’ to hint at Tracy’s sadness and sorrow throughout the text. This is effective for suggesting Tracy’s toughness very well, and, at the same time, it functions to give
subtle guidance for young readers in how to interpret the story, without the author being too imposing, or being too intrusive. Wilson’s use of Tracy’s voice ‘encourage[s] [the reader] to read between the psychological lines’ (Tucker, 2001:72), instead of describing the character omnisciently and assertively, in expressions such as ‘she is hurt’, ‘she is sad’ and ‘she nearly cries’. In this way, paradoxically, Wilson manages to indicate Tracy’s situation with much subtlety in her use of first-person-narrative, which is normally considered to represent the character’s voice more directly.

Tracy’s past, and her concern and anxiety, are gradually revealed, from the pieces of information she has released in her writing. However Tracy’s toughness and sensitivity prevent her from telling a straight story. She also has a tendency to tell imaginative stories, which she sometimes admits to being ‘fibs’. However, these stories imply the most significant issues for her. Tracy tells the story of her supposedly famous actress mother, who is too busy working in Hollywood and in other parts of the world to see Tracy. However, in fact, this exciting and fabulous story is not a true one. She only tells this story to convince not only others but also herself, and to deny the fact that she was abandoned by her mother when she was little, and has had hardly any contact with her since. Similarly, the invention of Tracy’s wonderful friend, who invites her to stay with her forever, only implies that Tracy did not have any friend to be with, nor any place to go, when she escaped from the Children’s Home in order to avoid the accusation of breaking her enemy Justin’s precious clock. Her habit of story making seems to separate her from the other people more, and lets her stay in her fantasy world. However, by writing stories which contain some elements of fact, as well as her true feelings, Tracy
gradually reveals her problems and sorrow in her writing. The text illustrates that this revelation of her own problems is a very important step in overcoming them. Following this, Tracy’s story writing functions differently from that of the cases of the other characters. As discussed above, ‘writing story’ appears to be a more advanced stage than the spy notes of Harriet or the diary of Leigh. Being ready to write a story as an oeuvre proves the ability and maturity of a writer, as both Harriet and Leigh have achieved significant qualities, such as a sense of identity, subjectivity, perspective and understanding for others. However, in Tracy’s case, it is not easy to distinguish between private writing and public writing, as the latter often functions as a gauge to estimate the development of a writer. It is also important to examine the nature of Tracy’s own ‘The Story of Tracy Beaker.’ As mentioned above, the text takes the form of her Life Book, which has several sections. This follows a format used to urge children to think and write about themselves, and Wilson uses the device of the rest of the book, with the heading ‘MY OWN STORY’, to allow Tracy to continue writing her story.

The variations of definition of ‘story’ are significant. Initially Tracy interprets the word as meaning ‘fairy tale’ and starts her story with the set phrase of fairy tales, ‘once upon a time’ (24). However, she denies this formula immediately afterwards, as her life is not as ‘happy’ as it should be in a fairy tale. Wilson depicts Tracy continuing expressing the complaint in her notebook, and ends up getting a summons from her social worker, Elaine, as ‘[t]his is your own special book about you, something that you’re going to keep for ever. You don’t want to spoil it by writing all sorts of silly cheeky rude things in it, do you?’ (28). Tracy’s answer seems to represent her anger and anxiety for her life, ‘It’s my life and it
hasn’t been very special so far, has it, so why shouldn’t I write any old rubbish?’ (28). At this stage Tracy still seems to think a ‘story’ has to be glamorous, and this suggests her expectation for her own life as well. However, Tracy’s realisation regarding her writing seems to change when she encounters the word ‘autobiography’ (107), to describe her writing, through a real writer, Cam, who has visited the Children’s Home. The text recounts that Cam, as a mentor figure, notices the significance of writing for Tracy, and gradually succeeds in opening Tracy’s heart and establishing a strong bond between them. This is significant in linking this novel to Künstlerroman theory, in that the progression in developing her writing prowess, from her early casual writing to more profound and revelatory writing coincides with her developing more profound relationships with other people.

Tracy’s contradictory attitude towards her writing, in trying to keep it ‘private’ but, at the same time, longing for someone to pay attention to it, is transformed by the encounter with Cam, so Tracy lets her read it. This suggests that Tracy’s writing has also changed in nature from private to public, as well as her development as a writer, even though she has not changed her style or type of writing. In fact, interestingly, her ‘autobiography’ ends by returning to a fairy tale style. It is significant that the text demonstrates several definitions of the words ‘fairy tale’. In the case of Tracy being accused by her foster mother in the past (25) for telling ‘fairy tales’, the term can be interpreted as ‘lie’ or ‘fib’. At the same time, her unrealistic story can symbolise hidden messages which she cannot or will not say out loud, as discussed above. The use of ‘Happily Ever After’ (158), in the ending of the text, suggests that Tracy recognises her life in a more positive way,
and feels happy, as should be the case in a fairy tale. This suggests the interpretation of ‘fairy tale’ in this text is, after all, very much more conventional, despite the other possibilities of interpretation of the words. Moretti’s view (see footnote 49 on page 97) on the relation between fairy tales and the Bildungsroman, and his interpretation of Bildungsroman as a juridical tale, may imply that this text tries to demonstrate the difference between good and bad, in a simple way, to young readers. Tracy, who has been unfortunate all her life, deserves to obtain happiness in the end. However, the sequel, *The Dare Game* (2000), in which Tracy is a teenager, has a more realistic tone. Despite the rosy happy-ending, having Cam as a foster mother in the first text, *The Dare Game* shows a complicated and ironic situation, in that the real mother comes back to Tracy’s life again and jeopardises her established happiness with Cam. At its conclusion, Tracy again finds happiness in the settlement with Cam, but this requires her realisation and acceptance of the reality she is facing, including the truth about her real mother. The more realistic tone in the sequel seems to reflect Tracy’s age difference from the first text to the sequel, as well as in the targeted audiences for each text. This raises the question of the correlation between the pattern of this work and the pattern of Bildungsroman already described. The book appears to reflect the Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman characteristics, in having a protagonist who develops herself through her writing activity, and matures into an independent minded individual. The possible ideological implication will be explored in the section: ‘Child writing figures as puppets?’.
**Love That Dog**

*Love That Dog* (2001) also takes the form of writing by the protagonist, whose name is Jack, but the categorisation of his writing is difficult. The text has been described as ‘original’ (Creech, 2001: rear cover) by reviewers. Yet, following an article by Peter Hollindale, the text might be more appropriately categorised as a ‘verse novel’ (2004).\(^{52}\) The text starts as Jack’s schoolwork for poetry class, dated September 13. Following entries also include the dates when they were written, and, consequently, they are in chronological order, and give the impression that the whole text can be interpreted as Jack’s diary. Despite the initial lack of recognition by Jack that what he is writing each day is a poem, the text can also be considered as a collection of his poems. Existing poems by real poets referred to in the novel appear in the appendix, and offer educationally valuable information to a young audience. Similarly to Leigh in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, Jack in *Love That Dog* initially has neither motivation nor interest in writing. On the contrary, at the beginning of his diary, Jack clearly refuses to write a poem, saying ‘[…] boys don’t write poetry. Girls do’ (2001:1). This may reflect reality, in both the resistance of boys to writing poetry and their frequent lower achievement in literary matters than girls. However, the text suggests a very encouraging message to the protagonist, since he, despite representing a less eloquent writer/poet, is shown as producing short diary entries, which can be considered as poetry. The recent publication of this book may suggest that the freedom of expression that the boy enjoys reflects the development of individual expression during this period. Although Jack starts

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\(^{52}\) Hollindale is concerned that ‘verse novel’ may ‘fall hostage to outright bibliotherapy’ (13), if this form becomes too fashionable. The issue of writing as healing and therapy is explored thoroughly in Chapter Four.
enjoying and appreciating poem making, the text still illustrates his insecurity and lack of confidence, in that he does not want to disclose his name, and prefers to remain anonymous. The story shows how he develops as both poet and individual, and concludes as his confidence in himself proves his maturity. In addition to his growth in terms of his poetry writing ability and his personality, the view of the poet figure contributes to the image of development and progress.

Similar to the other three protagonists, Jack also has some problems, which he keeps to himself. The traumatic experience of the death of his dog Sky is hinted at in various parts of his diary. He initially mentions matters related to Sky separately, such as the speeding blue car (8) and the day when he met the dog for the first time (25-27). When Jack reveals his dog’s name as Sky (45), it seems to prove that he has started to shorten the distance that he was keeping from his good but sad memory. Subsequently Jack manages to write an eloquent poem, to the memory of Sky (46-48). These changes indicate Jack’s emotional situation as he opens his heart, which has been blocked against the outside world as a result of his considerable suffering from the loss of Sky. As a next step, Jack can look back on the whole incident and reconstruct the memory of the death of Sky in another poem (68-72). Finally, he reaches the point when he can again celebrate his connection with Sky (68). These aspects of the text demonstrate Jack’s positive spirit, which also coincides with his positive attitude towards his poetry.

The text depicts Jack showing more interest in improving his poems by adopting new techniques. Although he worries about imitating an existing poem, he creates his own poem using the words from it which inspired him at school (46-48). Jack arranges words in the shape of a dog (37), after encountering a poem in
the shape of an apple. He also learns how to type and becomes very motivated to compose poems (67). He gains more confidence over his poems, so that he feels less intimidated at having his poem shown on the bulletin board in school for public attention. Furthermore, he finally agrees to reveal his identity as the author of the poems. Not only does this story line recall that of *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, but the climax of Jack’s story is also reached when he meets an adult poet, Mr. Walter Dean Myers. As with Leigh in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, Jack is reassured about his originality by a mentor-like real author and comes to accept his own qualities as an author. He can proudly present his poem as his own original work to Mr. Myers, whose poem inspired Jack in the first place. Their relationship suggests that the text takes the form of a Künstlerroman, in terms of featuring mentor figures. The fact that Mr. Myers is a nurturing type, rather than a type of obstacle for Jack, must be based on his young age. In this way the text shows how Jack is transformed over the period between September and the following July, from an anguished, sad boy, lacking confidence, to a confident and satisfied poet. The length of his poetry in each entry effectively symbolises his literary ability, as well as suggesting how much he has opened his heart, and is able to reveal his thoughts and feelings. Jack’s development also recounts his internal journey, how he has healed himself from the death of Sky, and has become a happy individual again. It ends with implications for his further progress in the future, thus the text represents the development of self-identity through his writing poems. As his initial antipathy toward writing shows, the implication of writing for him is different to the implication of writing for Harriet and Tracy discussed above, in that their writing was essential for their self-identities. However, his initial lack of interest in writing all the more
emphasises the later development Jack shows as an artist within the text. His poems represent not only his progresses as an artist, they also reveal his changes as a person. I chose this work to demonstrate and analyse how the writer/poet character is employed to emphasise the achievement of self-identity for young characters, in terms of my theory of the use of the device of writing characters in children’s literature. As demonstrated above, the text follows that pattern, and would seem to be an example of a work of children’s literature which supports my hypothesis, regarding writing characters in books for young readers.

**Child writing figures as puppets?: Ventriloquism as manipulation**

As seen above, these four Künstlerromane/ (Bildungsromane) effectively depict the development of young protagonists. The developments take place both in their personalities and their writing abilities. In particular, such developments are represented through their own words or writings, and their acts of writing have further significance. Among the four primary texts, *Harriet the Spy* employs third-person narrative as the main style, to describe characters’ action, and lead the story.  

53 However, Fitzhugh lets Harriet show her thoughts and emotion, through her ‘own’ words in her notebook in first person narrative. For instance to describe the protagonist’s misery, concern and some sign of resistance, the text says, ‘Harriet sat down and wrote in her notebook in very small letters: *Whatever happens don’t let me cry*’ (1985:132, italics original). This is effective in representing Harriet’s view with directness and authenticity.

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53 As mentioned in my Introduction, Schwenke Wyile calls this ‘Restricted Third-Person Engaging Narration’.
On the other hand, the other books discussed appear to represent the world from viewpoints of those who were given pens and an ability to write. *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) and *Love that Dog* (2001), all use first-person-narrative only, in order to represent their sorrow, anxiety and unhappiness,

Leigh in *Dear Mr. Henshaw* writes in his letter to Mr. Henshaw,

Sometimes I lie awake listening to the petrol station pinging, and I worry because something might happen to Mom. She is so little compared to most moms, and she works so hard. I don’t think Dad is that much interested in me. He didn’t phone when he said he would.

(1983:57)

Leigh’s words reveal the fact that he does not sleep peacefully, as he is filled with anxiety and concern for his mother. His isolation and loneliness are caused by the lack of communication with his father. Leigh does not write that he is sad or unhappy in his writing. But his references to his parents in his writing simultaneously imply his own feelings. The passage conveys a sense of time passing, whilst the protagonist waits.

Tracy in *The Story of Tracy Beaker* writes in her life book, after a similarly unsound night, ‘I don’t half want my mum. I know why I can’t sleep. It’s because I’m so starving hungry, that’s why. Crying always makes me hungry. Not that I’ve been crying now. I don’t *ever* cry’ (1991:52, italics as in original). Tracy shows her emotion more directly compared to Leigh. She usually avoids the verb ‘cry’ in her writing, but she slips the sentence ‘Crying always makes me hungry’ (52) into her life book, and she soon adds more sentences to deny it. Tracy’s Life Book is supposedly filled by her as she feels and thinks in her bed when she is sad at
night. The text, which represents her miserable state with the immediacy of her words, offers the situation of ‘being in her place’ to readers.

Jack in *Love that Dog* also tries to avoid mentioning the issue which has been difficult for him to refer to initially. He instead composes a short diary poem, which would be read by his teacher,

November 15
Yes, I used to have a pet.
I don’t want to write about it.

You’re going to ask me
*Why not?*
Right?

(2001:13, italics and layout as in original)

His short and simple poem effectively summarises his mixed feeling of having some emotional problem but not wanting to talk about it. Readers of the text are expected to realise that there is something Jack is hiding, and become intrigued as to the mystery, and proceed to reading his diary poems.

Although the images of writing characters who powerfully express their own feelings and thoughts are strong, these four young writers are merely fictional figures and their written words are the fictional creation of the adult author of each text. We cannot therefore deny the possibility that the use of writing characters is a kind of literary strategy to create ‘convincing’ characters. As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, in his examination of narration in young adult fiction, ‘The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel’, Mike Cadden claims that the use of first-person address in young adult fiction contains problems; he suggests that first-person address, which creates the illusion of ‘authenticity’, inevitably only conveys
the restricted world view from limited focalization.\textsuperscript{54} This view raises a question about the effect of reading similar first-person views for younger readers. The reading processes of the younger school-age child and the adolescent reader are very different, according to Appleyard (1991); the former is typically ‘the Reader as Hero and Heroine’ who identifies with the characters and gets involved with the story during the reading experience. The latter is ‘The Reader as Thinker’ who finds ‘the meaning of life, values and beliefs worthy of commitment, ideal images, and authentic role models’ (1991:14) in books. Appleyard’s theory may imply that the use of first-person narrative for younger readers has a less negative effect than its employment in fiction for adolescent readers, which concerned Cadden. First-person narrative facilitates reading to ‘identify with character’ by giving specific viewpoints, but this kind of reading is quite common for younger readers anyway, according to Appleyard. Adolescent readers, who, as ‘thinkers’, may have less opportunity to ‘think’, when faced with a limited view point, from first-person narrative. However, at the same time, the young characters represented with their ‘own words’ offer another interpretation. This section refers to the theory of ventriloquism to explore the implications of a fictional young writing character being a creation of a real adult author.

When considering the concept of ventriloquism in writing, the coming together of adult authors of texts and child fictional writers as the medium of self-expression effectively creates the act of ventriloquism, and this relationship, ventriloquist and his/her dummy, author and his/her child writing character,\textsuperscript{54} As mentioned in the Introduction, Andrea Schwenke Wyile also suggests that first-person narration is more limiting than restricted third-person engaging narration regarding perspectives. For her detailed categories of narrative, see page 32.
becomes significant. The words written by characters, (in fact, written by adult authors), in the texts, function in the same way as the voices of the puppets (in fact, the ventriloquists' voices), in the case of ventriloquism. Thus, the child fictional writer is a direct parallel to the ventriloquist's dummy, being manipulated in exactly the same way, 'speaking' for the adult author/ventriloquist. All fictional characters follow the same pattern, but considering the power-relation between adults and children, in that the former is dominant over the latter, this pattern in literary representation requires caution. Christian Jakowski’s video work, ‘Puppet Conference’, in which many famous puppet icons on television participate in discussion on the topic of their occupation, raises a number of interesting issues in terms of rights concerning puppets.⁵⁵ In particular, when Lamb Chop, a puppet in the shape of a lamb, talks about her long career, she recognises her iconic existence and clearly regards herself as more significant and experienced than her 'helper' Mallory Lewis who has operated Lamb Chop after the first ventriloquist, Mallory’s late mother Shari Lewis.⁵⁶ The conversation between Lamb Chop and Mallory Lewis, questions the issue of the ownership of the voice, and consequently, that of the puppet’s identity. Furthermore, the note for the video work tells us that the creation of ‘the puppet conference’ involves another layer of complexity regarding puppets’ voices, identities, and their existences. Puppets are dependent on each ventriloquist or operator, as well as on their scriptwriters and owners. Therefore this conference is in truth the result of the negotiation between the artist

⁵⁵ Among the participants, there are Grover from Sesame Street and Fozzie Bear from The Muppet Show.
⁵⁶ The reverse of the roles of a dummy and his/her ventriloquist clearly suggests its disturbing nature. In the film Dead of Night (1945), one of the omnibus episodes tells the story of a ventriloquist who gradually loses his control over his puppet, and instead, becomes subject to the manipulation of the puppet, and finally destroys both of them.
Jankowski and all those who have rights over the puppets, rather than the event being joined by living puppets, as it seems to be initially. Yet, it is undeniable that the fame of some iconic puppets contributes to the success of the conference. The popularity associated with puppets belongs to the puppet, rather than the operator behind the puppet. Consequently, the power-relation between the puppets and humans becomes a chicken and egg issue. It remains to be questioned whether the link between an adult author and a child character is a similar issue, as, perhaps uniquely, the link between adult author and child character is distinct from the normal relationship between authors and fictional characters.

The author of *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (2000), Steven Connor, suggests the contradictory or binary nature of the ventriloquial voice, which mediates between ‘body and language’, and, therefore, between ‘body and culture’ (2003). According to Connor, the dissociated ventriloquial voice both challenges and reasserts the political authority, as it marks the self’s presence as well as its estrangement from itself, at the same time (2003). In addition, the ventriloquial voice is both guarantee and threat to the modern subject, who must learn to internalise power, since the subject gives itself the authorisation through the medium of the voice, of the system, of self-speaking, and of self-overhearing, something which Jacques Derrida has named ‘s’entendre parler’ (2003). Connor’s view explains the issues raised in the above-mentioned puppet conference. The voices represent both the ventriloquists and their puppets, yet, at the same time, threaten the independence of both sides. Bearing this concept in mind, exploring the books under discussion, although the child writing characters give a negative
view concerning adult authors’ manipulation, as suggested earlier in the section of ‘The child writer as ideological being’ in previous chapter, these writing characters may, conversely, carry an image of power, control and authority, which should be valued elements, as discussed initially.

In the light of these views, understanding the relation between the author and his or her voice becomes even more difficult. Moreover, it is certain that the fictional character’s writing or voice gives everything, (including the existence of adult author, character in the texts, and the reader of the texts who receives the writing), a variable, vague and uncertain position, so that, in the end, it allows these texts much potential for interpretation. Although the complexity of employing the writing personae in fiction is more emphasised in this chapter due to the characters’ young age, as I have mentioned before, this issue remains integral to all the chosen texts of this study, and this will be explored further in Chapter Six in relation to metafiction in the postmodern view.

**Conclusion**

All these young characters- Harriet, Leigh, Tracy and Jack- are illustrated as developing tremendously as individuals, as well as artists, within these texts. The texts employ writings allegedly written by the young writing characters to represent their subjectivity reflected in their words, thus these all appear to be autologous. In this sense, I conducted textual analysis to examine how the characters were depicted in each story. In the cases of Leigh and Jack, they almost achieve new identities through writing activities, while Harriet and Tracy reinforce their self-identities with the act of writing. The journeys of development depicted in the four
protagonists involve an essential pattern, which is that of overcoming a problem. The issues are different in each case, yet they are similar in the sense of involving all the young characters in the experience of some kind of loss. The four texts show the characters eventually making up for their loss with their pens, by writing. The mentor figures for each of the young writers are, in many cases, related to literacy: Ole Golly, who is a reader, rather than a writer for Harriet; Mr. Henshaw and Mrs. Badger for Leigh; Cam for Tracy; and Mr. Walter Dean Myers for Jack. These mentor characters not only provide voices for the authors themselves, but also represent ideal adult figures. By encouraging and facilitating the writing of young characters in the texts these mentors tell young readers about the significance of writing as well as making connections with them, and consequently with other people; they can rescue children who tend to be isolated in their own sorrow.

The early reviews of *Harriet the Spy* show that some of the evaluations of the work found it to be out of the ordinary; for example, its originality was seen as ‘shocking’ (Gillespie and Lembo in (eds.) Block and Riley 1976:71). When she wrote an article in 1975, Virginia Wolff also claimed that the text’s status as literature was not clear. However, it certainly seems subsequently to have achieved the status of a modern classic. The change in the perception of *Harriet the Spy* over the years, and the positive treatments of the other three texts involving young writers, may suggest the characteristics of society today as well as the change in ideology regarding individualism over the time. It may imply that

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57 The influence of loss, in particular the death of loved ones, for a writer, will be examined further in Chapter Five.
contemporary society holds ideological and romantic views of writing as a symbol of autonomy, and that society welcomes these stories, in which fictional young artists learn to overcome the problems, heal their own wounds, and develop into self-dependent individuals. Although the issues which the protagonists confront and overcome are quite severe and serious, these success stories of young artists seem to have the function of encouraging a young audience. It is probable that, because these books are for the young, the authors have felt the need to be positive and to present a happy ending, one where the protagonists have conquered their problems. However, such encouragement and optimism from adult authors in texts for young readers can be interpreted as indicating their expectations for young readers. Furthermore, from a more negative viewpoint, such stories can be interpreted as functioning to serve as propaganda, where every child has to be positive and strong, implying that individuals should be able to conquer their problems themselves. This simplistic pattern is less common in texts targeted at an older implied audience. The differences in the dates of publication, which is naturally connected with the differences in socio-cultural context, may also explain the stylistic differences between *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and the other three books, *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) and *Love that Dog* (2001). *Harriet the Spy* employs both third-person narrative and first-person narrative, and depicts Harriet the protagonist both objectively and subjectively. The other three texts employ first-person narrative to represent the world from the viewpoints of child protagonists with their ‘own’ words.

As mentioned above, this image of child characters represented by their ‘own’ words starts to have further implications when the relation between child
characters and adult authors is compared to that of puppets/dummies and ventriloquists. However, the phenomenon of an increase in works which employ the words of more child characters in first-person narratives may nevertheless suggest that there has recently been more emphasis on the idea that self-hood should be recognised and each voice should be heard in our society. In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet learns to use her voice not merely to express herself, but also to communicate with others. In *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, Leigh achieves selfhood through his writing experience. In *The Story of Tracy Beaker*, Tracy similarly realises and accepts who she is while she writes her life book. In *Love That Dog*, Jack develops his writing capability as well as his personality through his poems. In all these texts the pattern of Künstlerroman (/Bildungsroman) has contributed as a mode to carry the clear message that the individuals concerned can by themselves develop their own superior abilities.

In my view, Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman as a literary genre has a strong link with children’s literature through the special use of the pattern in children’s books, as I hope I have demonstrated through the texts analysed above. Although the interpretation and the definition of the genre of Bildungsroman is complex, overall it is understood as a genre which depicts the development of the characters toward their maturation, and in particular that of artists, in the case of the Künstlerroman. The texts examined in this chapter create a doubly positive impression. Not only are they Bildungsromane/Künstlerromane but they are also represented as the characters’ own stories, to a great extent. The use of characters’ own writing represents the reflectiveness of each individual. The level of writing or the depth of content of writings may not be significant for each writer at
the beginning of each text, but each writer recognises his/her own change as an outcome of the writing experience at the end of each text. The image of the voicing/expressing young character in the end contributes to the creation of powerful, independent and able characters. In that sense, the choice of having characters express themselves and tell their stories can be interpreted as being driven by motivation to create a positive tone, at least in the texts analysed. I am aware that the analysis of four primary texts may not be fully representative of the texts with young writing characters for young readers, but I feel that I have demonstrated that my interpretation of my analysis is valid. It would now clearly be useful to undertake a study of a larger selection of texts, to test out my hypothesis.

To summarise the ideological messages regarding self-identities in these texts, I feel that the four characters demonstrate the developments of personality through the achievement of an artist by acquiring the qualities such as independence and autonomy. The images in these texts therefore seem to speak directly to the young readers, encouraging them to achieve similar qualities within their own development.
Chapter Four: Female writers

In this chapter I discuss texts including writing characters who are female and adolescent, so, older than those examined in the previous chapter. I decided to separate texts into two categories according to the gender of characters, thus adolescent female characters and adolescent male characters. The reason for this is firstly that I came across more of the former category of texts in the early stage of research, and consequently, I speculated that there would be some common characteristics in this particular kind of texts. 58 Fiction for children and young people, featuring female characters who are involved with the act of writing, either depict characters’ participation in writing within the story, or contain their written accounts, such as diaries, journals, letters and fictional stories, within each text. The categorisation of these texts becomes essential to an accurate analysis, as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

One of the most common subjects is the everyday life of the young characters, with a focus on issues occurring on a daily basis. This type of text also tends to have relatively limited subject matter and the content of the texts is often repetitive. This pattern is particularly noticeable in humorous and light-hearted popular fiction, as indicated in the categorisation of texts in the Introduction. In the case of such texts, in other words, ‘easy-reading’ texts, the strategy of employing writing characters can be argued as serving merely as a literary technique, to keep

58 The database of The Book Trust lists 55 entries for the books which include keywords: diary, diaries letter and letter-format, between 1990-2001. There are 8 fictions featuring young male writers, whereas there are 34 featuring female writers. (The other 13 books featured both genders, non-human characters, etc.) This result initially suggested to me the idea of classification of the texts according to the gender of the protagonists. My database also demonstrates that there are more texts which include female adolescent writing characters than male adolescent writing characters.
the story moving. The formats of diaries and letters, which require the existence of these writing characters in texts, are particularly frequently used in the kinds of texts which are not examined in this chapter but mentioned in the Introduction, such as Louise Rennison’s Georgia Nicolson series.

The present chapter focuses on texts in which female characters are represented as achieving positive outcomes through their writing experience. The difference between the texts with female adolescent characters selected here and those with female adolescent characters discussed in the Introduction lies in whether or not ‘writing as an act’ functions as a powerful force to help the development of the female character.

Two elements shared by the texts discussed in this chapter are, firstly, the positive image of writing as an act performed by the characters in the texts, and, secondly, the sex of the characters, always female. Therefore, the subject of this chapter is adolescent female writing characters whose act of writing contributes to their establishment of self-identity. The reason for focusing on the texts with female adolescent characters here is because the characters in this category seem to have characteristics that are common to the characters as explored below. The characters in the chosen primary texts for this chapter do not follow all of the four patterns found in the pre-pubertal male and female adolescent characters discussed in the previous chapter (See Figure 4): 1) a successful development as an artist; 2) a progression, since the story pattern ends happily; 3) the overcoming of problems by themselves and 4) the existence of a literary mentor, who encourages the protagonist’s creativity.
Patterns 2) and 3) are fairly common among these texts, which sometimes may be explained by the fact that these two modes are also relatively common in the realm of children’s literature, including literature that features older characters, and is hence aimed at an older readership. It is also noteworthy that the topic of the establishment of identity is also common in patterns 2) and 3). However, patterns 1) and 4) appear to be rarer among characters of an adolescent age range. Consequently, I have felt the necessity to classify texts according to the age range of the characters. Once the texts were divided into two groups by age range, I intended to identify more specific characteristics in the texts dealing with older characters, in addition to the above-mentioned patterns 2) and 3). However, the examination of these texts including adolescent characters fore-grounded the issue of gender-identity, which further splits this subject of adolescent characters into two categories. Although there are variations within the categories of male adolescent writing characters and female adolescent writing characters, generally speaking there exist distinctive characteristics related to the characters’ gender identities,
which I call category 5), in Figure 4. Consequently, I have decided to examine male and female adolescent writing characters separately, and this chapter focuses on female writing characters. As mentioned earlier, the main focus of this research is the power achieved by the characters’ writing activity in text. It seems to be relevant to employ Feminist criticism here, because it supports the power which female characters obtain through their writing activity. This chapter therefore further examines female adolescent writing characters with reference to feminist criticism, and highlights the connections between them.

For this chapter I have chosen the following main primary texts: *Z for Zachariah* (1975) by Robert O’Brien; *The Tricksters* (1986) by Margaret Mahy; *Hard Love* (1999) by Ellen Wittlinger and *Witch Child* (2000) by Celia Rees. The selection of the primary texts is principally based on the conditions that they satisfy the requirements that the female protagonists develop their self-identities through their act of writing. However, at the same time, these young female writing figures are intended to be representative of the characters reflecting the influence of feminist ideology. These four texts were selected from the extensive database of texts with writing characters in Appendix. Equally, it would have been possible to select other texts such as the heroine in *A Gathering Light* (2003) to support this argument, however, the present selection is in my view the most relevant and representative in relation to the feminist ideology examined in this chapter. In order to explore the image of female writers, the link between feminist ideology and the development of self-identity becomes significant. Furthermore, I originally had no intention of focussing on a certain period of time for the publication dates of the primary texts. Examining variations in young female characters, from different
texts, with diverse story settings, this chapter illustrates the link between two elements: the image of writing as an act, and the feminist perspectives appearing in the texts. The chapter demonstrates that writing as an act of the protagonist is often used to carry a feminist ideology, that of a female achieving voice. *The Tricksters* illustrates how a contemporary girl, Harry, learns how to express her 'self' (in other words, her voice, subjectivity and agency), a characteristic which has high significance in feminism, by writing a story. This text does not include a large number of written accounts by the protagonist, yet the story she writes symbolises her approach to subjectivity, and provides a variation from other types of writing such as the diary. This is one of the reasons I have chosen this book as a primary text, in addition to the fact that voice, subjectivity and agency are clearly present.

I also made the decision briefly to discuss Marisol in *Hard Love* in order to illustrate the case of a lesbian writer. Her portrayal can be interpreted as implying the importance of writing for her self-identity, in other words, to establish the person she is. Writing as an act is significant for all of the female characters discussed in this chapter. Yet, more than the heterosexual characters, who form the majority of those examined in this chapter, Marisol, who is a self-confessed lesbian, seems to rely on the act of writing to assure herself who she is. In that sense, it may possible to interpret that *Hard Love* tries to reflect further the influence on literature of ideas and theories appearing in modern society. These notions include feminist theory, lesbian theory and queer theory. This example may be representative of the most radical and contemporary versions of the topic of this chapter. The existence of such a book may also be interpreted as the reflection of the political change in society, so that such topics can be dealt with
explicitly in children's literature.

However, simultaneously, in recent times, there is a trend of employing a historical background as a story setting. Therefore, the analysis involved in this chapter also requires the examination of female characters who write in time settings and backgrounds which are completely different from the periods when the actual texts are written. Mary in *Witch Child* (2000), a girl in seventeenth-century Puritan society, will be considered as an instance of a character in a historical story. Ann, as a survivor of a nuclear disaster in the futuristic story *Z for Zachariah* (1975), written three decades ago, will also be briefly looked at as a female character set in a specific story setting, which - though in a different manner from the historical past - similarly represents hardship for the female protagonist. Both Mary and Ann represent the case of female characters who write in situations where being female is a disadvantage, so that the power of writing appears to have even more emphasis. The historical setting in the former title is representative of a new trend towards historical stories, featuring young characters who write. 59 This requires exploration, in order to comprehend the connection between the historical setting and the literary pattern formed by the writing character, which may carry contemporary ideological implications. In particular, a number of the female writing figures in such texts can be interpreted as conveying modern feminist messages. The choice of the past as the story setting, in which there are more obstacles against writing as an act, because of discrimination against the concept of girls possessing literacy, can be argued to be an effective strategy to convey certain images regarding girl characters and their eagerness to write. Consequently, the

59 See database in Appendix.
authors’ portrayal of writing as an act becomes more significant as an appropriation of power in a society where women are oppressed. In this chapter I firstly explore how the tradition of female writers for an adult audience has influenced texts with female writing characters in children’s literature.\textsuperscript{60} I move on then to the examination of contemporary texts for young readers including female adolescent writing characters. The length of analysis of the four primary texts is not equal, but no significance should be attached to this fact. My impression is that there are several variables involved here, including the fact that certain stories seem to reflect a specific feminist ideology, concerning history, which requires a lengthier discussion.

**Children’s literature and Feminist criticism**

Some scholars, including Lissa Paul (1987) and Perry Nodelman (1988), have suggested a link between children’s literature and women’s literature. The similarities between these types of literature, in which women and children have shared, for example, their subordinated positions in society, and the small amounts of their belongings, as well as the scale of their place to belong (Vallone, 2003), which is often a domestic setting, may be regarded as mere coincidence. However, the evolution of both these fields, children’s literature and women’s writing, is similar. Some of this resemblance can be interpreted as the influence of feminist criticism, which has developed within the former (viz women’s writing) on

\textsuperscript{60} Here, the term ‘female writers’ implies both those who existed in reality such as Jane Austen, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Louisa May Alcott and Virginia Woolf, and those who appeared in the realm of mainstream literature as female characters who write, in particular, in the light of feminist perspectives.
children’s literature, as Lissa Paul indicates in her feminist critique of children’s literature (1996). This is expected, in a more general sense, as the discipline of children’s literature owes much to another form of literary criticism. Criticism of women’s writing in an earlier period gave rise to ideas regarding how to interpret and appreciate children’s literature. Women’s writing used to be considered as holding minor status within mainstream literature, similar to the situation of children’s literature, which was considered to be outside the category of mainstream literature. Peter Hollindale also states the similarity between the two disciplines, in that the politics of gender in women’s fiction decides the status of the literature as much as the politics of childhood does in children’s literature (1997:9-10).

Paul’s analysis of the development of children’s literature under the influence of feminist criticism contains three realms, ‘Rereading’, ‘Reclaiming’ and ‘Redirection’. 61 Paul defines these three as follows, ‘the rereading of texts for previously unrevealed interpretations’, ‘reclaiming of texts that had been devalued or dismissed’ and ‘the redirection of feminist theory into providing a welcoming climate for texts by people marginalized by patriarchal colonial societies’ (103). Although she suggests these key words, following Adrienne Rich’s idea of ‘revision’ (1976), Paul describes how literary study has progressed much further from the initial concept of twenty years ago (103).

The issue of feminist criticism is related to children’s literature in several ways. In addition to the views that children’s literature and women’s writing share

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61 The issue of the treatment of the writing by female writers in the past is also mentioned in the section on autobiography in the following chapter.
common ground, and that children’s literature study owes much of its development to that of feminist criticism, there is a further significant reason for examining feminist criticism in this chapter. It is to understand the existence of a number of female writing characters, in the realm of children’s literature. The examination of similar motifs of writing figures in women’s writing makes me realise the possibility of recognising ideological messages in the characters’ actions in these texts. Hence, in its overview of the development of women’s writing, feminist criticism also helps to compare or predict the behaviour of female adolescent characters within children’s literature. It is also important to take into consideration the influence of general feminism in society, in addition to the effect of feminist literary criticism. For example, one of the primary texts, Celia Rees’s *Witch Child*, which is set in seventeenth-century New England in America, carries a much more modern view, regarding both the issues of a young girl’s identity, and of her human rights. This suggests the twenty-first-century author Rees’s awareness of feminist discourse in contemporary society.

In using the term ‘Redirection’, Lissa Paul indicates that criticism in children’s literature has developed from feminist studies to other disciplines such as gender study, cultural studies, and post-colonial studies. An impasse of feminist theory was already predicted twenty years before, in Elaine Showalter’s ‘Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness’ (1985). Showalter concludes her article by stating that feminist literary critics may never reach the promised land, in which, ‘gender would lose its power’ and ‘all texts would be sexless and equal’ (266); however, instead, feminist literary critics may realise the arrival at ‘the
tumultuous and intriguing wilderness of difference itself" (267). Following this, the change of emphasis in children’s literature study, from feminist criticism to gender study, cultural studies, and post-colonial studies, as in Paul’s list (1996:108-109), seems to be relevant. However, feminist theory as literary criticism has not disappeared, as evidenced by Paul’s Reading Otherways (1997), Roberta Seelinger Trites’s Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children’s Novels (1997) and Hilary S. Crews’s Is It Really Mommie Dearest: Daughter-Mother Narratives in Young Adult Fiction (2000). These critical studies of children’s literature employing feminist criticism may suggest that feminist theory as literary criticism has not lost its appeal in the realm of children’s literature. This may also be of some help in understanding the primary texts from a feminist viewpoint.

The theme of this chapter is adolescent female characters who represent the power of writing as an act. The might of the pen that young female characters symbolise in the texts seems to be further emphasised in contrast to their underprivileged situations, resulting from their identity as females. Feminist theory therefore becomes the key to interpretation of these texts. In fact, the above-mentioned study by Trites includes a chapter concerning young writers,

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62 In her lecture at Roehampton University (21/11/2005), ‘A jury of her peers: writing the history of American women writers’, Showalter discussed several problems, including intellectual, ideological, and structural issues, during her undertaking of a literary historical study of American women’s writing from 1650 to 2000. She implied that the problems were exacerbated by the fraught and contentious atmosphere of contemporary American literary studies. Her talk suggested that feminist criticism might have led the ideological interpretation of literary writings by women in the past. With this ideological interpretation in recent times, those writing in the past with no intention of being literary have been given literary value. This has caused the excessive ‘discovery’ of some women’s writings, lacking either literary value or intention, such as recipes, bills, etc. In this way, Showalter recommends discrimination and confines her debate to ‘literary’ texts. This is similar to the problem I encountered when I was compiling the database in Appendix. There are several books which were very difficult to judge whether they were pure literature or information books. These types of books are often in the genre of historical fiction.
‘Re/constructing the Female Writer: Subjectivity in the Feminist Künstlerroman’. The issue of subjectivity in Trites’s chapter, and her definition of feminism as the ‘premise that all people should be treated equally, regardless of gender, race, class, or religion’ (1997:2) shows that her view is broader than the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of feminism ‘Advocacy of the rights of women (based on the theory of equality of the sexes)’ (2005). Trites’s definition generates an impression that the nature of her study may be more liberal and advanced than the conventional definition. However, Trites simultaneously focuses on the similarity between writing as an act and the re-visioning [of the world from feminist perspectives] (1997:63), which seems to be fundamental in terms of feminist theory.

Reading contemporary fiction, which similarly deals with adolescent female writing characters, including those referred to in this chapter, such as Witch Child, Z for Zachariah and A Gathering Light, has led me to form the view that these illustrate the powerfullness of the character’s writing action in a very similar way, in different texts. The impression I gained from contemporary fiction featuring the image of the powerful writing activity of fictional characters is surprisingly similar to my impression on reading the classics of feminist literary study such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic (1979). Both the fictional writers in children’s literature of the twentieth and even the twenty-first centuries, and real female writers, who were struggling for the rights of women in the past, create the impression that writing is an act that ultimately functions as self-expression and self-formation, since it allows their voices to be heard. This encouraged me to speculate that the pattern of young female characters who write
represents the influence of feminist criticism. To examine the causality of this connection, it is important to take into account the development of feminist literary study and feminist theory.

Feminist criticism has developed in tandem with women’s movements. The first-wave of feminism in Western society is generally accepted to have had its origin in the women’s suffrage movement in the late 1840s, driven by the emancipation of slaves, and to have endured until the 1920s. After two major World Wars, the feminist movement developed significantly. In particular, World War One and, more so, World War Two temporarily lead women to have the same occupational opportunities as men, and proved women’s capability in terms of labour, thus leading them to question why they had to go back to domesticity after the war. The questioning gradually revealed the existence of patriarchy, which was a socially, culturally and historically constructed convention. In order to escape from disagreeable social constraints for women, the second-wave feminist movement, known as ‘women’s lib’ or the ‘women’s liberation movement’ appeared in the 1960s. This second-wave had a very significant influence on literary criticism, since the movement also interrogated literature which depicts the patriarchal society, culture and the resulting ideology surrounding women. A number of studies concerning the connection between women and literature have been produced, the titles of which are noted later in footnote 63.

Feminist literary criticism started its history at the re-visionary stage following the above-mentioned Adrienne Rich’s idea, Re-vision. Rich defines Re-ision as ‘the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction- is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it
is an act of survival’ (1980:35). This mainly involved the examination of male views of females, and reinterpretation of literary texts, written by male authors, from women’s perspectives. Then followed a phase termed as ‘gynocriticism’ (1986:131, 248), a term coined by Showalter to define study which focuses on women’s writings as the primary subject, with feminist perspectives. In their above-mentioned study, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar emphasise how inappropriate female writers were seen as being, in the nineteenth century, since, in patriarchal Western culture, ‘the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis’ (1984:6). This strong link between the pen and the male author, is, in fact, considered by some feminist critics to be generated by a male concern regarding the uncertainty of male procreation, and anxiety regarding female powerfulness, so that the order of the creation myth becomes reversed (Morris, 1993:20). Consequently, women with a pen who become counterparts of such male authors are construed as impossible and mad for attempting to cross the borders, and invade male territory. Gilbert and Gubar, adopting the gynocriticism point of view, depict the struggle and hardship of real women writers and their fictional counterparts who reflect the creators’ experiences in a patriarchal society. Women’s writings and woman writers have contributed significantly to the study of feminist literary criticism by offering subjects for exploration. The number of feminist literary studies applying the same approach indicates that women’s writing played a significant part for feminist literary study. In particular, such texts emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.  

63 Ellen Moers’s Literary Women (1976), Showalter’s A Literature of Their Own (1977), Nina Baym’s
Female authors from the past, such as Jane Austen, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, George Eliot, Louisa May Alcott, Virginia Woolf and many others, have made various contributions to women’s literature, including their literary creation, as well as through their existence as subjects of the above-mentioned ‘gynocriticism’. Through writing their stories, these female authors simultaneously examined and critiqued women’s lives, a female connection to society and identity, and then expressed their views regarding all these issues, from female perspectives. Additionally, female writers ultimately make a contribution to the feminist movement, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis suggests: ‘any female cultural practice that makes the “meaning production process” itself “the site of struggle” may be considered feminist’ (1985:34). The more difficult the surrounding conditions, situations and conventions for female writing characters become, the stronger and tougher an image they can portray as women. This view gives an interpretation of female characters in similarly troubled circumstances in fiction.

For example, Mattie, the protagonist of a text for the adolescent reader, A Gathering Light (2003) by Jennifer Donnelly, can be interpreted as a feminist prototype of a female literary tradition, who represents the actual female authors in the past. In the story, Mattie suffers from the dilemma resulting from the conflict

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64 Poets such as Emily Dickinson have made a contribution to women’s literature in addition to the above mentioned female authors.

65 Although A Gathering Light depicts the strong connection between the act of writing and the establishment of self-identity of a young female protagonist, I did not choose this as a primary text to be examined in this chapter. This is because Witch Child more obviously represents the link between historical story setting and feminist ideology, with its earlier period. Also Witch Child
between her desire to have an education and to write, and the imposed pressure on her as a girl from a patriarchal society in early twentieth-century America. In the same way, within the topic of this chapter, namely fictional female writers, there are those who demonstrate the significance of writing as act through their writing accounts, despite the challenging circumstances in which they find themselves. The story setting of these characters becomes crucial to examining the feminist implication within the texts, as will be seen in the discussion later in this chapter of Z for Zachariah and Witch Child.

As with the above-mentioned Anglo-American feminists who adopted the gynocritical view, French feminists also had similar female-orientated approaches, in an environment where male-centred concepts concerning language, and, consequently, literature, were dominant. In any scrutiny of feminist critics these cannot be avoided but their approach is more theoretical than that of the American critics. Though they are strictly of peripheral importance to this study as the research on writing characters owes most to Anglo-American feminists, the influence of the French critics on Anglo-American feminist criticism should be acknowledged. Scholars such as Julia Kristeva (1974; Revolution in Poetic Language), Helen Cixous (1976; The Laugh of the Medusa) and Luce Irigaray (1986; This Sex Which Is Not One) have examined the male-privileged formation of knowledge, which is closely related to the issues of language and literature, and have struggled to find alternatives suitable for the female, rather than those which were meant for the male in the first place. In particular, the theory of subject reveals the protagonist’s writing directly by employing a diary format, whereas A Gathering Light only depicts the protagonist’s writing activity indirectly in the third-person narrative.
formation of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, which was referred to in the Chapter Two, became significant in terms of the relationship between sex and language. Lacan’s theory is indebted to the pioneer of psychoanalysis, Freud, whose work has also been controversial for its male privileged presuppositions, interpretation and theorisation.

According to Lacan, the human psyche develops from the Imaginary Phase, where a child has not yet achieved the sense of self yet, to the Symbolic Phase, where the child adopts the language system and a sense of self. These two phases are punctuated, firstly by the ‘mirror-stage’, when the child sees the image of himself/herself as a whole being, different from the rest of the world, and in particular as separate from the mother, who also appears in the reflection in the mirror. Secondly, there is another transitional phase, the Oedipus Complex, as suggested originally by Sigmund Freud, whereby ‘the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate the father and become the sexual partner of the mother’ (Barry, 1995:97). This is, therefore, the time when the child starts to see himself as an individual, who can counter an adult father and wish for the mother to fulfil his desire. However, Lacan, who has re-examined Freudian ideas and developed his own theory, suggests that, in the Oedipus Complex, ‘phallus’ is not an equivalent to the penis, but ‘a universal “transcendental signifier” of difference’ (Wilkie-Stibbs: 9). According to Lacan, ‘phallus’ plays a role as the most vital signifier of subjectivity, and consequently suggests a sexually unequal notion and a subordinate role for females.

In contrast, and focusing on the same concept, the above-mentioned three French critics have developed ideas concerning literary subjectivity. They have
regarded the psychoanalytical theories for the formation of subjectivity interpretation by Lacan and Freud as male-centred, thus feeling the necessity for developing theories to include female subjectivity, and have suggested the idea that the woman’s body is an alternative signifying system. This emphasis on physicality leads to an interpretation that texts are also physical existences rather than the collection of abstracts, which are words or language. Kristeva suggests that there exist feminine elements before what Lacan calls the Symbolic stage where masculine elements constrain the former. Kristeva uses the term the ‘Semiotic’ to represent ‘a pre-signifying, polymorphous, space […] of anarchic impulses and energies […]’ (summarised in Wilkie-Stibbs, 2002:82) which are generated before reaching the Mirror Phase, in other words during Lacan’s ‘Imaginary’ phase. In Kristeva’s view, it is possible that the Semiotic ‘return in/as irruptions within the symbolic. It manifests itself as an interruption, a dissonance, a rhythm Semiotic unsubsumable in the text’s rational logic or controlled narrative. The semiotic is thus both the precondition of symbolic functioning and its uncontrollable excess’ (in Grosz, 1990:152). Thus, what is signified in the Semiotic does not yield to but is free from the Symbolic. Cixous and Irigaray have also proposed subjectivity within the pre-Symbolic phase, and term it ‘l’écriture féminine’ and ‘le parler femme’ respectively. Similarly all these concepts have characteristics of plurality, circularity and variability. Willkie-Stibbs stresses the gender-free availability of these concepts; however, their rejection of the male-centred concept still shows the inclination to agree with feminism, which perhaps

may be interpreted equally as a biased male-centred view on the one side, and as an emphasis on the female, on the other. Her interpretation of *The Tricksters* will be mentioned later briefly, however, it is not my intention to follow the ‘feminine subject’ in characters’ writing in this thesis. This study regards characters’ writing activities as the representation of the establishment of self-identity.

As discussed, the different approaches taken by three female critics, Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray, have displayed developments from Lacan’s theory, and their work could be considered as the major approach and reaction against the mainstream or classic psychoanalysis of Freud. This has widened the field of female literary study, and established a notion that female mentality or self-identity is different from that of the male, due to women’s various differences, such as biology, their relation to language and to social roles. More recent critics also examine the relation between gender and style of writing: since women have been excluded from the dominant social narrative, or masculine narrative ‘endowing male subjects with a sense of belonging to the historical time of society’ (Violi 1992, cited in McNay 2000:82), ‘women are brought to identify with the objectified feminine position of patriarchal symbolism’ in a structural perspective (McNay 2000:82).

Other feminist critics of psychoanalysis, such as Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Elizabeth Abel (1982), indicate female existence not merely as the negative to the dominant male, but also as an essential element for the entire society and culture.\(^{67}\) Therefore, the twofold positions: male-female, major-minor and positive-

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\(^{67}\) For Chodorow’s argument about the sexual differences effect on writing experience, see Chapter Five (page 184).
negative, are represented in literature. However, since this gender-orientated concept is rather rigid, and, fundamentally, insufficiently flexible to be applicable to changes and differences among women, in terms of history, class and race, gradually the tendency or trend of feminist criticism reaches the concept of women’s culture (Showalter 1985:259). This concept integrates all the elements considered so far: the biological and the psychoanalytical, and contains the language issue. For instance such an approach is seen in the work of historian Gerda Lerner (1979: The Majority Find Its Past: Placing Women in History). Women’s culture discusses topics such as: ‘muteness’ or ‘silence’ and ‘wildness’\textsuperscript{68}, interpreted in a way specific to the female. Yet again, in fact, this culture includes both a negative view, which is imposed by the dominant male towards the female, and a positive view, which is generated by females through their self-interpretation.

In some respects, the theory of women’s culture seems to be more rich and profound than the biased male-orientated convention which often obtains. However, as Showalter indicates, this approach can lead to the interpretation of text by women as ‘double-voiced discourse’ (1985:263), containing two sides, both male and female views. This may imply the irrelevance of the emphasis on one side only, female or male, whichever it may be. At the end of her article dealing with her overview of the development of feminist criticism, Showalter predicts the impossibility of finding a theory in which sexual and gender difference does not matter. It is possible to see a connection between feminist criticism and gender study, for which the sexual/gender difference is essential, or, furthermore, to

\textsuperscript{68} ‘Wildness’ is not a quality unique to femaleness; an alternative variant has also been applied to masculinity.
interpret the latter as the advanced form of the former. Showalter, in fact, moves from feminist criticism to gender studies. Additionally, it is noticeable that lesbian feminism, which has developed from the realm of feminist theory, inevitably shows a strong connection to queer theory, in which male homosexuality is also taken into account in order to examine the perspectives of individuals with unconventional sexual and gender attributes. This movement also indicates the significant link between these disciplines. A primary text examined in this chapter, *Hard Love*, may suggest that the topic of sexuality, in this case, lesbianism, becomes a significant element of identity for a young person. The emergence of such a text may lead to the interpretation that texts for young readers reflect the development of criticism. Feminist criticism, with which the criticism of children’s literature is considered to have many elements in common, as stated earlier, has developed a symbiotic readership with queer theory. At the same time, texts with an orthodox feminist implication such as *Witch Child*, which has been published more recently, may suggest that texts for young readers also still convey a more orthodox ideology.

**Story setting as a special source of ideological implication**

The previous section has briefly illustrated developments in feminist criticism, and the connection between female characters and their act of writing as self-establishment in texts. Writing as an activity, for female writers, is stressed as the acquisition of power and agitation for change. This activity involves the pen, which has traditionally been associated with the male-symbol, therefore implying the domination of the male. The act of writing by female characters in texts
simultaneously functions as the expression of female forms of creativity, as well as female strength and autonomy. Female characters’ strength is clearly revealed and proved in the most difficult circumstances. The more severe the surrounding conditions become, the more difficult it is for female figures to achieve their power.

To explore the significance of employing a certain story setting, Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotope concept becomes useful its relevance to children’s literature has been particularly highlighted by the work of Maria Nikolajeva (1996, Chapter 5). Bakhtin defines this concept as the ‘intrinsic interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature’ (Bakhtin, 1981:74). In her study of texts for the adolescent reader, Robyn McCallum adopts this concept for the examination of historical fiction. According to McCallum, the two major concepts related to the chronotope are narratological and ideological aspects (1999:185), and, consequently, fiction with specific historical settings comes under the influence of the image and ideology of the specific period of the setting of the story as viewed from the writer’s sociocultural context. This view is repeatedly demonstrated as relevant in the texts with specific story settings in order to convey a feminist viewpoint.

My examination of texts commences with a brief discussion of the futuristic science fiction *Z for Zachariah* (1975) by Robert O’Brien, and a more extended study of the use of story setting follows in the examination of the historical novel *Witch Child* (2000) by Celia Rees; I will apply Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope in analysis of both case studies. The examination of the latter is considerably longer compared to the former. This is inevitable, as the latter, *Witch Child*, employs history as a background, which offers information this study needs to consider, in
particular the unknown story regarding subjugated females. On the other hand, the futuristic story setting, which is dependent on the authors’ ideas and views on the future, does not have the same background depth of implication in terms of feminist ideology as the latter. This is understandable considering the changes which occurred in society over the period of twenty five years between the publication dates of these books. The individualism has been developed and further emphasised over the time, and most relevant of all for this chapter, the rights of women became widely accepted following situation such as women’s participation as an important workforce, as well as achieving more power in society. Yet, these two case studies equally reveal the use of the chronotope in texts with female adolescent writers.

**Z for Zachariah**

Feminism started with the objectives of reforming the inequality imposed on females, and of achieving rights for women on the basis of equality for both sexes. Following from this, woman’s independence, autonomy and power are celebrated in the feminist view. As mentioned above, the 1960s was the period when the Women’s Movement was particularly active, and the ideas spread widely. Such a change in society started to have an influence on texts for young readers in the next decade.

Although a post-nuclear disaster, which is the story setting of *Z for Zachariah* (1975), cannot be recognised as part of actual history, the novel’s origin is precisely located in a period following nuclear devastation, which resulted in a dystopian view. Perhaps, because the time when this text was written was more
favourable for females relative to the past, many people were not adequately aware of remaining injustices, thus, the setting of post apocalyptic society in which females are treated cruelly was necessary to make the audience aware of female rights. It is also possible to speculate that the pessimistic view regarding the future was a product of the Cold War period. The story of an indomitable female protagonist, Ann, in a devastating catastrophe can be seen in the context of the threat in the cold-war period, when the fiction was written, and providing a warning for all humanity. The text initially indicates the protagonist’s innocence and vulnerability by depicting her struggles, but ultimately gives a powerful image of woman as a survivor. The harsh circumstances function as a chronotope, or, in my understanding, ‘a united world/matrix, with specific time and space, represented in books’, to emphasise the strength of the protagonist. The narrative of Ann’s struggle for her life takes the form of her diary and recounts her drama day by day. As a survivor of a nuclear disaster, Ann suffers from chaotic living conditions, as well as isolation and sorrow when she is left alone. As she mentions, she began her diary since, 'I discovered I was forgetting when things happened, and sometimes even whether things happened or not' (7, italics original), and also, 'I thought writing in it might be like having someone to talk to, and if I read it back later it would be like someone talking to me' (7). The author indicates the significance for Ann of keeping a diary. When her life gets disturbed by a mysterious intruder, she also counts on her diary to decide how to deal with the situation, 'I am writing this partly to get it clear in my head and to help me make up my mind' (37).
The intruder into Ann’s world turns out to be a scientist, John Loomis, and Ann feels pleasure at having a living companion around. The author, O’Brien depicts that, while she nurses him from the effects of radiation, she cherishes quasi-affection and holds an adolescent-girl-like fantasy, about the future with him, the last man on earth, namely, Zachariah, which is the counterpart of Adam, (as ‘A is for Adam’, who is the first man and ‘Z is for Zachariah’ (61)) The relation between Mr. Loomis, who is an experienced adult and a scientist, and an immature and naive adolescent girl, Ann, who works in the fields, follows his instruction and helps him devotedly, can be interpreted as a formula of male-superior and female-inferior. This initial romantic love idea held by the protagonist and the gender formula can be argued as echoing a convention widely spread before the feminist story became more accepted in the 1970s, when the text was written. In the text, Ann’s hardship is increased even more by her identity as a female, rather than by the nuclear disaster. Not only does Mr. Loomis invade Ann’s safe and unpolluted valley, take over her house and monopolise foods and essential tools for living, he also threatens her body and mind. His attempt at raping her and the subsequent shooting makes her realise her role is to become prey: ‘[h]e wants to shoot me in the leg so I cannot walk. He wants to maim, not to kill me. So that he can catch me’ (171). In the end, Ann takes the decision to steal Mr. Loomis’s precious ‘safe-suit’, which enables her to leave the valley in the hope of finding a new place to live. The encounter with Mr. Loomis has deprived her of her home, childhood and innocence, and has forced her to be tough, independent and mature. Her diary not only functions as her companion and counsellor, it also records all of her changes, and symbolises Ann’s personality, which continues to develop. When Anne
decides to take action for her future, she also looks back her past and feels sadness for her loss of innocence and optimism:

Now I am ready. I start my plan before daybreak tomorrow morning. It may be I will not write in this journal again. I know that if Mr Loomis catches me with the safe-suit he will shoot to kill. It is sad when I think how happy I felt when I was ploughing the field.

(182)

Ann also looks back on her last conversation with Mr Loomis and reflects on her own childish words: ‘There was bitterness in my voice. And suddenly, feeling near tears myself, “You didn’t even thank me for taking care of you when you were sick”’

(192). The text illustrates that Ann has left Mr Looms to establish a new life for herself, despite his calling after her. And her diary ends with a positive tone,

While I was sleeping the dream came, and in the dream I walked until I found the schoolroom and the children. [...] The dream was gone, yet I knew which way to go. As I walk I search the horizon for a trace of green. I am hopeful.

(192)

The loss of paradise depicted in Z for Zachariah, due to the naming of Zachariah as the counterpart of Adam, as mentioned above, represents a pessimistic dystopian view of the future of humankind, and sympathy for the female confronting hardships, yet the efforts of the protagonist, Ann, seem to suggest encouragement and hope for the female. In this way, although the male author O’Brien initially creates a pattern of male-dominance and female-suppression and Ann’s situation is most masochistic compared to the other female characters examined in this chapter, perhaps due to the author’s gender, the image of the surviving girl ultimately seems to suggest an empathy with the feminist view. The use of such a story setting to portray the power of the female ultimately seems to function as a chronotope to convey O’Brien’s ideology. His
other books such as *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh* (1971), also suggest his feminist sympathies through the strong mother figure, Mrs. Frisby. The story setting and the image of writing as an action, in this science fiction text, also contribute to emphasising a compassionate message for females. It is interesting that the diary form is employed in another futuristic science fiction, Jean Ure’s *Plague 99* (1989), (later renamed as *Plague*). The diary-book, which was initially the ordinary diary of a teenage girl, who is the friend of the protagonist, later reveals the protagonist’s account of sadness and agony through her experience of the disaster, but at the same time, her resistance, determination and power. With a futuristic story setting of post-nuclear disaster, *Z for Zachariah* portrays a young woman’s survival effectively, and implies female power. However, the past as a story setting seems to offer an even more effective chronotope, in order to represent female strength. The following section explores how much the concept of past as hidden truth contributes to creating female power in texts with a historical setting.

**Witch Child: A girl in the past**

Feminist literary criticism often concentrated on the recovery of the world from female-centred perspectives, since there have been things being badly treated or ignored in the male-centred view. As mentioned above, at the initial stage, there was re-interpretation of the female image in the male view. This moved on to ‘gynocriticism’ (1986:248), in which women’s writings are examined from feminist perspectives. The recovery of lost women’s writing in the past, in fact, corresponds well to the subject of gynocriticism. With regards to feminist ideology,
the use of such a pattern, recovering the past of a subjugated female in the twenty-first-century, can be interpreted as more ideologically loaded than the employment of a futuristic setting in the above-discussed science fiction. This section further develops the examination of the use of story setting in order to carry a specific ideological message in historical fiction. The use of girls and women as writers in fiction often suggests the accompanying difficulties and hardships for women in the past, when literacy itself was limited to only the privileged. 69 Witch-hunts provide the framework of historical background of *Witch Child* (2000) by Celia Rees. An outcast protagonist, Mary, who has moved from England to New England in the seventeenth century, is in danger, as she is suspected by others in the strict Puritan society of being a witch. Her literacy, a skill which was not yet very common among women at that time, leads to additional suspicion about her identity. In the story, Mary does not choose to hide, give up, or abandon her writing, yet, in order to protect the truth, her story, she ultimately hides what she has written. This may well symbolise what has happened to women’s writing in the past.

Rees composes the text with what are alleged to be Mary’s personal accounts, collected and rearranged by a fictional historian, Allison Ellman. 70 The text illustrates Mary’s brutal lives in two worlds, the old one in political and social turmoil, and the new one defined by mighty nature and the community, but

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69 Another text reflecting this situation is *Nightjohn* (1994) by Gary Paulsen, a story of slaves in nineteenth-century America. Although the characters in this book have not reached the stage where they can express themselves and reveal their psychological aspects, in their written accounts and hence are not discussed here, the book depicts the power of literacy effectively; literacy for slaves, who have been deprived of any kind of rights, is shown to represent knowledge, ownership, authority and power. Consequently, obtaining literacy implies the way to freedom.

70 The complex structure of this text and its postmodern elements will be thoroughly examined in Chapter Six.
retaining the old conventions and customs. It also focuses on the significance of writing for her. Her journal starts with the declaration of her identity, ‘I am Mary’ and, more shockingly, ‘I am a witch. Or so some would call me. “Spawn of the Devil”, “Witch child”, they hiss in the street, although I know neither father or mother’ (11). These statements indicate not only the cause of the whole ordeal in her life, but also the significance of the identity issue, which is consistently stressed throughout the text. Mary continues by telling the story of the sole surviving member of the family, her grandmother, Eliza Nuttall, and the horrific accusation against her, which had eventually led to her execution as a witch. This danger also faces Mary, who has been left alone by losing her grand mother as the last family member. Soon after, she is rescued by a mysterious high-class woman, who, to her surprise, even arranges for Mary to escape England, and seek a safer place in the New World, America. In fact, the woman turns out to be Mary’s mother, as well as being a witch herself, and the link with her encourages Mary to confirm her own identity. It is significant that her mother also provides a trigger for Mary to write down her life story, by giving her writing materials. Mary in fact feels frustration, when she suffers from isolation and anxiety for the future, at finding blank papers in a box full of things for the journey, given her by her mother. However, she starts recording her life, ‘I use the ink and quill to begin my Journal. Many here are writing them, to record the commencement of their Great Adventure. I resolve to do the same. For I do feel alone, very alone, whatever she may say’ (38).

In her writing, not only does Mary record the things occurring day after day, but she also looks back to the past, and even finds consolation in writing. The author Rees gives Mary a very contemporary attitude towards writing within the
period of the story setting; in particular, finding a healing effect in writing can be regarded as a psychologically valid development. In terms of modern elements in the text, her mother’s presents, ‘ink, quill, and a deal of paper, folded to make a book’ (37) are even more symbolic. Not only has her mother answered Mary’s question about her identity in the New World that ‘[y]ou are Mary Newbury. An orphan. Father a soldier, killed at the Battle of Worcester fighting in Cromwell’s army. Your mother dead of a wasting sickness. Grandmother too feeble to care for you’ (27), her mother has also given Mary an opportunity to think, look back and compose her life, from the past to the future.

This concept of creating one’s ‘own life’ is another modern-day element of the text, which also reflects its ideology, requiring the proposition of individual and independent selfhood, a concept which some might consider to have emerged as a perception as recently as the nineteenth century. Anthony Giddens mentions social psychologist Baumeister’s statement concerning the lack of emphasis on individuality in pre-modern times, and continues, ‘the idea that each person has a unique character and special potentialities that may or may not be fulfilled is alien to pre-modern culture’ (1991:74). Following this, for me, applying a Japanese perspective, Mary not only represents feminist ideology, but an ideology of individualism in western culture as well, where individuality is valued. In the historical story setting, individuality, which is perhaps taken for granted currently, becomes emphasised when applying my Japanese perspective which has less emphasis on individualism compared to a Western perspective. While the story of

71 Although both Mary and her writing are fictional, it is possible to regard the function of her journal as a means of healing, in the same way as autobiography has therapeutic effects for a real writer, as analysed by Marilyn Chandler in *A Healing Art: Regeneration through autobiography* (1990).
Mary, set in the mid seventeenth century, suggests the fears and hates the surrounding people had for a heretic, Mary, as a young girl in that society, reacts to the issue in a modern way, as the fiction is the construction of the twenty-first-century. In other words, the story setting seems to be inappropriate in terms of period, considering Mary’s modern mentality, which appears to imply the expectations of Rees’s contemporary readers. Mary studies herself, and recognises her identity as original to herself. In fact, Mary’s qualities, including her ability to think, her cleverness and knowledge of the healing remedies of her grandmother, her kindness and open attitude to others, even to the ‘savage’ natives, appeal to the contemporary reader. Her vigorous will and strength to survive, and possibly, her witchlike telepathy and the burden that accompanies it, such as foreseeing the destinies of others, also may invite more sympathy for the protagonist’s misfortune, from modern readers, whose society offers more freedom and right to the readers. However, qualities like these would have been considered negative in the period of the story. A widow, Mistress Hesketh, in Salem, the first settlement Mary arrives at, warns Mary regarding her optimism for a ‘new life’ in the New World, and her view that it will be different from that of the narrow-minded, superstitious and exclusive old society:

Then have a care, my smart young maid. You’re as sharp as a thorn, with a mind of your own. You must keep a curb on your tongue or you’ll have more than yourself in trouble. Keep your counsel and look to your back. (110)

The community in Beulah which Mary eventually joins is composed of several families, and Mary, without any kinship, is expected to show extra respect for their harmony, cooperation, and, in particular, obedience to those who are considered to
lead the rest of the people. The recorded dialogue in her journal between the Reverend Johnson and Mary suggests the definition of obedience in those days,

‘Are you obedient?’ ‘Yes, sir.’ I kept my eyes down, trying to look suitably submissive. ‘Make sure that you are. Remember: “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,” so it is written in the Book of Samuel’ (178)

As the association of witches with defiance in society may already imply, the gender issue plays a significant role, in deciding the power holder, and, consequently, the hierarchy and the structure of society.

The Reverend Johnson, the Reverend Cornwell and the chief Selectmen (the titles for the leaders in the community), Ezekiel Francis, Jethro Vane and Jeremiah Vane, are all male, and the hierarchy of the females also depends on the position of the males they are related to. Martha’s younger sister, Goody Francis, shows arrogance towards Martha, because the newcomer, Martha, who has travelled from England with Mary, is not related to anybody else, in other words, she does not have a male protector. In terms of the necessity for male protection, another incident proves the indispensability of a male benefactor in the seventeenth-century Puritan community in Witch Child, when forbidden witchcraft becomes popular among girls, including daughters of the chief Selectmen. Rees depicts that the conclusion reached by society is to blame the innocent Mary for casting spells on those girls, who have actually themselves conducted malicious deeds. The behaviour of these girls can be interpreted as a form of adolescent hysteria from the modern viewpoint and with scientific knowledge. However, the twenty-first-century novelist Rees has chosen to represent the past where the
community regarded Mary as being responsible for the incident with her ‘witch spell’. 72

It is significant that the story is told through the voice of the wrongly accused Mary, which is represented as truthful. This is similar to the presupposition of the ‘reclaiming’ stage of feminist criticism referred to earlier. Rees represents Mary’s voice as veracious to readers, by presenting Mary’s words as being discovered by a present day historian within the text. The text also includes several devices, as referred to later, to imply that the character Alison is a real existing historian, so that her discovery, Mary’s journal, is a lost truth of a subjugated and deprived young woman, which needs to be recovered in more neutral circumstances. Female characters in the text also notice the powerlessness of their own existence. In particular, Martha and Mistress Hesketh, the elderly widows, understand Mary’s past, and become concerned for Mary’s safety, and give advice, and caution her not to stand out and be different, or she will be regarded as evil. Similarly, Goody Johnson, the wife of the Reverend Johnson, claims that she herself has been saved by him from being executed as a witch, and from losing her soul to the devil, so that she instantly knows Mary’s nature, and encourages her to change herself, too. However, Mary feels: ‘if I had to choose between the life she’d had and death by drowning, I would choose the latter’ (2000:186). Goody Johnson’s life, (having a blind belief in her husband, devoting herself to him, bearing so many children that her health deteriorates, ultimately leading to her death), reveals the sorrow and misery of being female, when the novel was set. The text demonstrates that

72 The witches of Salem, in New England, in the U.S., are well known from other literary works such as Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1953).
Mary has no intention of denying herself, or yielding to something she does not approve of. Her scepticism toward the Reverend Johnson is also seen in her attitude to his sermon:

The Reverend Johnson is hailed as a prophet. The people who came here with him almost worship him. They hang on every word he says. His word is God’s word and God’s word is law. They often write down his sermons to read back later. I sit, head bent, scribbling away, but I write with a different purpose. The pulpit is painted with a great eye. God watches us all the time. I keep my Journal under His gaze.

Mary sees the faults in others’ beliefs in the Reverend, and his arrogance, in behaving like God himself. Instead, Mary is determined not to be disturbed and deluded by rules set by those with authority in the society she happens to be in, but maintains that her writing, with her honesty and sincerity represented as her ‘confession’ in what is supposed to be her private journal, gives her a direct link to God. Her honesty and sincerity is found in her remark regarding her past, her thoughts about her identity, and her questions and criticisms of those with authority, which could all cause serious damage to her safety if the journal were revealed to the eyes of others. In this sense, the author, Rees represents that the writing of Mary, who is ironically accused of being evil, due to her nature, involves an almost religious nuance because such confessional writings were seen as ‘witness’ in Puritan society, and the writing becomes vital for her.

Rees describes that Mary’s literacy is valued by the Reverend Cornwell and by Reverend Johnson’s nephew, Elias; this male approval may suggest that her skill is acceptable, as long as she serves them as a recorder of their words. Reverend Cornwell tells Mary ‘I might have need of you. I mean to keep a record of this journey’ (49), when he knows of her literacy, as he himself was ‘too weak […]
at present to even to hold a pen’ (50). Elias also needs someone to scribe his words as ‘the cold causes painful swelling of the joints in his hands, making it difficult for him to write’ (180). However, others, such as Goody Francis, an illiterate, ignorant woman, find Mary’s literacy negative, saying ‘inky fingers on a girl are very far from natural’ (158). This implies that there is, in that society, still a negative view, which sees girls’ literacy as requiring control. This can also be interpreted as another insertion of a twenty-first-century perspective, that women can be obstacles for other women. In addition to the powerful male, some females who fit into the patriarchy, and are under the control and protection of males, try to prevent other women from developing themselves, and, instead, force them into regression and submission to males. More advanced and open, Martha tolerates girls’ usual writing on ‘everyday things and lovers and dreams’ (205): however, as soon as she recognises the distinctiveness of Mary’s journal, she is concerned, anticipating danger, and attempts to destroy it, in order to save her:

[Martha] makes a dash to throw the papers on the fire, but I am quicker. I stop her before she reaches the hearth. ‘No, Martha. You cannot do this.’ Words have power. These are mine. She has no right to destroy them.

(206)

Mary’s resistance to Martha’s action seems to represent her eagerness and obsession with her writing. At the same time, her persistent attitude to preserving her writing can be interpreted as demonstrating that she already understands or foresees the danger waiting for her. Sparing precious time in her moment of peril, Mary records ‘[t]hese are, perhaps, the last words that I will ever write. Scribing them takes precious time, and I go in great fear of my life, but I feel that I must bear witness’ (224). Mary’s sense of obligation to bear witness reflects the
Puritan’s duty ‘to testify to what the Lord has done for one’. In this sense, others’ treatment of Mary as heretic or demonic becomes inaccurate. Mary’s last struggle may also suggest that, not only is her journal entrusted to report the ‘truth’, but also that her writing, including her ‘story’ and her ‘truth’ is a kind of symbolic replacement for herself, by showing her existence in the world. Later she escapes from society, and even vanishes from the world. As a character Mary seems to symbolise women’s history, which has mostly disappeared and left no trace in the later world, yet which modern feminists have sought to recover. In that sense, *Witch Child*, as a novel, shows the whole cycle of women’s history, what has happened, what has disappeared, and what has been recovered.  

This suggests that *Witch Child* is the product of the late twentieth century and could not have been written much earlier, as this text in fact reflects the history and changes happened in society.

As Mary’s journal is depicted as carrying a mission of conveying ‘truth’, the concepts of ‘truth’ and ‘fact’ are emphasised in *Witch Child*. The text also questions the ‘truthfulness’ of the text itself and interrogates the nature of the text. Mary’s journal links the past and present smoothly, with the inherent danger of confusing fact and fiction for the readers of the text. The framework of the text, the journal of a girl in the past, with plausible grammar and vocabulary characteristic of that time, discovered in a quilt studied by a historian, crosses the border between fiction and fact, by blurring the line between the two. The fictional researcher

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73 *Witch Child’s* sequel, *Sorceress* (2002) features a modern character Agnes who also becomes a link to the past, in addition to Alison.

74 This text will again be examined in the Chapter Six on metafiction, in the context of historiographic metafiction.
appeals to the actual contemporary reader of *Witch Child*, for information on a fictional history, using an existing e-mail address. The stress on ‘factual’ elements may make the story of a struggling girl more effective and convincing.  

The theme of *Witch Child*, that of a female protagonist telling her truth and protecting the story containing her voice, is one of the most significant themes in feminist literature. The text shows the author has orchestrated the contents in this way. Additionally, there are a number of details which convey feminist messages. Not only has Mary had a number of female supporters in her life, she has also depended on female help for the survival of her alter ego, the journal. Rees depicts Mary choosing to hide her writing in the quilt she is creating. Hiding her writing seems to suggest the passive and repressive role women had to adopt, as well as the destiny of their writing not to be recognised, but to disappear. However, this hiding, in fact, paradoxically implies her resistance. In particular, hiding in quilting suggests that her writing is in the hands of, and under the control of, women. The significance of quilting in this text conforms to the definition given in *A Feminist Dictionary*: ‘process of making art with an important social function’ and ‘describing an oral history project’, and more importantly, serves as a ‘from of self-definition’ (1985:371) in the feminist sense. The quilt often plays the role of an alternative to literacy or to literature in the female domain, similar to oral history,  

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On the contrary, it may be arguable that this emphasis on ‘truth’ becomes as much an opposite effect, when the fictionality of the text is revealed. However, it is clear that the fictionality of the text including its ‘truth’ is not revealed immediately to the readers of the text. It is clear in the author’s aim as seen in her words that protagonist Mary should ‘seem real. […] and] to cut the distance between her and the reader’ (Rees:2005).
and to weaving. In this respect, the image of the quilt in *Witch Child* can be interpreted as the representation of the female connection and female power.

Though there are many details of the text containing feminist implications, Mary’s nature as a witch, which is indeed an archetype of disliked or rather evil, malicious, and disobedient women, most of all contributes to the story of the struggle of a young female. The question of whether Mary is really a witch or not may depend on each reader’s interpretation, yet, it is important that the text projects the fact that Mary identifies herself as a witch, as well as society regarding her as one. In *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, Gerda Lerner argues in favour of ‘mystic’ as an alternate mode of thought to patriarchal thinking, and indicates the influence of the gender of the mystics on others’ attitudes towards them. She indicates the danger women mystics were surrounded by, and states that ‘women who lived without parental or male protection were always very vulnerable to accusations of heresy’ (1993:79). Similarly witchcraft seems to be a subject reflecting gender-orientated prejudice; Mary Anne Warren argues that ‘the very concept of witchcraft represents the epitome of misogynism’(1980:489). Mary in *Witch Child* is oppressed as a putative witch and as a female. Warren further states the paradox, ‘[s]ome recent feminist writers have looked upon the legends and rituals of witchcraft as a part of women’s spiritual heritage, and have found in the witch an inspiring image of female strength’ (499). In the same way, Mary’s agony, struggle and battle simultaneously develop her will and ultimately her efforts to obtain power, autonomy, and freedom.

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76 There are a number of literary works which feature quilting as main theme, such as Jocelyn Riley’s *Crazy Quilt* (1984), Susan Terris’s *Nell’s Quilt* (1987) and Jacqueline Woodson’s *Show Way* (2005), as well as films such as the American film in 1995, *How to make an American Quilt*. 
John Stephens focuses on witch figures in recent children’s literature and observes their intertextual entities, crossing temporal, historical and cultural borders. Regarding the issues concerning young readers, he claims that, ‘[o]ne of the problems implicitly attributed to late modernity is that it separates people from their cultural history and alienates them from their own selves’ (2003:197). Stephens, in particular, notes a positive view toward the witch-figure as ‘a counterweight to cultural paradigm shift’ (197-198), which should be very different from the interpretation of the witch in the past. As a ‘witch’, Mary, the protagonist of Witch Child also connects the past and present, and in particular represents the author’s re-interpretation of the past. Stephens appreciates the witch-figure as an acceptable motif on widely varied occasions, in terms of temporal, historical and cultural settings. According to Stephens, a witch-figure implies the social changes from the hegemonic patriarchal past, into a transformed society, as a result of the women’s movement. The witch-figure also suggests cultural aspects of various interpretations of females in the past. This favourable observation on the witch-figure, in fact, leads to one of the polemic elements in Witch Child. As mentioned before, Mary in Witch Child has modern elements such as her identity issue, subjectivity and the feminist message, in spite of being portrayed as a girl in the seventeenth century.

Perhaps, as Witch Child shows, the ‘real’ historical past of seventeenth-century New England would have functioned effectively to impose hardship on a young female protagonist, and her strength at the same time, by portraying her survival. However, the issues with which the protagonist deals, in the text, are common in twenty-first-century society, and one must question the reason for the
author’s choice of the past, as story setting, which may be in order to present female power more dramatically. In that sense, the text itself reflects the changes which happened in society over the period during the period in which it was written despite its historical story setting. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the historical setting in such works may be used as a chronotope only to convey modern ideas, messages and ideologies which are alien to the background period of the stories. In *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction*, Stephens comments on the treatment of historical narratives, ‘the ideologies implicit in historical fictions are an important dimension, since the socio-cultural values of a writer’s period will determine which “universals” are inscribed within the fiction’s teleology’ (1992:238). This view is related to what Anne Scott MacLeod suggests in ‘Writing Backward: Modern models in historical fiction’ (1998). MacLeod indicates the problematic tendencies of recent historical fiction, ‘characters are divided into right - those who believe as we do - and wrong; that is, those who believe something that we now disavow’ (33). MacLeod furthermore calls attention to the problematic combination of history as story setting and modern consciousness in the characters, by claiming ‘people in the past were not just us in odd clothing’ (33).

As the subtitle of his chapter ‘Feminism and History: Historical Fiction: Not just a thing of the past’ (2004) on female characters in fiction in a medieval setting suggests, Peter Bramwell also claims that a specific historical period often functions as a suitable story background in order to convey a contemporary ideology and indicates its problematic element. Similarly, Angela Hubler argues that there is a combination of historical setting and a modern treatment of
adolescent female figures in contemporary historical fiction for girls, in her ‘Girl Power and History in the “Dear America” Series Books’ (2000). She surmises that there is a modern feminist influence, in particular from works of specific scholars, dealing with adolescent girls, such as Carol Gilligan and Mary Pipher, on the series, which employs diary formats, and recounts personal lives in America, from varied time periods in history. These views support my conviction that contemporary texts make use of the chronotope combined of values and customs from separate time settings. Such new chronotopes, a combination of different elements, emphasises hardship for the female, including historical and futuristic settings, and characters’ writing activity, in order to carry feminist messages. As seen in the analysis of Witch Child, the past as a story setting easily represents and emphasises the situation where female characters face more difficult conditions regarding their independence and autonomy, and these qualities favoured by contemporary society are symbolized in the characters’ act of writing.

Achieving self through writing: The Tricksters

As indicated in the above section, a story setting, in which female characters at a disadvantage and often constrained due to their sex/gender, may be a means of showing them gradually finding power and independence through the act of writing. However, such a pattern of writing female characters in a challenging environment

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\[In rewriting of fairy tales, ‘Rapunzel’, ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Snow White’ in her Happily Ever After (2005) (originally published as The Egerton Hall Trilogy, The Tower Room (1992), Watching the Roses (1992) and Pictures of the Night (1993)) Adèle Geras also shows the use of the past as a story setting and the image of writing activity, to convey a feminist view. These texts will be examined in the context of a discussion of parody in Chapter Six on metafiction.\]
can also lead to a potentially problematic blending of different thoughts and ideas. If modern readers are conscious of the existence of different values in a different society and period setting, they may find it difficult to accept the texts resulting from combining elements from various different sources, and, if they are alert, may see the device as manipulative, to convey the authors’ conscious ideology. Or they may take a modern view of the past for granted. Conversely, in Margaret Mahy’s *The Tricksters* (1986), set in New Zealand, Harry [Ariadne] Hamilton comfortably typifies a modern female young writing character to contemporary readers. The transformation of the protagonist through her writing experience, from an average girl with inferiority complexes into a confident individual, illustrates her achieving power and ultimately presents a feminist message. One of the most notable characteristics of the text is the nature of its intertextuality (Trites, 1997: Chapter Three, Wilkie-Stibbs, 2002: Chapter Two), which actually emphasises the significance of the protagonist’s involvement with writing, and her recognition of her identity as a writer. These are crucial topics for the examination of female writing figures throughout this chapter. The treatment of such intertextual elements in the text is doubly feminist. Firstly, intertextuality itself is often considered as one of the key features of feminist writing, as argued by Kristeva (1984); it is the place of ‘plurality and subversion’ (summarised in Humm, 1994: 102), resulting in positive and liberated implications, in the light of feminism. Secondly, the point that intertextual elements in the text, such as myth, legend and folklore do not appear as in the original form, but instead, are ‘re-written’ by Mahy, means that specific aspects of them become important. Trites explains that ‘[i]n writing folktales [of, by extension, myth and legend] to advance feminist ideologies and to identify female
subjectivity, feminist writers are both protesting the powerlessness of women inherent in our culture’s old folkways and giving voice to a new set of values’ (1997: 45). This rewriting motif is also found in the protagonist, Harry’s, activity and attitude. Compared to the other texts examined in this chapter, which employ formats such as diary and journal, *The Tricksters* does not contain a significantly long account from the protagonist. But Harry’s wish for a Christmas present, a book which creates the feeling that: ‘you were a book and someone else was reading you. Story and real would take it turn and turn about’ (Mahy, 2000:34), foressees the situation where her real world and her literary world unite. This ambiguous border between book and reality suggests that, for Harry, ‘to write’ is almost a synonym of ‘to live’, and her ambition for writing implies her strength and power in her journey in search of the self.

At the beginning of the story, Harry is an ‘apparently’ insignificant seventeen-year-old girl, who is not satisfied with her identity. At home she is considered as ‘good old Harry’ (32) and ‘nothing but a middle one, someone over whom older and younger members of the family could cheerfully seesaw’ (25). The topic of ‘middle child’ appears often in children’s literature and the lack of attention and affection they receive is often regarded as characteristic (Pam Robson, 2001). Being a middle child also seems to have an effect on Harry, in her gaining of her sense of who she is. Harry is constantly put in the position of a foil to other members of her family, in particular, her elder sister Christobel, who has everything: beauty, intelligence, and a temperament which requires constant attention from everybody. However, Harry can transform herself into the wonderful Ariadne; when she writes a story: ‘her true life was lived in the moments when the
tip of her pen met the white paper’ (23). Harry’s desire to change herself into someone special can be easily interpreted as typical of an unconfident and unhappy adolescent, whose only escape is through her writing and her imagination. However, the writing activity does not lead her to see a hallucination, but instead lets her develop a personality with whom she gradually integrates. As Willkie-Stibbs suggests in her section concerning Mahy’s novel, ‘the emphasis is on subjects in process, of their “becoming” rather than “being,” echoing the feminist critique of the social construction of identity’ (2002: 47). In this way, writing as act, depicted within the text, symbolises the fluidity, flexibility and multiplicity of identity and of life in general. It is also noteworthy that Ann Lawrence-Pietroni (1996) suggests in her study of adolescent novels by Mahy that this flexible nature is regarded as a suitable characteristic of adolescent literature, which should ‘destabilize expectations of character and genre as self-contained and complete’ (34). This is another reason why the text is so accurate in its depiction of a young character in process of transformation.

As Harry and her other self, Ariadne, merge into each other at the end, the text contains other themes dealing with unity and connection. The Hamiltons are having a holiday to celebrate Midsummer, Christmas and New Year at a seaside house, Carnival’s Hide, a house with a story attached, concerning Teddy Carnival’s tragic death in the sea. In this festivity, many guests join the family. As well as her family having a huge impact on Harry in her search for her own identity, the additional people in Carnival’s Hide significantly influence Harry by changing the balance Harry is used to in her family. Anthony, a Forestry Fellow from England, arrives in New Zealand to join this unit of the family, as do friends of the children,
including Emma, the best friend of Christobel, with her little daughter, Tibby. Finally there are three mysterious men, Ovid, Hadfield and Felix, who claim to be other descendants of the original Carnival, the builder of the house. In addition to family members, all these other visitors, who turn out to have some connection with the Hamiltions, cast influences on Harry, who is still working out her identity. Emma has a secret connection with the Hamiltions through the birth of her daughter, Tibby, and this simultaneously implies the possible overturn of the Hamilton family, and questions the image of Harry’s parents, Jack and Naomi as, a perfect couple.

Anthony is ultimately identified as a descendant of Minerva Carnival, who knew the truth about the death of her brother, Teddy Carnival. In this way, the author Mahy depicts Anthony extending the historical and temporal connections involving the Carnival House and its residents. In fact, this link through Anthony also overcomes the differences on the temporal and geographical levels. In other words, there is a chronotope which combines England and New Zealand as well as past and present. The former, England, represents the old, traditional and conventional, and the latter, New Zealand, the setting of the story, symbolises the magical and different, where Midsummer, Christmas and New Year take place within ten days, as it is in the southern hemisphere. Anthony’s visit to New Zealand from England connects the two worlds. Finally, the three brothers, Ovid, Hadfield and Felix, the Tricksters of the title, seem to have an unreal existence, and may be the threefold facets of the ghost of Teddy Carnival. Furthermore, they also bear a resemblance to the fictional characters of a romance written secretly by Harry. These elements indicate the brothers’ unreal and fantastic identities, and,
consequently, blur the boundaries between the reality Harry belongs to and her fantasy world.

As Willkie-Stibbs points out, the world Harry creates, or the romance she writes, includes a number of characteristics comparable to those identified by Kristeva as ‘symptomatic of the borderline fictions of the adolescent Imaginary, opening up the repressed’, and becomes ‘the point of psychic reorganization’ (2002:47). Thus *The Tricksters* is a text that depicts Harry thoroughly, by revealing her two sides. The ending of the story suggests that Harry is ready to write an alternative story of her life. Again her starting sentence is typical of a fairy tale, ‘Once upon a time…’ (Mahy, 2001:332), yet her new story will be different from what she was writing as her old self, and will unquestionably be independent of her physical and physiological worlds; she will write the dream book by herself.

Although at the beginning of the text Harry does not have the confidence to admit her identity as a writer, she certainly shows that she has a tendency to write while she plays an unconfident, minor and docile role at home. She sees, gazes at, listens to and observes people around her, which, conversely, implies a quiet insignificant girl, who captures others for her writing by making them her object of attention. Initially, Harry admires her beautiful elder sister, Christobel, who is an absolute contrast to her; Harry even wishes to become like Christobel. However, Harry’s identity as a writer reverses their relationship completely. Christobel, who enjoys the attention from the others and becomes their object of attention, does not have the ability to see others objectively, and therefore becomes neither a subject nor a gazer. Mahy demonstrates that Harry’s anger and frustration at her own trivial and undesirable role in Harry’s own reality reach their peak when Christobel
ridicules Harry’s story; this time it reveals the real power Harry has: ‘You don’t know anything about me. No one in the whole bloody family knows anything about me, but I know all about you’ (288). Thus she declares her power of knowledge, a quality highly significant from a feminist perspective, over other members of the family. Harry finally reveals the secret of their father: that he has fathered Tibby, the daughter of Christobel’s best friend Emma. The truth significantly damages the perfect image of her family which Christobel has embraced blindly. At this point, this text again unbalances the initial formula embedded in the story setting, and makes the whole story flexible and ambiguous. This last subversion could never have been achieved unless Harry had actually expressed what she knew, instead of only keeping the truth within herself. In that sense, the text ultimately has a message to encourage the expression of a female voice in addition to achieving her own perspective, the ability to observe and to become the subject oneself.

Although in the end Harry decides to destroy her first writing, a romance, which has been insulted by others, writing it has a great significance for her as a piece of adolescent writing. A possible interpretation is that Harry might have brought into existence the Carnivals, Ovid, Hadfield and Felix, by writing that romance and being Ariadne. Intertextual elements, such as the character of Ariadne from Greek mythology and Ovid, the author of *Metamorphosis*, additionally imply the characters’ roles and their fate in this text. Harry’s love relationship with Felix provokes Ovid, who does not want her to dominate his brother and alter ego, Felix, instead of dominating Felix himself. Consequently, Ovid challenges Harry by manipulating her elder sister Christobel and by letting her mock Harry’s writing. Ovid’s challenge has a double significance. Firstly, it questions whether Harry
defends or admits her other self, Ariadne. Secondly, it also changes the sister-relationship with Christobel, since their family-relationship involves even Christobel’s friend Emma, by making Harry reveal the secret she has been keeping. Harry is instrumental in these questions, by writing a fiction, without its being autobiographical. Mahy depicts that writing a fiction has changed Harry’s reality, and the incidents associated with her writing turn out to be related to her life itself. *The Tricksters* is not written from Harry’s perspective only; therefore, it cannot be interpreted as autobiographical writing. However, her diary at the end of the text suggests that she will tell/live her own life and either write an autobiography of a dream book by herself as she is able to do that by having achieved a sense of self. In this way, the text as a whole represents a girl’s process of development and establishment of stronger self through her writing activity, which equates with living. Thus the ideological message received through this text would seem to be that development of the self is an ongoing process achieved by one’s own deeds over an extended period, not fixed or determined at a particular time in one’s life.

**Writing as defining self-identity: a case of a lesbian writer in *Hard Love***

The current age is often considered to offer more rights for all kinds of people regardless of their race, nationality, religion, gender or sexual-orientation. Texts for younger readers have also started to reflect a society where various people coexist. Wittlinger’s *Hard Love* (1999) depicts a contemporary teenage lesbian character Marisol, who is a great influence on the heterosexual protagonist, John. In this text, the act of writing is portrayed as a means of reinforcing self-identity.
The sexual orientation of Marisol seems to emphasize the power writing creates, which may reflect the findings of queer theory, a form which has evolved from feminism. Queer theory explores the possibilities in gender and sexuality typing, involving various cultural, social and literary theories such as Lacan’s view regarding discourse originating identity, found in his various works, as well as other theories seen in Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

Marisol in *Hard Love* is, from the beginning of the story, an already established and confident writer of zines for the eyes of the protagonist, John. The term Zines signifies handmade magazines containing personal writing, originally made as fan magazines, and characters in *Hard Love* express their thoughts and ideas in each zine. The text recounts how Marisol stands in a position of teaching the power of writing to John who has only started writing since he was inspired by her writing. John is an unhappy teenager, who never opens his heart to others, after suffering from indifference and rejection from his parents. But he gradually comes to appreciate the beneficial effect of writing following his creation of his zine, as well as the communication he establishes via zines. The connection with Marisol consoles apathetic and numb John, who describes himself thus: ‘I am immune to emotion’ (1), and leads him to hope for a special relationship with her. However, his romantic desire cannot be fulfilled, due to the nature of her sexuality, and his feelings become hurt again. But this time, after learning how to reveal his feelings and communicate with others through his writing experience, John is ready to overcome the situation, and to progress toward his unknown future with new people instead of escaping into the old comfortable isolation. Since the
protagonist of *Hard Love* is John, Marisol plays only a supportive role in the text, which describes a strong connection between her self-identity and her writing experience. Her zine consists of unusual stories about herself: her Puerto Rican background, the quest for her birthmother, her relationship with her adoptive parents, etc. Her story attracts John deeply, but the reason is not only its novelty or rarity, but, also her assertiveness, as well as her strong will for her future; she describes herself in her zine ‘Escape Velocity’ as ‘Marisol Guzman, Puerto Rican Cuban Yankee Cambridge, Massachusetts, rich spoiled lesbian private-school gifted-and-talented writer virgin looking for love’ (9). John cannot face his reality and uses the zine to flee from frustration and even creates another persona ‘Gio’ as a writer of his zine, ‘Bananafish’, So Marisol, who is very direct, sincere and confident in herself, is admirable in his eyes. Her established identity, in particular as a lesbian, seems to be related deeply to an act of writing, and its pattern follows the actual characteristics of lesbian criticism about writing.

In lesbian criticism, ‘creative writing’ and especially ‘first person fictions’ are significant for attacking the stereotypes imposed by heterosexual society and traditional literary values (Humm, 1994: 216). More importantly, Humm claims that, ‘lesbian writings themselves, due to the dearth of visual models of lesbianism culturally available, carry particular significance in the formation of a lesbian identity’ (216). From this it is possible to interpret this novel as depicting how Marisol’s identity as a lesbian is reinforced by her writing experience. According to Judith Butler, ‘gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylised repetition of
acts’ (1999:179). ‘Lesbian’ is often simply defined as ‘a woman whose sexual orientation is towards other women’ but the determination for one’s sexuality is regarded as involving complex aspects such as physical, historical, social and cultural elements. In fact, the issue of sexual orientation seems to have different theories for its development. Although there is a view that homosexuality (which includes lesbianism) is dependent on a biological temperament for homosexuality as Peter Copeland and Dean Hamer (1994) claim, the other view (Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick) stresses that cultural elements mould sexual orientations as well as identities. If the latter view is accepted for the determination of one’s sexual orientation, it needs to be created and strengthened by those who require this identity. The text suggests, in addition, that Marisol is even more reassured about who she is through her writing experience; it is especially significant that her writing leads her to an encounter with other lesbian writers, who are older and more experienced. Importantly, they lead her into a new world, a new community, or ‘sisterhood’, where women love, respect and support each other, sharing and weaving their stories together. However, at the same time, it is significant to note that Marisol’s determination and the female community she is entering, which is unapproachable for John, are just briefly described in a story which centres on a heterosexual character. Wittlinger’s depiction of confident, positive and powerful lesbian writers in this text produces an image to celebrate. It is noteworthy that this text’s protagonist is John, a heterosexual teenager. If a text focuses on the characters with unconventional sexuality and the issues related to sexuality become the central point of the story, certainly such lesbian characters as these in *Hard Love* would encounter difficulties and dilemmas in a society where
heterosexuality is mainstream. In this sense, Marisol can be interpreted as a conveniently stereotyped supportive character who teaches the benefit of writing to the protagonist John.

It is possible to see lesbian relationships in this text as a paradox, in relation to convention; Roberta Seelinger Trites suggests that a heterosexual relationship generally tends to prevail over a female bond in children’s literature (1997:91). The bond between lesbians would be regarded as an extreme case, since there is no space for a male to intervene in the usual way. Marisol seems to play some of the conventional feminine roles in the text as a nurturer for John; in fact this ‘nurturance’ also functions as ‘a source of women’s special power’ (Humm, 1989:150) yet ultimately she remains superior to him. Furthermore, she clearly refuses to be captured by him, as an object of his love, due to her identity as a lesbian. The text recounts several occasions when she is confused by her own reaction. She is happy to dress up and to be pretty, to accompany John to his high school prom, and is also very comfortable with John, who is clearly falling in love with her. Wittlinger depicts Marisol tying to explain to John about their relationship, ‘No, not… love. Some kind of deep… connection…[...]which is confusing. And that’s why it has to be over now’ (Wittlinger, 1999:165). Her words to John are mainly meant to remove the source of his confusion. However, at the same time, she also feels insecure about the situation and tries to avoid any danger of diminishing her identity as a lesbian through her determination to terminate any potentially distracting connection. This shows that she may also still be in the process of establishing her own identity, as well as enforcing her recognition as a lesbian. Marisol’s joining other lesbian writers whom she has met at the zine
conference appears to be her choice. At the same time, this decision seems to represent her trust and hope towards writing as a means of self-formation. In this way, the power the act of writing creates is enhanced by the lesbian character. In this case, therefore, the sexual identity of the lesbian character is essential in conveying the ideological message concerning sexual identity, suggesting that the creation of self-identity can include development of a ‘non-standard’ identity such as a lesbian identity. This is achieved through the image of a writer who creates ‘autologous writing’. Here, the non-mainstream character becomes an extreme example to support the concept that self-identity is flexible, negotiable, and, perhaps, needs to be created by the individual.

**Conclusion**

In children’s literature there are numerous female characters who write, and the variations of their writing, their reasons and motivations for writing and the outcome the characters achieve from their writing activity are various, as briefly presented in the Introduction. However, this chapter has focused on the texts where characters demonstrate the significance and beneficial aspects of writing as action in their search of ‘self’. The sex/gender identity of characters has contributed to the organisation of this research by classifying texts according to the protagonists’ gender identities, so that this chapter focuses on adolescent female writing characters and the following Chapter Five examines adolescent male writing characters. The sex/gender identity female is significant for characters; in particular, those who are in the process of developing into adulthood cannot avoid womanhood in stories. Many of the female writing characters examined in this
chapter similarly encounter some problems on the grounds of their female identity. Ann in *Z for Zachariah* (1975) is chased as prey by a male with authority and power. The author O'Brien is the only male author among female authors of texts examined in this chapter, and perhaps created such a sadistic male character out of his male guilt, when feminism was progressing in the 1970s. Mary in *Witch Child* (2000) is regarded as an evil witch, due to her combination of being female and having qualities such as literacy and the ability to understand the nature of people and things. Marisol in *Hard Love* (1999), a confident lesbian writer, is aware of the affection John feels for her, and tries to avoid being objectified, to be his love object. Harry in *The Tricksters* (1986), on the other hand, has an inferiority complex regarding her elder sister, Christobel, who is confident with all the attention and affection from others for her qualities, such as beauty and intelligence. Harry, in particular, lacks confidence in her appearance, at the beginning of the story, and imagines herself to be beautiful, strong and deeply in love in her fantasy and literary creation. For all these female characters, the act of writing ultimately functions to solve their problems and worries. These problems and worries are linked to their issue of self-identity, and often caused by the fact that their gender identity is female. The act of writing gives them the opportunity to think, reflect for themselves, and encourages them to establish their stronger sense of self, so that they can overcome the difficulties with their own will and independent selves.

The primary texts for this chapter are not limited to those employing the form of characters writing accounts only, however, three out of four texts overtly include supposedly characters’ writings in texts, and suggest the validity of formats
to represent the power of writing as act for characters. The characters’ act of writing stands for their involvement with creativity, authority and power. Their writings reveal their thoughts and feelings, and at the same time represent their existence physically. Thus, these primary texts depict that heroines are producing ‘autologous writing’ in their own ways. In their writing, there appears their perception of the world and themselves, and these often demonstrate the development such writing characters have made.

The issue of women’s rights has been the major topic in women’s writings, as well as criticism of women’s writing. Feminist literary criticism went through several phases such as the re-interpretation of female images in texts by male authors from female perspectives, the regaining of the lost female voices in texts by females, which is termed as ‘gynocriticism’ by Showalter, and attempts to establish a theory which can be free from gender/sex differences. For the examination of young female characters, who are in search of their voices and power, in this chapter, this feminist literary criticism offers various possibilities in the interpretation of young female characters. It is significant that there are also a number of links between children’s literature and women’s writing. Feminist literary criticism of the latter has been influential both on the recent development of children’s literature and on its criticism.

Feminist literary criticism seems to correspond well to the images of female writing characters in fiction for young readers. In The Tricksters the emphasis is on subjectivity and agency, and these are achieved through the protagonist’s writing experience. The same pattern of connection between writing activity and establishing self-identity is found in Hard Love, yet this text includes even more
contemporary argument about lesbian identity, in relation to performance, as self-formation. *Z for Zachariah* depicts a female character who struggles and eventually achieves independence through the experience she goes through alone. She does not have any family or friend to rely on, and she only has her journal to reveal her thoughts and feelings. The circumstance she is trapped in, post-nuclear disaster, in this science fiction novel, seems to function to emphasise the success she has achieved. In a similar manner to the way this futuristic story develops, *Witch Child* employs the past to function as a suitable setting in which to depict female characters confronting hardship, and, consequently, there is a strong emphasis on the power and ability females attain. This is the employment of a historical time-setting for the story background, while the central character displays a modern psychological mind-set. This suggests that the text is in fact the product of a modern time, reflecting the social changes over the period as well as the awareness that feminism developed during that period. There seems to be a particular trend in recent fiction, which includes female writing characters with modern minds, in a historical setting. It suggests that a specific time period is chosen as a convenient chronotope to convey certain ideologies. In *Z for Zachariah*, the past functions as a suitable setting in which to put female characters confronting hardship, and, consequently, there is a strong emphasis on the power and ability females attain. This phenomenon which appeared in texts for young readers, could be interpreted as implying that feminism has reached its saturation point, in terms of development.

In actual fact, today is often considered to be the era of ‘post-feminism’, as the rights and equality of women, which predecessors have achieved, become
taken for granted. Furthermore, there is a more paradoxical phenomenon, that of ‘raunch culture’ as a result of the freedom females have achieved. Some question this ‘freedom’, as Tony Allen-Mills argues in the article 'Brain or Bimbo' (2006), whether the choice of becoming a sexual object is a result of the freedom females have achieved, or not. An American feminist, Catharine MacKinnon states that ‘post-feminist is really a return to pre-feminist’ (in Baxter 2006). MacKinnon’s opinion is also criticised by others that ‘women are treated as perpetual victims’ (in Baxter 2006). Following these, the concept of feminism seems to have confronted difficulties and uncertainty regarding the direction in which to proceed. In this regard, the feminist message in children’s literature seems to hold a specific view. On the one hand there appears a positive unconventional character, such as a confident character, Marisol, whose lesbian identity seems to demand a great emphasis on writing as act. On the other hand, there are struggling female characters in stories in historical settings, where young female writers are subordinate to males. But one thing common to the two different types of characters is the continuous effort the female characters make in their search for self, through writing activity. Even in the former case, Marisol is depicted as continuing to work on her self identity. Thus, in the texts for young readers, the fundamental old proto-type image of female power may be the ultimate message. Furthermore, the appropriate background to convey this fundamental feminist ideology is the setting where female characters are forced to suffer, in pre-feminist conditions.
Chapter Five: Boys and writing

As we have already seen throughout the earlier chapters, there are strong connections between writing as an act, on the one hand, and subjectivity, agency and the power of characters within novels, on the other. In particular, as indicated in the previous chapter, feminist theory observes female writing figures in a number of texts and associates them with the representation of empowered female figures. In the light of feminist theory, such writing characters are classified into a single category, the characteristic of which is the link between the effect of writing as an act and the development of the writing characters (Hirsch, in Abel 1983). The same topic is also discussed in the realm of children’s literature by Trites (1997). It is, however, not impossible to discuss autologous writing by young male characters in the light of feminist theory, if we follow Paul’s view that women and children share similarly marginal existences in society (Paul 1987), because male characters are often under the influence of masculine ideology. Trites also suggests a generous definition of feminism, stating that it is the ‘premise that all people should be treated equally, regardless of gender, race, class, or religion’ (1997:2); accordingly, when young male characters are portrayed as trying to achieve a sense of subjecthood, they can also be understood in the light of feminist theory. In a way, it is possible to interpret that the above-mentioned study by Trites, on writing characters, suggests that the tendency is for characters who are actively writing in the texts to be those who are marginalized and oppressed, regardless of the gender of the fictional writers. However, there is a contradiction, as Trites’ view relies on a proposition that historically there exists a binary set of
people in society, the oppressors and the oppressed. Clearly her definition of feminist texts indicates the latter, the oppressed as the subjects, therefore those who represent the former category, in other words, those who are white, upper and middle class, heterosexual and male, are excluded from the group of the marginalised. Consequently, since boy writers satisfy (or will in due course satisfy) at least one of these conditions, they need to be examined using a different approach. At the same time, it appears to be that Trites’ attempt to interpret boy characters in the light of feminist theory should not be ignored.

This chapter focuses on adolescent male characters who are actively engaged in the act of writing, and the choices of the primary texts are made on the basis of the characters most clearly depicted in relation to personal development, through their writing experiences, in the texts. The premise for choosing adolescent male writers is the decision to compare them with the young boy writers examined in Chapter Three, as well as with the female adolescent writers examined in Chapter Four, who were also investigated as a follow-up to the younger writers in Chapter Three. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dominance of female writing characters in number over male writing characters within the realm of children’s literature also leads me to investigate the difference according to their gender identity in the texts. These prolific writers coincidentally show the same images, in that they utilise writing activity in order to console themselves, with regard to various problems, and ultimately to create their own personal growth and development. These characters also share some other common features, in addition to their interests in writing. These characteristics of the boy writers in the texts will be examined closely in this chapter, as they may
explain the connection between the characters and their writing activity. Furthermore, it will be questioned, in this chapter, whether, in the case of male adolescent characters, the image of writing activity is employed with a clear ideological message, as was the case in the previous chapter, regarding adolescent female characters.

As mentioned above, the examination of male characters who write and achieve a sense of subjectivity requires more than feminist theory. It is significant to focus on male characters’ sexuality and gender, particularly in terms of the expectations of the males that they are ultimately supposed to grow into. Recently, in reality as well as in texts, there seem to be more and more varieties of being male. However, the major image of the male is still what R.W. Connell calls, ‘hegemonic masculinity’, which has historically been dominant in society as ‘the configuration of the gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (1995: 77). Consequently, it is essential to take account of the influence of masculinity or masculine ideology in order to examine the young male figures in these texts.

When gender becomes an issue in children’s literature, the problematic question often concerns the image of male dominance depicted in texts. Feminist theory has constantly criticised the contradicted images of female characters, who are portrayed as passive, dependent and helpless, in the search for their power and freedom. The movement for the rights of the marginalized has been trying to change such stereotypes, and has created subversive stories. Such stories have become almost alternative clichés in recent children’s literature. Following the
emergence of active, powerful and strong-minded female characters, there have appeared male characters who take obedient, passive and powerless roles, in other words, who exist in order to play second string to female heroines as depicted by characters such as the prince in *The Paper Bag Princess* (1997). As a result of real changes in society, or due to the ideologically humanistic nature of children’s literature, in order to convey an encouraging message for child readers hoping for a better future, children’s literature has developed more diversity in masculinities. In the preface to *Ways of Being Male: Representing Masculinities in Children’s Literature and Film*, the first volume with the focus on masculinities in the field of children’s literature, John Stephens lists variations such as ‘traditional macho, New Age man, gay, and queer’ (2002:ix). However, despite this range and multiple possibilities in maleness, Stephens subsequently states that the above-mentioned ‘hegemonic masculinity’ still achieves dominance (2002: ix). Interestingly, in the end, the new types of masculinities, the last three categories in the list, could be seen as having similar characteristics to those of female figures in relation to ‘hegemonic masculinity’. They are equally denied and oppressed by ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in terms of subjective agency (xi).

As has been repeatedly argued in the previous chapters, writing as an act is depicted as having a strong connection with the issues of subjectivity, agency and self-identity, since the creativity employed in writing enables these qualities to develop. The gender distribution of characters who are engaged in the act of writing becomes significant, as it shows several important features in terms of the issue of masculinity. Among the texts including young writers, there tend to be significantly more female characters than male characters. One of the possible
interpretations of the link between cultural products and reality, is in the former being regarded as the reflection of the latter. Another possibility is to consider cultural products as existing to carry ideological implications, as well as the expectations of the audiences in reality. The dominance of females in the fictional texts which employ the same format seems to suggest several things. It may imply that, in reality, there are more women than men who write reflective personal material, such as diaries and letters. However, at the same time, it is too complex and problematic to suggest that reflective ‘life-writings’ are unique to female writers. In particular, in the light of feminist theory (Anderson 2001: 34 and Marcus, 1994:81), such writings are often regarded as autobiographical writings, therefore, equal to autobiography, which used to be associated more with males. In the past there was a lack of texts written by females from an accepted canon of autobiographical writings centring on texts by Saint Augustine and Rousseau. This is not because women did not produce autobiographical writing, but because these writers were regarded as ‘unimportant, crude, illegitimate, therefore unable to live up to “great writing” by men’ (Anderson 2001:86). It appears that male writers and female writers are not so different in terms of ‘writing about the self’, and that in most cases their differences turn out to be merely in their styles, as well as according to the perspectives of the readers and critics who interpret these autobiographical writings/autobiographies.

Among the texts including characters who write, there are a considerable number of examples with comical and humorous insights into contemporaries’

78 Here, I use the terms autobiographical text and autobiography interchangeably, since, in terms of the link between the writers and their writings, autobiographical text and autobiography are not different.
detailed daily life, which appears to be the appeal for young readers. In particular, there are several series featuring talkative or rather prolific adolescent girl writers, targeted at readers with similar profiles, such as Georgia in *Angus, Thongs and Full-frontal Snogging* (*Confessions of Georgia Nicolson*) by Louise Rennison. Similar kinds of male characters are seen in texts such as Sue Townsend’s ‘Adrian Mole’ series.  

Humorous and light-hearted, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 ¾* (1982) also includes a description of how a sensitive youth suffers from being in love, and from the friction between his parents. However, it is significant to note that the series crossed the boundary, between child and adult readers. Firstly, the first volume, which depicted thirteen-and-three-quarters-years-old Adrian, was initially published for an adult audience. Secondly, the series also features grownup Adrian in the last few volumes. It suggests that his adolescent existence is intended to evoke adult readers’ amusement, sympathy and nostalgia. In this respect, it is essentially similar to a novel with another young male character, Holden Caulfield, in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), who reveals his psychological state through his narration. This book was also initially published for adults. Nevertheless, it had a tremendous influence on the realm of children’s literature and encouraged the birth of stories for adolescent readers, based on realistic issues related to young people and their genuine reactions.

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*I am aware of the fact that Sue Townsend, as a female author, has created a male protagonist. However, the difference in sex between the author and protagonist had no bearing on my decision not to investigate this as a primary text, to be examined in this chapter. As I explain in this chapter, I focus on the texts in which the protagonists recognise the significance of writing as an action. I exclude Townsend's text from my main discussion as Townsend employs 'writing pattern' as a direct means of story telling regarding the insight of an adolescent male protagonist. In fact, I have chosen *Z for Zachariah* by a male author, Robert O'Brien as one of the primary texts regarding adolescent female protagonists in Chapter Four.*
However, as has been noted above, such comical and humorous texts with characters who write seem to be more frequently associated with female characters. Comical stories in trivial everyday life are also seen in mainstream literature, in particular in women’s narratives such as Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’ Diary* series. Although I have mentioned above that there appears to be no significant difference between male and female writers in terms of the writing ‘self’, there is a view that the attitude toward the selfhood varies according to the gender of the writers as seen below. As discussed in footnote 26, a series of fictional writing accounts for young readers employ different terms to describe a personal account. The choice of term by the publisher may demonstrate that the publisher intends to follow the stereotype regarding the act of writing and the gender of the writers.

The history of autobiography needs to be taken into account for the understanding of the use of an autobiographical pattern in texts for young readers. In the nineteenth century, biography/autobiography was about the ‘great man’ and his selfhood in relation to history. In terms of the aspect of ‘recording’, autobiography was regarded as having a scientific nature as ethnography, but, at the same time, according to the content, it was also possible for it to be regarded as an art-form, literature or philosophy. In the early twentieth century, there appears another kind of writing which contains both facts and psychological aspects, notably writings by a female writer, Virginia Woolf. As will be mentioned later, the gender issue became significant for classification of autobiography, in particular, due to the forms and styles. In terms of difference in gender, Nancy Chodorow (1978) suggests a theory that the absence of the paternal figure in the
early lives of western children influences the establishment of gender roles. According to Chodorow, girls learn a relational orientation which simultaneously encourages them to have interests in interiority, while boys learn to be separate and independent and head for the journey to the external world. In this sense, the development of females evidences fewer clear differences from their childhood as they reach towards adulthood. On the other hand, males seem to require obvious separation from their childhood, and this may explain the nostalgic tone found in the above-mentioned texts with boy characters.

When it comes to the limited number of male writers, certain characteristics I identified, which are shared by these boy writers, seem to be different from those of the above-mentioned dominant, ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Although they may be attempting to be positive as in the case of Adrian Mole, and Eugene from The Amazing and Death Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman (1987), generally speaking, young male characters who reveal themselves through their writing of diaries or journals seem to be self-centred, egocentric and yet, simultaneously, insecure, unconfident and anxious (qualities which, paradoxically, create amusement and humour for the readers of the texts). There seem to be generally two patterns in texts with young male writers. One is relatively light-hearted, and, therefore, the comic theme becomes central; this will be categorised as ‘humorous text’. The other pattern mainly includes serious issues. The examples of serious boy writers are seen in the protagonists of Aidan Chambers’s novels such as Breaktime

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80 Some may also argue that the less obvious difference between girls and mature women can be explained as the relation to males. In a traditional sense, females continuously struggle well into their adulthood because of their subordinate status to males, in the same way as children are subordinate to authority/adult figures.

Adolescent male writers in this latter category of texts are chosen in this chapter for examination, as they are most consciously engaged with writing action and acknowledge its function. The selected primary texts for this chapter are the following five: Aidan Chambers’ Dance on My Grave (1982), Chris Crutcher’s Ironman (1995), Ted van Lieshout’s Brothers (1996/2001), David Almond’s Kit’s Wilderness (1999) and Janet Tashjian’s The Gospel According to Larry (2001). Dance on My Grave is chosen among several of Chambers’s works, since it illustrates the protagonist’s writing activity most explicitly. Boy writers who are discussed in this chapter are all similarly isolated, sensitive, reflective and self-conscious. These characters representing male adolescents in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century may all reflect, in one way or another, ‘the New Man’ concept, which was widespread in society during this period.

The first case of boy writers to be examined is chronologically the earliest of the five texts, Chambers’ Dance on My Grave. Ted van Lieshout’s Brothers follows, as these two texts share a common feature. Three of the writing characters in these two texts, Hal in Dance on My Grave, and Luke and Maus in Brothers are alienated from conventional boyhood because of their homosexuality. If they find writing even more meaningful and beneficial because of their sexuality, in other words, being the antithesis of the hegemonic masculine, it is essential to
investigate what exactly they go through and achieve out of their writing experience. The lesbian protagonist in *Hard Love* discussed in the previous chapter has demonstrated the use of writing activity to reinforce her sense of self-identity, which appears to be similar to the characters having non-hegemonic masculine characteristics, described above.

The following section features an athletic teenager, Bo in Chris Crutcher’s *Ironman* (1995). I have chosen this text to examine a young male character who is equally engaged in the act of writing as the above-mentioned characters, yet shows different characteristics. Bo’s more masculine nature, in terms of his enthusiasm for physical training and his heterosexuality, seems to be a contrast to the characters with less explicitly masculine features, in other texts. Bo’s letters describe how writing activity for him means ‘an autobiographical quest for Ironhood’ (21). Simultaneously his active involvement in both writing and physical triathlon training suggests that writing is not limited to those who are effeminate, or at least not masculine in the traditional sense. According to Stephens, traditional masculinity involves being ‘strong, tough, independent, active, aggressive, violent, unemotional, competitive, powerful, commanding and rational’ (1996, 18-9). Nevertheless, Crutcher’s complex character questions stereotypical images of masculinity and writing. As mentioned earlier, the reason for selecting primary texts is the characters’ obvious engagement with the act of writing. These characters similarly share solitude, sensitivity and self-consciousness. This raises the question as to whether such a similar nature and tendencies found in characters are coincidentally shared by those who are deeply involved in the act of writing, or if they are expected of writers, and this chapter explores the function of
writing and the influence of writing on these adolescent male writers represented in texts.

By contrast, the stories based on old oral tales and creative writing by Kit in David Almond’s *Kit’s Wilderness* (1999) seem to be quite different from writing by the other characters discussed in this chapter, which is mainly about personal feelings and thoughts in first person accounts in various forms, such as letters, diaries, memories and autobiographical writing. However, all of these characters similarly occupy themselves by the act of writing, and the variations in style and content are relatively insignificant, as, ultimately, writing symbolises ‘creativity’, which is, according to Stephens, ‘a form of agency, text production, whether as writing, imagining, or some other form, [which] figures agential self-constitution’ (Stephens, 2002:38). Josh’s Web site in *The Gospel According to Larry* not only influences the young readers of his Web sites in the world, it also changes the writer Josh’s life. The creation of the Web site also signifies the creation of a new identity: Larry. As the text takes the form of a manuscript written by Josh himself looking back on the whole experience of his Web site creation, it includes two sets of narrative created by Josh over the different time periods. Any writing discussed here, is ultimately autologous writing, as all are discourses which represent the entities of each writer.

**Autobiography and boy writers**

The texts examined in this chapter show writing activity as functioning in a significant way for the characters within each story. As Bo in *Ironman* calls his letters to Larry ‘an autobiographical quest for Ironhood’ (21), writings by other boy
writers, (Hal in *Dance on My Grave*, Luke in *Brothers*, Kit in *Kit's Wilderness* and Josh in *The Gospel According to Larry*) seem to show similar inner development. The definition of ‘autobiography’ is highly contested; but Philippe Lejeune’s definition is often quoted ‘A retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality’ (1989:4). It is obvious that the writing figures in the chosen primary text are not real people. However, from the patterns of the writing by these characters, what these boys compose can be seen as forms of autobiography. Bo, Hal, Luke, Kit and Josh are all engaged in the act of writing, and, while they reflect and record the significant incidents in their lives, they gain profound understanding of themselves and the people around them, and develop their own mature identities. Their life stories, or dramas between life and death, take a retrospective style and represent their psychological developments as the stories proceed. To a certain extent, female characters discussed in the previous chapter include retrospective perspectives in their writing too, but they do less so than the boy writers examined in this chapter, in that they are in the context of fast-moving storylines, where they do not have a moment for introspection, with the benefit of hindsight. Additionally, in texts, girls are depicted as achieving self-identity from point zero, whereas boys appear to lose the self-identity they had initially, thus need to re-create a new self-identity having lost the original.

The styles of writing the authors choose for them often seem to contradict their categorisations as autobiography, or, following the above-mentioned Lejeune, regarding style, ‘a retrospective prose narrative’ (1989:4). However, as referred to earlier, it has recently been claimed in the light of feminist criticism (Anderson
that letters, diaries and memories are achieving revaluation as ‘private’ or another kind of ‘life writing’ or autobiography. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the relation between gender and style of writing has been explained as being due to females’ objectified position in society and their exclusion from the dominant social narrative, or masculine narrative (McNay, 2000 and Violi, 1992). Following this, again the choice of writing forms, diary, letter, memory and creative writing, seem to suggest that the protagonists of the texts do not embody conventional masculinity. It is also interesting that some of the texts discussed in this chapter were written either some time ago or have their plots set in an earlier period. The stories of Hal, Luke and Maus, which coincidentally include homosexual characters, set approximately in the 70s or early 80s, seem to be possible in that particular time period. The 70s and 80s were the point when homosexuals started coming out, or rather they achieved confidence to come out. The social acceptance of homosexuality was more limited then. Naturally, the media includes books, and, in particular, texts for young readers reflect such situations.\(^1\) It is possible to argue that both *Dance on My Grave* and *Brothers* represent the changes that occurred in society itself where the existence of those with ‘unconventional’ sexual orientation and their difficulty of establishing self-identity were acknowledged, and furthermore regarded as important and appropriate enough to inform young readers. Particularly, the time lag between the

\(^{1}\) Although Kenneth Kidd suggests a possible interpretation of some classics of ‘lesbian/gay children’s literature’ (sic) such as Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), he also distinguishes the fact that they are different from more ‘explicit’ works after 1969, the year *The Stonewall Riots* took place. (‘Introduction: Lesbian/Gay Literature for Children and Young adults in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, vol.23.3, 1998) It is also significant that his interpretation of this classical children’s literature is not contemporary to the period when the texts were written.
text's publication and story setting of *Brothers* may imply the author's conscious decision to portray the time in the past when the circumstance for gays was even more difficult, compared to the time of publication.

When autobiographies and autobiographical writing show the development and growth of the author, or ostensible author in the case of fiction, at the same time, they also include the ebb and flow of individual life. Loss is the most difficult thing to accept or overcome for any human, no matter what the object lost may be: fame, money, health, love or life. Possibly, one of the worst things that ever happens to human beings is encountering the death of a beloved person or family member. In these novels, Hal loses his lover, Barry in *Dance on My Grave*; Luke loses his brother, Maus in *Brothers*; and Kit loses his Grandpa in *Kit’s Wilderness*, while Josh even loses himself by pretending to commit suicide in *The Gospel According to Larry*. The tragic experiences of all the characters have a tremendous effect on each of them; these impacts appear significantly in each text, or are often used to initiate the writing itself in the first place.

Some of the female writing characters examined in Chapter Four also encounter the death of people close to them. As a survivor of the nuclear disaster, Ann lost her whole family, friends and neighbours, and suffers from solitude, as well as struggling for her own life in *Z for Zachariah*. Mary in *Witch Child* also experiences the loss of family, as her Grandmother, who has been the sole family for her, is executed as a witch. Following this, not only does Mary endure isolation, she herself becomes suspect as a witch and encounters hardship which threatens her life. As stated in the previous chapter, these two female writers discover not only consolation but also encouragement in their writing activity. Since the
situations these female protagonists are trapped in are, significantly, difficult and harsh, they do not have time to linger in the past and indulge themselves in memories. The hardship these characters encounter may be explained as there being an intention to create stories of female survival and triumph, with ultimate feminist ideology. Interestingly, these two texts also have linear story patterns, which, according to Nikolajeva (1996: Chapter 5), in her study of the Chronotope, is normally considered to be a traditional male story line. (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

![Diagram](Nikolajeva (1996:143))

Furthermore, the opposite pattern of circular narrative, which Nikolajeva regards as that of the traditional female story, can be detected in the texts with male characters in this chapter. The typical male story line is similar to the pattern of Bildungsroman, which is linear in its structure. As discussed in Chapter Three, the pattern of Bildungsroman is employed in the stories of young writers, thus their story pattern can be regarded as being similar to male story lines. However, interestingly, my choice of primary texts indicates that the characteristics of story patterns suggested by Nikolajeva are not necessarily exclusively applicable to the texts with writing characters. Examples of female characters with linear storylines include Ann in *Z for Zachariah* and Mary in *Witch Child*, whilst examples of male characters with circular storylines include Hal in *Dance on My Grave*, Luke in *Brothers* and Josh in *The Gospel According to Larry*. Therefore, the texts with
writing characters perhaps suggest that they do not conform to the typical gender image, represented in texts.

The connection between tragedy and autobiography is examined in Marilyn Chandler’s study of autobiography, *A Healing Art: Regeneration Through Autobiography* (1990), which discusses the connection between crisis in a person’s life and its autobiographical treatment. Chandler suggests that crisis often leads to the creation of experimental modes of thinking and writing (18), as the old ones are no longer valid when the accustomed world has disappeared. Accordingly, autobiographical writing becomes one of the solutions to the problem, as it functions similarly to Freud’s concept of ‘grief work’, and becomes part of the necessary and inevitable stages of regaining emotional equilibrium after bereavement (15). Although there is a significant difference between the kinds of true autobiography with which Chandler deals and the four fictional works discussed here, it is interesting that they seem to have the same effect for their writers. Despite the fact that they are generated by fictional characters, I suggest that all these fictions are deliberately presented as autobiographies by employing autobiographical modes and conventions in order to generate similar effects. It is possible the authors of these texts share the same view regarding writing, so that they have created these stories, in which characters overcome the difficulty through their writing experience. Such a view may reveal the ideology these authors share. At the same time, it is not enough to point out similarity between these texts and the actual autobiographies. The reason for copying real autobiographies also reveals the ideological images hidden in the real autobiographies. For example, Chandler’s above-mentioned theory, that the action
of writing functions as therapy, in autobiography, may lead to a similar interpretation of fictional autobiography. It is possible to interpret that the fictional writers of autobiographies are going through healing processes while they write. One example is Jill Paton Walsh’s *A Parcel of Patterns* (1984) in which the protagonist, Mall, heals her grief of losing loved ones by plague through her writing memoir.

An extension of Chandler’s argument concerning loss is suggested by Marcus who indicates in her study of autobiography that the ‘Victorian’ notion of autobiography is to see it as an epitaph or monument to a past life and a *memento mori* for future generations’ (1994:209). As Hal in *Dance on My Grave* and Luke in *Brothers* write about themselves, they clearly come to identify themselves with the past as being as dead as their deceased beloveds. They experience death doubly, firstly the people who used to be close in the past are dead, and, secondly, part of their identities are dead, from losing the people they love. Hal has been showing that his fascination with ‘death’ goes back to a long time before the tragedy, as he shows his interest in death in his English essay and remarks, ‘Death gets us all. No exceptions. But every body. Yours too’ (2000:33). This consciousness becomes a real ordeal only when he knows of the death of his lover, Barry, and feels it as if it were his own death. Although both texts illustrate that the protagonists, Hal and Luke respectively, suffer greatly from their losses, the focus of their consciousness is on themselves, as is often the case in adolescence. In each text, when these characters reach the end of their writing episodes, the writing becomes a monument to their past lives and suggests the beginning of new lives and identities.
Kit’s Wilderness depicts the protagonist Kit as having many links to death. Not only has he been surrounded by a number of factors related to death, such as the deadly history of the town, his frail Grandpa who is nearing death, and the game called Death, but he also feels his own death symbolically by recognising his name, ‘Christopher Watson, aged thirteen’ on the list of the dead. He sees this firstly among the names on the monument to the victims of the 1821 coal mine disaster, which his friend John calls a ‘tombstone’ (Almond, 1999:37). He also recognises his name on John’s den wall (47). But, as Kit comes to learn, those things which seem to be opposite can, in fact, be components of each other; thus death is not only an ending but also a beginning. In fact, the structure of the book also gives the impression that the story repeats the circle and lasts eternally. Chronologically, the prologue of the book is the end of the story, except for the very last chapter in which things are described using the present tense for the first time. The prologue is written in italics, otherwise used for Kit’s story of Lak. In this sense, the entire book, written from Kit’s perspective, seems to be a story or autobiography written by Kit himself, as he looks back on the whole incident about death as a significant experience in his life.

The Gospel According to Larry by Janet Tashjian demonstrates the effect of writing activity upon a person’s identity, in particular through contemporary technology such as the Internet. The story also implies significant questions such as who holds the authority and control over identity, and simultaneously what identity is exactly. The multiple possibility in identities due to the influence of technology is often claimed (Turkle, 1997). The text illustrates how Larry, the online alter ego of the protagonist, Josh, becomes a success in society, and a
media cult figure, and eventually invades and threatens the real identity of Josh himself. Due to the uncontrollable situation, Josh decides to pretend to kill himself, an event already foreshadowed by his discovery of his name on his mother's tombstone. However, after having escaped from the chaos he has been suffering, he finally realises that he has a 'self' which would keep on going as, 'My body relaxed for the first time in weeks, and I knew my life would go on. I could change the world. I'd just start with me this time (219). His attitude indicates that identity is neither fixed nor solitary, but changeable, as well as a negotiable concept, as is often the case in more recent notions regarding 'self' and 'identity'. These views do not sit comfortably with the Humanist concept of autonomous, unique, able, stable and continuous being, a view traditionally accepted in most children’s books.

The text demonstrates a number of links between the issue of identity and writing activity. Josh’s creation of the Larry figure in his Web site represents his lack of confidence in himself, and his desire to be different. Josh initially appreciates and enjoys the power of writing which gives him pleasure and satisfaction. However, the power of writing also causes a problem for Josh, when his creation Larry becomes too famous, and Josh, as a creator, becomes the media victim. Eventually, Josh chooses to kill himself to escape all the confusion, problems and loss of his normal life. This can be interpreted as Josh having caused a kind of death by his writing. The text also illustrates another power of writing. Since the text takes the form of Josh having written the story by looking back on his own experience, through his writing experience, Josh deepens the understanding of his own problems, sorrows, wishes and hopes. The writing activity helps him to reflect
on the past as well as re-organise his own thoughts, and prepare for the future, in which he re-creates/re-establishes his own self-identity.

This symbolic implication in the act of writing also explains another similarity between these fictions regarding boy writers, which is the journey all of them go through, during their writing experiences. The boys have problems and difficulties in their lives, but, while they write, they remember, reflect, think, consider, imagine things in the past and present, and, by the end of each story, experience personal development towards a better future. The hardships the characters suffer are highly complex and include serious issues, such as death, homosexuality and abuse. Nevertheless, their similar story lines, all starting with tragedy and ending with a positive tone of overcoming problems, mean that these problems can be considered as the inevitable ‘hurdles’ to clear by means of their journey of writing, on the way to attaining agency and psychological development or coming of age. Lastly, with these points in mind, it is important to consider whether the act of writing suggests a new possibility for male characters. These characters are all different individuals, belonging to many varied categories, as defined by criteria of masculinity, such as sportsman, gay and New Age Boy. The concept of New Age Boy implies being ‘sensitive, creative, imaginative, other-regarding, negotiative’, (Stephens, 2002:43). Conversely, the existence of this pattern may pose the question as to whether it may only function in order to create an ideological image of the establishment of original identities, in terms of gender and sexuality, against the dominant hegemonic masculinity. However, simultaneously, this may suggest that this is only one of several messages to the readers of these contemporary books. The chosen texts illustrate examples of
characters who write and simultaneously establish their identities. The implication is that these characters are typical of males who are actively engaged in writing activity. Chronologically, *Dance on my Grave* (1982), in which a gay character is deeply involved with the act of writing, is more than a decade earlier than *Ironman* (1995), which exemplifies the sporty male type. This may represent a trend that authors have now started to portray writing characters who are more close to the ‘hegemonic male’ image, since society requires various types of male youth to be portrayed in order to represent the ideal free society. Following this, New Age Boys, such as Kit in *Kit’s Wilderness* (1999) and Josh in *The Gospel According to Larry* (2001), may represent the diversities of male writer images in recent children’s literature. However, the translation into English in 2001 of *Brothers* (original 1996), which depicts homosexual brothers in the 1970s Netherlands, may again emphasise the link between act of writing and the self-identity issue, which is different from the mainstream.

This chapter starts the exploration of male adolescent characters with Hal in *Dance on my Grave* as a gay writer, and continues the examination of male writers with similar sexuality in *Brothers*. The next case study is of a sporty boy, Bo, in *Ironman*. Following this, New Age boy figures are examined in *Kit’s Wilderness* and *The Gospel According to Larry*.

**Gay boy writers**

**Dance on My Grave**

The majority of the text of Aidan Chambers’ *Dance on My Grave* (1982) is formed of autobiographical accounts written by a sixteen-year-old boy, Hal, about his
experience during the summer. Hal has been arrested for damaging the grave of his friend, Barry, and he initially starts writing his story at the request of a social worker, Ms. Atkins, who investigates his case, having been appointed via a court order. However, his writing turns out not only to be an explanatory official document, but also his story, his truth and his record of the new self he has achieved, as a result of his writing experience.

The direct purpose of Hal’s writing is supposed officially to be a clarification; however, this project has a more personal meaning, as it was originally suggested to Ms. Atkins by Hal’s English teacher, who knows how writing will be a suitable medium of expression for him. Hal does not make this his stated aim at any time and the style he chooses to satisfy the legal system is far from official. For him, the incident is not only about ‘damaging a grave;’ rather he has to tell the whole story from the very beginning. As his account is written some time after the incidents it covers, Hal is able in it to look back and analyse his first encounter with Barry. This mini-adventure, in which Barry rescues Hal from a capsized sailing boat, has had a tremendous impact on Hal, who has recently moved to a seaside town. Hal, we learn, is rather shy, isolated, self-conscious, fond of literature, and has been wondering about his future, as he is sitting exams that mark the traditional end of formal education. The author Chambers depicts Hal as becoming attracted to Barry, who is two years older, active, and highly spontaneous. In Barry, Hal recognises his longed-for ‘bosom friend’ or ‘a boy with a can full of magic beans’ (44), and he gradually becomes infatuated with Barry. Hal writes all the details of times with Barry: his excitement, his joy, his happiness and also reveals that ‘to dance on my grave,’ that is, the grave of whichever of
them dies first, was an oath, which Barry has demanded that they swear to each other. Hal later considers ‘swearing to dance on graves’ as analogous to ‘swearing undying friendship’ (177), or ‘undying love’. However, in spite of Hal’s absolute passion, Barry ends their relationship by suggesting Hal’s clinging nature,

It’s not what we do together that you want. It’s me. All of me. All for yourself. And that’s too heavy for me, Hal. I don’t want to be owned, and I don’t want to be sucked dry. Not by anyone. Ever. (179)

Indeed, Barry’s words describing Hal’s problematic tendency towards possessiveness imply Hal’s whole difficulty with the process of growing up and finding his own identity.

Chamber portrays Hal’s loss of his beloved accentuates a serious issue for him, the emptiness of his self. The loss of his beloved provokes a crisis of self-identity, as he has subsumed his self in another, so that Barry’s death brings about the death of the re-visioned self Hal has created through Barry. He is thus not only grieving, but also disorientated. He has no clear sense of himself and so needs to tell his story in order to write himself into existence and create a bridge between his Barry self and the self he needs to shape, post Barry. The scene describing the end of their relationship clearly represents this dilemma. Deeply shocked and devastated by Barry’s words, Hal frantically throws a rock at Barry, who only escapes it by ducking. The rock hits and destroys a mirror in Barry’s record shop, so that what Hal reports seeing is that ‘my face fell in splinters to the floor’ (180). Mirrors play a significant role in much literature, and this scene is open to many interpretations. It may indicate Hal’s broken heart and pride, or perhaps, following Lacan’s concept of the ‘mirror-stage’ when a ‘child sees its own reflection in the mirror and begins to conceive of itself as a unified being, separate from the rest of
the world’ (Barry, 1995:114), it can be seen as the destruction of his immature self-image, consequently, implying that his sense of having carefully constructed a self has been destroyed. Whether or not this Lacanian interpretation reflects Chambers’ intention, this type of use of the mirror theme is not uncommon in Children’s literature.

Mirrors feature elsewhere in the text. For instance, a mirror represents Hal’s devastation after learning of Barry’s death; when he washes his face, he refuses to see his reflection, ’I didn’t look at myself in the mirror. Couldn’t bear to see any part of me’ (187). His refusal to see his visible and living self shows a strong sense of self-negation. At the same time, it may imply that Hal still wants to see Barry as a part of himself, and he may be afraid that his reflection will only remind him of his loss. Later, Hal goes back to the shop and sees ‘the broken mirror’s empty frame looking blindly back at me from the wall’ (188). This indicates his recognition of the loss of himself, as if he too has vanished with the death of Barry.

When Hal tells the story about the incident, he is presented as conscious of the act of writing itself. His intention seems to be to make his account as accurate as possible, but, at the same time, Chambers introduces into his account many experimental techniques, such as rewriting the same event with the word ‘correction’ (9), and giving lively effects by starting with ACTION REPLAY (19), quoting another extract (57), (224), and so on. The inclusion of these elements shows that, for Hal, writing this account is more than an obligation, and, in fact, he takes pleasure in writing as he used to when he was working on schoolwork, because he experiments with form. It is important for him to do something he likes,
as he becomes more involved with the activity, and Hal himself becomes the main point of the writing. In other words, his emptiness can be filled with his writing experience. His English teacher, Jim Osborn, who has succeeded in breaking Hal’s silence and enabling him to start writing his version of events, well understands the effect of writing. Osborn tells the social worker that ‘writing the account has started to have a beneficial therapeutic effect, and that in addition the act of writing about himself is giving Hal a new and purposeful focus in his life’ (191-192).

It seems that Chambers depicts what Hal describes as being actual incidents in the past, yet his writing is more than just a record of facts: it is an experience of creativity. Hal himself mentions the influence of the act of writing, and explains that, while he writes,

I have become my own character. I as I was, not I as I am now. Put another way: Because of writing this story, I am no longer now what I was when it all happened. Writing the story is what has changed me; not having lived through the story.

(221)

Hal is very conscious regarding his act of writing, and aware of the nature of his ‘self’ which is unfixed, flexible and changeable. Other characters examined in this chapter are not as focused as Hal regarding their writing and the sense of self. Josh, in The Gospel According to Larry, who will be examined below in this chapter, later looks back and wonders about his reasons for writing as Larry in the Website,

Who was Josh Swensen anyway? And why did he need to create Larry to spout his opinions? Didn’t he trust his own voice? I realized [sic] I was thinking of myself in the third person again- why? Why did I have such a hard time embracing “I,” just being Josh? Did everyone else my age have this problem too?’
Josh infers that his involvement with writing came from agony, anxiety, and a wish to become somebody else, which are feelings often shared by youth. On the other hand, Hal in *Dance on My Grave*, further refers to how ‘writing’ starts to capture him, and alter his sense of self-identity, doing this seems to make you see yourself differently. Also, you stop thinking about your self so much and think more and more about The Work - the Writing! [...] Making this Book of Bits. This Mosaic of a Me-That-Was. This Memorial to Two Dead People.

Here his attention has moved from the tragedy to the writing, and, at the point when his mind is no longer preoccupied with grief, it may indicate that he has started the process of healing. Freud’s concept of ‘grief work’ (Freud, 1917) or ‘the process of ‘letting go’ of attachments to the bereaved is ‘to establish a new identity in which the deceased is not present’ (summarised by Gorle, 2002), and Hal goes through the same thing while he writes his story. His words, ‘This Memorial to Two Dead People’ clearly show that he recognises that his former self is as dead as Barry, and the present self, who is writing this account, is another person. Particularly when Hal adds the extract from his diary, which was written soon after the death of Barry, to his account, he looks back at his then self and attempts to understand who he was and what he was doing: ‘I think now that what I was trying to do with that diary was to write him back to life’ (224). As Hal explains, ‘[the diaries written in the past] tell that part of the story best, because they were forged by the present moment’ (224). The diary written then is important in terms of being truthful and accurate to the emotions he had at the time. Furthermore, these parts of his diary indicate how distressed he was at that time, as well as how much he
has, in fact, changed since then into a new person, who can analyse his past self objectively.

In this way, a more powerful and capable new self is created by the writing experience. The effect itself proves the power of writing, but Trites suggests a further development of this. She argues that the main strategy of novels about gay characters is based on Foucault’s concept that sexuality is ‘depend[ent] on notions of deviance to define what is allegedly mainstream or normal’, and ‘informed by the relationship between discourse and power’ (144). She then indicates the importance of the styles of the texts, which are influenced by postmodernism as they work particularly effectively to convey ‘discourse as a form of power’ (1998:149); she hints that she sees Dance on My Grave as an instance of this process. According to Foucault, discourse produces knowledge, and it has power by controlling and defining people and things around them. The power in knowledge is not only linked to ‘the authority of “the truth” but also has the power to make itself true’ (summarised by Hall in Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001:76). Hal also seems to be aware of this equation from his own experience, as he explains while he writes, ‘I have become my own characters’ (Chambers, 2000:221). Equally, he has been struck by his friend Kari’s exact words, ‘[p]erhaps we even invent ourselves. Make ourselves appear to be what we want to be’ (246). This view suggests a similarity with the theory of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ as creation and performance, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

Since Hal recognises the power of writing, the power of himself as a writer and his subjectivity, his act of writing seems to be his declaration of his conviction that his old self, ‘[t]he chewed-up mess’ (224) has been overtaken by his new self,
created as he writes. Of course he values everything he has gained through the connection with Barry: firstly, his joy, happiness, sexual awakening as gay, then his pain, anger and desperation, but these emotions are all about his past. They are essential to who he is now, but, as he emphasises in his final section, the present Hal is more self aware and self protective: ‘someone who is making sure that he is no longer influenced by what made him what he has become’ (252). His change is reflected in the role he adopts in his new relationship. As Barry ‘gave [him] a present from Southend’ (149) and awoke him sexually, leading him into their relationship, Hal guides Spike, who used to be a school friend, and gives him the same thing (251) at the end of this novel. This shows the strength of human nature to bury the past and to work for survival. Thus, the whole story is both a tragedy, and at the same time, a celebration for Hal, in that he can go on living, by continually re-writing/inventing himself. The author Chambers depicts Hall summing up this as, ‘we all escape our history’ (252).

**Brothers**

As mentioned in the Introduction, the primary texts of this project have mainly been published first in English-speaking countries: the U.K, U.S and Australia. However, I decided to include Ted van Lieshout’s *Brothers* (1996/2001) which was originally published in the Netherlands, in this chapter, as it depicts how adolescent boys have became involved with writing activity and developed through their experiences. The fact that this text was not written in English originally should not be a reason to exclude the text, as its translation into English and its publication in U.K. suggests that the text should be treated as equal to those which were written.
in English in the first place; that the publishers feel it worth publishing in the UK suggests they felt it had a wide enough appeal, given the patent scarcity of translated texts, in English speaking countries.

At the start of Brothers, the image of writing as power works in a different way for sixteen-year-old Luke from that for Hal in Dance on My Grave. Initially, the issue of ‘power’ in this story is mainly related to the idea of discourse as a power, which is developed into the idea that knowledge is power. Ironically the Foucaultian concept mentioned above affects Luke negatively. As his initial refusal to admit his homosexuality indicates, he fears the power of discourse, because he believes that, once the ‘discourse’ (to use Foucault’s term) of his being gay is known to others, it will become an acknowledged fact to people around him and to himself, and lead to conflict, since homosexuality was regarded as a more of a social taboo in the 1970s when the story is set, than it is today. It would appear to me, therefore, that Luke felt his homosexuality was unproblematic, as long as it was unknown to others. Luke attempts to escape from becoming a victim of this ‘stigma’ by denying the words in the diary, written by Maus, his brother, who has died from congenital Wilkinson’s disease. However, the form of the whole story is that of a diary composed of the two brothers’ accounts, and it becomes essential that Luke keeps writing in it. Simultaneously, the story gradually reveals that his attitude toward writing is connected with his recognition of his sexuality. The more he writes in the diary, the more strongly he acknowledges and accepts his identity as homosexual.

What has made Luke start writing on the blank pages of his brother’s diary, is the fact that Luke has thought that by doing so he would save the diary from the
destiny of being burned by his mother, as a part of her ritual of saying goodbye to the deceased Maus. Luke's attentions and interests in the physical object are seen in his words to his mother, such as, 'If you get rid of everything then it'll feel as though Marius never existed' (11), to which his mother replies, 'I don't need his things to remind me of him every day. [...] I'm not going to have a shrine in my house' (11). Luke further shows his interpretation that Maus's belongings are his brother's embodiment in his words, '[i]f you clear out Marius's room, it'll be almost like murder!' (14). He explains, 'I'd really hate it if she threw [the diary] into the flames. It would seem as though she was burning [Maus's] thoughts, too' (17). In this way, the author Ted van Lieshout depicts Luke turning Maus's diary into a symbol of his brother's thoughts and feelings, and treats it almost as a fetish. He believes that if he adds his thoughts to the diary, then the diary will become his diary, too, as he can claim his authority for the pages he writes. Luke concludes, 'by writing in your diary, I can save it, and that way something of you will continue to exist' (17). In remembering Maus and writing down the memories in his diary, Luke realises that time parts them further and further, and how much he is beginning to forget about Maus. The fear of forgetting Maus makes him more eager to keep Maus's belongings, particularly the diary. Luke's fixation on the diary as object can be interpreted as his intention to retain physical materials, in order to understand abstract concepts or psychological phases. Similarly, his biggest question originates from the same issue. Luke feels not only sorrow but also frustration since the death of Maus, as his father, mother and he have never been able to share the grief, nor to comfort each other. Luke particularly feels anger at his mother's despairing words, '[t]he grief of a mother is greater than the
grief of a brother’ and retorts ‘[y]ou’re still someone’s mother, but I’m no one’s brother anymore’ (24). This leads him to ponder whether he needs to have a brother to be a brother, and whether he is still a brother after losing Maus.

When Luke has written more than Maus did in the diary, his mother simply says that she is going to tear out Maus’s part. Then Luke decides to fill the margins and gaps between the lines in Maus’s pages, which inevitably involves him in reading what Maus had written. Ted van Lieshout depicts Luke seeing this as essential to saving the diary, but writing in it has an additional meaning for Luke. Reading his dead brother’s diary, Luke learns more about Maus and about himself. Maus’s diary goes back to two years earlier, his thirteenth birthday, when Luke had given Maus the diary as a present. Therefore, the writing by Maus, with that added by Luke, creates a conversation over a distance of two years. The text becomes a contrapuntal narrative of two brothers. Although Maus did not keep the diary constantly, Luke learns little by little what Maus was thinking and feeling, as well as some slight symptoms of his disease through the diary. Luke also sees himself at that time in the diary, viewed as someone who has been avoiding Maus in order to escape questions about his own secret, his sexuality. Luke objects to Maus’s writing, as Maus has come to know about Luke’s homosexuality by reading the secret draft of a letter addressed to their parents confessing his sexuality. Although Luke has tried to conceal the issue, gradually, he realises his brother too was homosexual. He begins to understand that he did not have to keep a distance from his brother and thus isolate both of them, nor miss the opportunity of sharing the issue, instead of suffering alone. Thus, it seems that Ted van Lieshout demonstrates the diary entries by two brothers revealing Maus in the past and

Ironically, the plan of saving the diary becomes a menace to Luke’s secret. The more he ponders and wonders about the diary’s treatment, the more he illuminates the very secret in the diary. Yet, at this stage, Luke still believes that his mother will destroy the diary anyway, and at this point he regards the diary as a safe confessional. While he writes in the diary, he understands the past, reconstructs what he has lost, discharges what he has been desperately hiding, and, in the process, he changes himself. When he realises that his mother has not put the diary in the fire, he decides to destroy his secret instead of destroying the diary.

Van Lieshout portrays Luke having been suffering from many forms of guilt. Since the story is set in 1970s Holland, when homosexuality was considered to be more deviant and taboo than it is today, Luke’s sexuality condemns him socially and troubles him doubly. Firstly he is depicted as being afraid of disappointing his parents, particularly since he is the only heir after Maus’s death, and, secondly, the secrecy of his sexuality has forced both Maus and himself to be isolated, and has particularly distressed Maus who was suffering from his illness alone. Luke seems to feel guilty for surviving, particularly at the medical examination for Wilkinson’s disease, a genetic metabolic disorder, from which Maus died. However, gradually Luke understands that if Maus’s case had been discovered earlier, Maus could still be alive with a suitable diet and medication. Luke’s agony reaches its peak, when he realises he will survive even if he has the same disease, because Maus’s death has alerted him to have an examination before the disease has become too
advanced. At the same time, he also feels anger at the doctors for failing to find Maus’s illness, and for risking his own health by not explaining for six long months the importance of being examined. This anger seems to save Luke from his guilt in one way at least. He resolves another issue by confronting his parents and telling them that he is homosexual.

The text depicts that, although Luke’s confession does not surprise his parents, who have sensed the situation for a long time, it changes the dynamics of the family positively, making relationships more open and comfortable. Luke is depicted as being released from his sense of guilt and the burden of secrecy, and starts to feel happy and positive about who he is. This indicates that the secret has had a significant influence on his personality, so that the earlier Luke with the secret, and the present Luke without it, seem to be different identities. Similarly, Luke recognises two identities generated by Maus’s death and this becomes the answer to Luke’s biggest question, whether he is still a brother after Maus’s death. Luke says, ‘when you died, the brother that I was died also’ (142), and, vice versa, he believes ‘the brother in you survived with me’ (142), and this will ‘go on and on and on, [Luke’s] whole life long’ (142). Consequently, the text demonstrates that Luke reaches to the realisation that he does not need the diary, an object which symbolises Maus and himself in the past. Through the diary, Luke has reconstructed by writing what he could have done while Maus was alive, and been reconciled with his past. And, finally, he can declare the end of the diary and also farewell to Maus, entrusting ‘the brothers [they] were’ (155) to Maus, who stays in the past, and head for his future.
Returning to Foucault’s concept, ‘subject’ means ‘the object through which power is relayed’ (Hall, 2001:79), which is ‘constraint’, a negative element of subjection according to Foucault, contrasting with the other concept, ‘freedom’. Luke’s transformation simultaneously illustrates a change in how writing functions for him. Initially, the author, Ted van Lieshout depicts Luke having not had control over writing, (‘constraint’) since his original purpose for writing in the diary has not been to benefit personally, through a healing effect, but to save Maus’ diary. Luke is often in effect trapped as a subject of his brother’s account, as well as being a victim of prejudice and abhorrence from society because of his homosexuality. However, Luke gradually comes to appreciate the act of writing for its beneficial functions such as reflecting on the past, contemplating issues, revealing problems, making confession, understanding a situation, and helping to find the solution. At the same time, these indicate that the more he gets involved with writing, the more central he becomes in his own writing so that he has become the subject, ‘the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces’ (Hall, 2001:79), someone who owns power and control over writing and holds the agency of his own action, (‘freedom’). In particular, the point Luke makes, regarding the decision of parting from himself in the past and accepting his new self, shows the power he now has over himself, as well as the power that the writing as an act embraces. The power of writing is depicted here, as in Dance on My Grave; this rhetoric seems to be especially emphasised as suitable for those who are different, or rather deviant, such as gays in conventional society, where a hegemonic masculinity is the mainstream. Luke, who has been oppressed from the social convention at the beginning of the story, learns to accept his new and true identity.
with his ability of recognising, creating and holding ‘power’ through writing, and, hopefully, will survive as himself in the future.

As I have stated above, there are many similarities between Luke and Hal. However, the texts illustrate that they are different kinds of writers. While Hal regards himself as a developing writer from the beginning of the story, Luke coincidentally happens to be involved in the act of writing. The ending of *Brothers* suggests Luke will depart from the writing activity, since his problems have gained some kind of solution, as well as being partially released from the sorrow, agony and guilt he has been suffering from. In this sense, *Dance on My Grave* could be regarded as a kind of Künstlerroman, but *Brothers* could not. The attitude toward his own sexuality seems to be reflected in the act of writing. Hal, who has been a confident and active writer through the story, seems to have fewer dilemmas about being gay. On the other hand, Luke has been in self denial and secrecy until he gets involved with writing. In this way, writing as act is depicted as effective and suitable for those who are ‘unconventional’ in their sexual orientation.

**Sporty boy in *Ironman***

Chris Crutcher, a children’s and family therapist, as well as a writer, addresses seventeen-year-old Bo Brewster’s development in *Ironman*. Bo is highly interested in training himself to become a triathlete, ‘Ironman’. He keeps a record of his life in letters ostensibly for the radio personality, Larry King. In addition to Bo’s letters, the text also includes third-person narratives in the present tense to depict characters. The small proportion of ‘own writing’ already suggests physically that there is less writing by the protagonist in this text compared to that in the other
primary texts. However it is significant that Bo is also involved in physical training, which is objectively illustrated by the third-person narrative, in addition to his psychological development through writing. It seems that Crutcher portrays Bo as writing these letters because of his ambition, that he will be famous in the future for the triathlon. However, the fact that Bo does not actually send these letters to Larry, throughout, and his occasional comments on Larry, such as ‘what I like about you is, you listen’ (1995:1) and ‘you ought to think about being a shrink’ (28) suggest that the writing to Larry means more than recording ‘[his] rise to the top of the triathletes’ pyramid’ (78). Perhaps this remark may imply his needs for therapeutic counselling from a psychiatrist. Bo has problems with his relationships with his father and his (American) football coach, and it is his purpose to train his body to become bigger and tougher in order to avoid feeling his own smallness and helplessness while confronting these male figures with authority and superiority. His rebellious attitude results in his being forced to join the Anger Management group, where students with problems, what Bo calls the ‘gang of future lifers’ (18), belong. In spite of his initial reluctance, Bo appreciates meeting with other students, including his girlfriend, Shelley, and sharing feelings. With its healing function, the group gradually becomes a comfortable and important place for him.

I regard Ironman, as a story of a sportsman-type boy, which looks as if it should be a contrast to less clearly masculine and domestic story types. In addition to the title, words such as ‘hard’, ‘toughness’, ‘muscle’, ‘strength’, and ‘power’ often appear in the book and emphasise these physical features. For Bo, his body is not only an exterior and physical result of his hard work of running,
swimming and cycling, it also represents his interior or core element, which enables him to make such physical efforts. He explains that the rhythm he feels while he exercises requires 'body, brain and spirit' to be all together (123); the book shows his physical development and his psychological progress synchronously, and ultimately the construction of his independent self.

Crutcher depicts Bo’s problems as being caused by difficult relationships with his father, his football coach and the college students who would be rivals in the triathlon; his solitary battle against them suggests a rather simplistic bipolar formula of good versus evil. This bipolar formula has often been noted in fairytales and Bildungsromane, which were examined in Chapter Three. However, the story indicates that things are more complex than they look, by showing Bo’s understanding of people around him. All members of the Anger Management Group give the impression of being somewhat odd to others. However, the members including Bo’s future Gladiator girlfriend Shelley, Elvis, Hudgie and also the instructor for the group, a Japanese Cowboy, Mr. Nakatani - all have sensitive psychological conditions, mainly due to problematic experiences in the past and the present. Bo comes to realise that their difficult pasts have traumatised them and that they are affected by this, but at the same time, he also realises that they have had to overcome these gradually, as even Mr. Nakatani has overcome his desperation at losing his own children, though it was his own fault.

The experience in the group also teaches Bo that ‘fear causes hate’ and he accepts his own prejudice against his supportive swimming coach and journalism teacher, Mr. Serbousek, which has arisen from the teacher’s homosexuality. This becomes the key to solving Bo’s fundamental problem, and at last he realises that
his hostile relationships with his father and football coach, together with his hatred and anger, originate from himself, ‘a monster that lived inside me’ (145). His triathlon competition becomes his battle not so much against his antagonists but against himself. His physical training, discipline and the final competition involve mental effort as well as the support of people around him. This indicates a change in Bo’s attitude towards society. Initially, he was isolated within the football team, which is a significant institution in the American high school context as well as relating to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995:37, 54); he was angry with his football coach and his father, a symbol of patriarchal authority. When he leaves the team and participates in the Anger Management group, however, he remains isolated. Eventually he appreciates his new connections with the other members of the group, and he fights and finishes the triathlon race with their encouragement. Bo’s effort in the race and the group’s support are recognised as symbolising each person’s battles to establish their places in society, whatever race, gender, class, and family background they have. It should be noted that Bo reveals his emotions in his letter to Larry, and through his reactions to and interaction with the members of the AMG.

As Bo reveals in his final letter to Larry, his story, ‘the soon-to-be highly-sought-after memories of our country’s future premier Ironman, Beauregard Brewster, in the year of his quest to conquer the fielding Yukon Jack’s Eastern Washington Invitational Scabland Triathlon’ (1) does not finish with the physical race. He also includes things after the competition: his graduation, Mr. Nakatani’s return to Texas, and, most importantly his going with his father to counselling for the sake of improving their relationship. Through this he discovers that his father
also had a difficult relationship with his own tyrannical father, and this helps to explain how he in turn became a bad father. In this way, besides the strong emphasis on the bodily and physical elements, in Ironman Crutcher also shows the importance of spiritual and psychological development, and, in particular, writing appears to be an effective way to stress these in this novel.

In addition to the therapeutic function for Bo, writing as act is effective to deliver a certain impression in this story. The point that Bo, who is sporty and masculine in the conventional sense, is positively engaged with writing, blurs the gender binary categories and supports the message of this story, that everybody should be able to be what they are, and, if they are not, they should make an effort to become themselves, whatever hardship they suffer from. This book suggests that everybody is entitled to have his/her own place. Not only does this include those who have been abused, violated and victimized in the Anger Management group, but also the villains. Through his characters and orchestration of events Crutcher conveys the message that since the villains also have reasons to be warped, they should not be deprived of their rights as human beings, as long as they hope to improve themselves and make efforts. Such a tendency is also seen in the structure of this novel itself, the combination of Bo’s first person narrative letters and the third person present tense narration, which reveals the existence of multiple perspectives in the world, and appeals to readers for understanding, compassion and tolerance for others.

This kind of supremely positive message may originate from the ideology or romantic view due to the author, Crutcher’s background as a children’s and family therapist. However, at the same time, it is also part of the convention of
contemporary children’s literature, that people can be better and, perhaps, the situation has further progressed, in that people ‘have to’ get better. ‘Compulsory happiness’, potentially a kind of ideology in children’s literature, has the danger of ending up loading burdens on those who are unable to cope with the expectation. The writing activity and bodybuilding coincide in Bo’s case, as Bo is striving to become an ‘ironman’; thus he undertakes physical training, whilst developing mentally and emotionally, through group therapy and interaction with others, processes represented in his writing. In this way, the text succeeds in depicting the positive developments of Bo in two ways.

**New Age boy figure in Kit’s Wilderness**

David Almond’s *Kit’s Wilderness* (1999) illustrates a different kind of power of writing from the above examined texts. The protagonist Kit notices that ‘[s]tories are living things’ (Almond, 1999:154), and ‘telling stories is a kind of magic’ (155); he adds ‘hope’ and ‘wishes coming true in story’ as the elements of magic. On the whole, the nature of Kit’s writing is often fictional and different from the examples already discussed. While Bo in *Ironman*, Hal in *Dance on My Grave* and Luke in *Brothers* write memories and confessions or records about their own past, Kit produces many different forms of writing, such as stories based on old tales of his grandfather, pure fictions and unconscious/dream stories. As mentioned earlier, the text is written from Kit’s point of view and in retrospective style. If the whole text is considered as the product of Kit’s writing, the story of his experience of life and death, starting with a game called Death, becomes another example of his creative writing (which is not necessarily fictional and fantastical). Many of his
stories may look fantastic and arbitrary, as they often symbolise the psychological aspects of the writer himself. They should be treated as seriously as the more direct accounts in the previous three cases. The importance of the stories seems to be the main message in Almond’s text. For that reason, this section investigates how significant the story telling or story writing depicted is for the maturation of the writer, Kit.

Thirteen-year-old Kit, Christopher Watson, is still a newcomer in an old mining town, Stoneygate, since his family has moved in to live with his grandfather, whose wife has died shortly beforehand. Kit’s rather isolated situation is recognised in the fact that he often spends time with Grandpa, who tells him old tales related to the town, which has a long sad history. Kit writes stories based on these tales, and they help him to assimilate into the new community. His stories win not only the praise of his teacher and classmates, but also the attention of an isolated abused outsider, John Askew, who values connections to the past. John considers Kit’s talent for story as a proof of a link to the past, analogous to his own drawing ability. Almond depicts that, despite Kit’s initial resistance, he becomes involved with John Askew and other children in the game called Death and the tragic past of the town. The tragedy was a pit disaster, which buried alive and killed the children of an ancestral generation. Significantly, at the same time, Grandpa is failing and nearing death, something which further directs Kit’s mind to issues of death. While writing stories based on Grandpa’s old tales and recollections, Kit learns the importance of memory and his role as a storyteller, ensuring that ‘things pass down generation to generation’ (26). However, at this stage, Kit is not impelled by any strong will or desire to write, but rather by what he
feels to be his vocation in order to pass on the stories and record the fading memories of Grandpa.

Kit’s stories and his attitude to writing change when he has fewer opportunities to listen to Grandpa’s old tales, due to the grandfather’s worsening condition and the sudden disappearance of his friend John, after the Death game has been banned by the school authority. These situations have a significant influence on Kit, as it is possible to understand that he has lost the mentor who has been supporting and leading him. At the same time, he has also lost John Askew, who is what Kaum (2001:38) suggests as his other self, or shadow, following the Jungian theory. The shadow is a part of personality and represents ‘the opposite qualities from the manifested persona’ (Stevens, 1999: 43), which is the ‘packaging’ of the ego (42). John symbolises what Kit has been attracted to, in brief, darkness and death, and John’s vanishing seems to suggest that he has gone to the dark side on behalf of Kit. In Jungian terms, ‘assimilation of the shadow is a crucial step for individuation’ (46), and this is what Kit achieves when he writes a more original story about a primeval boy, Lak. Significantly, soon afterwards, the story which Kit writes for John (Almond, 1999:190), and his dream, start to mingle. This clearly represents that Kit is working on his shadow or unconsciousness for his maturation.

Although writing about Lak’s journey may be a remedy for Kit, as he is able to express his anxiety and fear about John, Grandpa, darkness and death, to write about hardship can be difficult and distressing for him. As ‘the stories are living things’ (154), Kit cannot control them as he wishes. Yet, at the same time, Almond portrays Kit understanding that ‘telling stories is a kind of magic’ and continuing the
hard journey of writing which helps him to find some answers to his questions, though these are never very explicit. Just as he has seen in his real life that things have multiple elements, when he recognises that John ‘isn’t evil. There’s good in everyone. There’s good in Askew’ (Almond, 1999:76), he learns that everything is related to everything else. Death and life, dark and light and evil and good are elements not to be opposed, but to be complementary to each other. Simultaneously, his attitude to story and dream also indicates that during his writing process, he has accepted his unconscious instead of having repressed it; thus he achieves wholeness and obtains his own personality, (Jung, 1933:179), or, the self.

Finally Kit also writes a factual and familiar story. Kit’s Wilderness seems to be a story about Kit with his experience of life and death, in other words, his autobiography as discussed above. The prologue, which comes near to the very last in the chronological order of the plot, suggests that Kit looks back on the whole incident as a significant influence in his life. It also suggests the changes in his writing, as well as in himself. Instead of Kit’s being driven or led by outer forces such as his role and unconsciousness, as he has been initially, David Almond’s Kit’s Wilderness appears to be composed with Kit’s understanding of himself and of surrounding people in the present and the past. Furthermore, it seems to be that the protagonist Kit also recognises the importance of his and other’s experiences, and feels that they should be passed on to his generation and thence from generation to generation. The last point may be the biggest difference from

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82 The treatment of binary elements, such as good and evil, light and dark, life and death, as complementary to each other rather than opposing each other, is also seen in Almond’s other works such as Skellig.
the cases of Hal and Luke, who clearly reveal that they have finished writing about their tragedies, as these have been intended to improve the recovery of these writers, Hal and Luke. On the other hand, for Kit, the story needs to keep going, as the ending is the beginning, as darkness is light, and death is life. Consequently, he concludes the book with his belief in eternity, ‘I see Grandpa and Grandma before me. I follow them. I walk beside the river with my friends. I know that, as long as there are others to see us, we will walk here together forever’ (Almond, 1999:233). Thus his story will be continued from generation to generation for ever, suggesting to me that the ideological nature of Kit’s discovery of self-identity is that discovery of self-identity and that self-identity are not completed but continuing phenomena. The continuing nature of this process was discovered in other texts such as *Hard Love* and *Dance on My Grave*. However, *Kit’s Wilderness*, particularly appears to emphasise the limitless time span involved, which even extends beyond an individual’s lifetime, to span different generations.

**Identity through new technology: The Gospel According to Larry**

The development of new technology creates more variations, possibilities and complexities in modern media, which have significant effects on the act of writing itself, as well as on the representation of the act in texts. For instance, as seen in the online diary or Blog (Web log), personal writing open to the public has a significant characteristic in terms of a blurred boundary between the private and public. Recently, there have been more texts featuring writing via e-mail, Weblog or the Website, which enables fast and more wide scale communication, such as Carolyn Keene’s *The Nancy Drew Files 144: the E-Mail Mystery* (1999) as a part of
The Nancy Drew Files series, Rosie Rushton and Nina Schindler's *P.S. He's Mine* (2000), Jacqueline Wilson's *The Worry Website* (2002), and Sandra Glover's *E-mail* (2002). Additionally, a phenomenon created by new technologies is that there is a link between the fictional texts and the readers in the real world, instanced by Web sites regarding Francesca Lia Blocks’ fictions, where there are active interactions of readers in the real world, regarding the fictional world, in literary texts. There appears to be some attempt to connect the fictional world of texts and the real world of readers by reference in the texts to the new technology. The insertion of an existing e-mail address in Celia Rees’s historical fiction *Witch Child*, examined in the previous chapter, is a good example. It suggests the new possibility that the books as old-fashioned media make use of modern technology in order to reinforce their plausibility as stories.

Janet Tashjian’s *The Gospel according to Larry* (2001) deals directly with new technology, in spite of some religious elements in the text, such as the gospel and the theme of resurrection. The text recounts how the creation of a Web site enhances the power of writing, in terms of self-expression, communication and creativity. The messages in a Web site influence people and the world in the story is about to change. The text depicts how the messages in the Web site influence society. The protagonist, Josh Swenson, creates the Web site as Larry, and posts his anticonsumerism messages, which are against the mainstream view in his society. To his surprise, his Web site gains the support of a great number of people, and the Larry figure becomes famous and eventually turns into a media sensation. When Josh is revealed as Larry’s true identity, Josh gets trapped by his alter ego, Larry. Larry becomes ‘a product [...] to get consumed’ (2001:150) and
deprives Josh of his privacy, although the persona of Larry has initially provided Josh with freedom and courage, to express his opinion and passion, and the opportunity to be someone he wants to be.

The text shows that Josh is doubly engaged in the act of writing. As the first level, Josh writes/creates the Web site as Larry. The text takes the form of the manuscript, ‘The Gospel According to Larry’ written by Josh, which was passed to the author Janet Tashjian. In that sense the story can be interpreted as being written at the second level, and Josh reflects all of his experiences from his creation of Web site to his agony caused by the revelation of his identity, and the loss of his existence as Josh. As Larry, Josh experiences the positive power of writing, as it enables him to express an opinion and communicate with people. However, Josh’s writing experience also shows the danger of creating another identity, which ultimately threatens his true identity. Josh suffers deeply from the negative effect of writing activity, and he even commits ‘pseudocide’ [sic] (176), in other words, he eliminates his life as Josh, who is a lonely victim of the media, with no friend.

Through writing this manuscript, Josh analyses his past and deepens his understanding of himself. Josh, as a lonely seventeen-year-old boy, has been suffering from the death of his mother, his step-father’s new relationship, and an unfulfilled love for his best friend Beth. He realises that, in the past, although he made a connection with people all over the world through his Web site as Larry, he failed to communicate with the people closest to him, as Josh. The author, Tashjian depicts the invention of a new identity invading the old identity, and, as a result, both the identities, of Larry and of Josh, disappear. Through the creation of
the second piece of writing, in which Josh reflects on the whole experience from creating the Web site to losing the original Josh by committing ‘pseudocide’, there is a new identity which is different from both old Josh and Larry. However, since the protagonist chooses to present the manuscript as ‘The Gospel According to Larry-in my own words by Josh Swensen’, it seems to be that he attempts to restart his life by including all the old identities he had/created in the past. Although writing as act has caused the problem in Josh’s life, he also recovers from the experience, through the act of writing again. Josh’s choice of an old typewriter to produce his second writing, since ‘it’s time to go back to basics’ (215) may also imply the fundamental importance of writing for identity, instead of identity for writing. As Josh himself realises, the irony is that his writing experience employing technology in his Web site has taken him over.

This text implies the multiple possibilities and flexible nature of identities. It also suggests the optimistic idea that there is more than one chance for life, and a mistake can be reversed by another attempt. Thus it seems to support postmodern concepts, regarding the issues of self and identity. However, at the same time, the text asserts the importance of owning one’s own self-identity, instead of claiming the insignificance or non-existence of self. In that sense, it still carries a humanist message, the ideology of which is that any individual possesses a self-identity/identities.

**Conclusion**

Through the experience of writing, each young male writer examined in this chapter comes across a similar discovery or understanding about the effect of
writing as an act and as self, and achieves a new and flexible identity through it, which it seems will never be controlled nor dominated by any other stereotype, particularly that of masculinity. The pattern of writing characters successfully represents the multiplicity and instability of the concept regarding ‘self’ and ‘identity’. Bo and Maus find some therapeutic function in writing. Kit becomes aware of the magical power of the story. Furthermore, Hal and Luke notice that the written self and the writing self are two different things, and this relates already to one of the controversies about autobiography, the gap between the author and the pronoun ‘I’ (Marcus, 1994:195). This duality is also seen in the meaning of subject according to Foucault, as subject is something ‘subject to someone else’s control and dependence’, and also something ‘tied to his own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge’. These two concepts indicate the dual meaning of subject ‘a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to’ (Foucault, 1982: 208-212). Foucault’s theory has been discussed on page 211, with reference to these two concepts. This view suggests that the young writers are included in what they have written, in other words, they are subjected to their own accounts. This may be a great contradiction to the images of writing characters that have been described as autonomous, independent and powerful. However, simultaneously, the same discourse requires readers to locate themselves in it, or subject themselves to it. Thus, this whole interpretation proves that discourse is the centre of the entire nexus, compounded of author, book and reader. In that sense it is most natural that these books reveal some elements implying their consciousness of their own entities in a postmodern manner, as postmodernism can be one of the anti-(hegemonic) masculine characteristics for denying and rejecting the existing
rules and conventions, a tendency which is found in all the five fictions discussed in this chapter.  

Creating selfhood and identity with autonomous control is physically represented in the characters’ acts of writing, and such objective features are also emphasised in postmodern characteristics, as a book revealing to the reader elements which display it as a creation and construction. *Ironman* is a compound of multiple viewpoints, which are represented by a combination of first-person narrative and third-person narrative. *The Gospel According To Larry* also includes multiple frameworks representing the different perspectives, as well as the changes occurring in the protagonist, Josh, due to his reflection on his own extraordinary experiences. *Dance on My Grave* takes a metafictional form; it consists of a collage of articles, documents, memory, essay and diary, which are written from different perspectives or focalisations. The newspaper articles in the very beginning and end of the book show how things look different from different points of view, although the social worker, Ms. Atkins may have deliberately chosen to describe the relationship between Hal and Barry as ‘friendship’ because she was concerned about the reaction of society, which would not be very different from the situation when the book was published in the 1980s. *Brothers*, which includes two writers and time settings, puzzles readers with its contradictions and complications.

Coincidentally, or perhaps naturally, such postmodern elements, which create flexibility and multiple possibilities, are considered as characteristics of

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83 Postmodern features are examined regarding their characteristics and effects, in particular in the shape of metafiction, in the following chapter, Chapter Six. The ideological implications and expectations from adults, authors, publishers, critics, teachers, parents will also be included in the examination of metafiction.
lesbian/gay texts within ‘queer theory’ (1995, Barry: 143-148). *Kit’s Wilderness* contains layers of stories as well as multiple ways of how to interpret things. As this is not a gay/lesbian text, it may suggest that new age boy storylines take a neutral position. McCallum calls these features ‘incorporated discourse’, and explains that they are employed as the ‘object of representation’ (1999:206). This implies that the use of ‘incorporated discourse’ has been made in order to make the stylistic effect in texts. These features not only make an immediate and intimate appeal to readers, but also emphasise the characters’ creations in terms of their physical formation. McCallum further argues the significant roles of incorporated discourses for representing the construction of subjectivity, by embracing multiple focalisers or narrators, diverse linguistic styles, registers and ideological viewpoints, which are under various social and cultural influences (209). In that sense, it seems not to be a simple coincidence but rather a reasonable outcome, that the chosen five different stories of male writers who are alienated from conventional images of boyhood, similarly use such a style, to convey stories of growing up for a better future.

At the same time, it is significant to shift the focus to the fact that, if the young writers write their stories and develop themselves through the beneficial function of writing, they are only depicted as doing so in fiction. Thus the reason why such fictions have been written becomes significant, in particular in relation to the concealed expectation and ideology of the authors, who seem to suggest that readers are supposed to develop themselves by creating ‘own selves’. The storyline to encounter the tragedy, consequently lose the self, and overcome the difficulty by creating a new self and a future with one’s own hands is similar in each
case. These five contemporary stories include many complex issues, such as death, homosexuality and abuse, which used to be left out, as taboos, in the realm of children’s literature. However, the texts examined in this chapter by depicting writing as a positive and affirming act in each case ultimately present a positive view that all young people can eventually conquer personal problems and build maturation using their own powers. Or, at least, that they are expected to do so, as if hardship functions as the inevitable ‘hurdle’ to clear for the psychological development of coming of age.

The male writing characters discussed in this chapter, Bo, Hal, Luke and Kit, Josh (and also Maus, although he has not appeared as extensively as his brother, Luke has in the text), similarly develop themselves through the experience of writing. The contents, styles and purpose may be different, but while they write they equally take a journey from past to the future by reflecting, thinking, expressing and wishing. Their act of writing, in other words, creativity, symbolically demonstrates an ideological image of self, which is autonomous, independent, vocal and self-curable. It is noticeable that writing as an act is a very effective strategy to obtain suitable identity for all writers, since no matter how different they are from the conventional, they are capable of creating what they need with their own hands. In particular, the less they are conventional, in terms of gender, the more important it is to have flexible and negotiable schema to establish self-identity, which should not be naturally rigid nor inflexible. Additionally, the point that their writing takes the form of some kind of autobiography or life-writing is significant, as it represents the positive view of living people, who progress and develop. The writing can be interpreted as the embodiment or alter ego of the
writers. In that sense, the term I suggested in the Introduction, ‘autologous’ writing becomes valid. Yet the writing characters also learn to distinguish between their writing and their selves, as it is the inevitable step to go through in creating the new identity. The split between the writers and their writing also poses questions about the nature of books, as well as the roles and meanings of writers and readers.

However, finally, returning to masculinity in children’s literature, the extremely rigorous issues appearing in these books, and the small number of ‘conventional’ or ‘mainstream’ boy characters, (thus homosexuality should be included), seem to imply a lack of stories about ordinary scenes. ‘Unhégemonic masculinity’ tends to be associated with the ‘writing act’ as it allows the writing characters to create their own comfortable and suitable selfhoods. The influence of authors’ gender on the creation of character was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. The authors of the texts with boy writing characters examined in this chapter are predominantly male and only Janet Tashjian, the author of The Gospel According To Larry is female. It appears that creating an opposite gender character is not particularly significant. However, perhaps it should not be concluded as a mere coincidence that both Chapter Four and this chapter suggest that more authors create same gender protagonists, and perhaps the gender of the author is entirely coincidental, in any case.

This strategy of creating new self-identity is the same for the female writing characters examined in the previous chapter. The use of ‘writing character’ as literary pattern in various texts can be interpreted as reflecting the development of literary and cultural theories. As feminism has evolved into gender studies, which includes queer theory, all of which are concerned with the individual’s right,
freedom and self-identity, the writing character may have gained more variations in terms of gender and sexual identities. Regarding the difference between the characters discussed in the previous chapter and those discussed in this chapter, in a general sense, female characters were depicted as discovering or re-claiming their identity, whereas male characters discussed in this chapter were suffering from the gap between the pre-determined self and their internal identity. ‘Writing’ may still not be common in the standard masculine sense. Perhaps, simply, there are not enough discussions, studies, ideas, and therefore books, which focus on boys on a wider scale. However, in the future, more texts may appear, including writings by various young male writers, and then an assessment of this pattern of male characters who write will be possible. As mentioned earlier, chronologically more ‘ordinary’ or mainstream boys, appear in texts published more recently, such as Bo in Ironman and Josh creating Larry, who is more charismatic than himself, in The Gospel According to Larry. This phenomenon may imply that the writing activity is becoming more widespread among young people within the stories.
Chapter Six: Writing characters in postmodernism

Metafiction

The texts which include writing characters, particularly texts taking the form of characters’ personal writing accounts, often show self-consciousness, and also represent the artifice of texts, by demonstrating the way texts are composed of the words of the fictional writers. In this sense, there is a strong link between the subject of my research, writing characters, and metafiction. According to Patricia Waugh, metafiction is ‘a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about relationship between fiction and reality’ (1984:2). In addition to its questioning function, Waugh also suggests the possibility of metafiction in relation to the concept of the world the readers belong to, and the concept of subjectivity with which the readers co-exist, ‘If our knowledge of this world is now seen to be mediated through language, then literary fiction (worlds constructed entirely of language) becomes a useful model for learning about the construction of “reality” itself’ (3). Due to its association with anti-conventional views of the world and individual subjectivity as unstable, disordered, thus perhaps not existing, metafiction is often regarded as an example of postmodern literature. Metafiction has indeed occupied the foreground in postmodernism, a characteristic of which is to deconstruct traditional values. Regarding ‘postmodernism’ Linda Hutcheon states,

[…] any attempt to define the word will necessarily and simultaneously have both positive and negative dimensions […] In general terms, it takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted
commas around what is being said [...]. Postmodernism’s distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale ‘nudging’ commitment to doubleness, or duplicity [...]. The postmodern’s initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as ‘natural’ (they might include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact ‘cultural’.

(Hutcheon, 1989:1-2)

Having such a view as a background, postmodern works of art, which include literature, imply the existence of a kind of fiction which ‘knowingly refers to its own status as a work of art’ (Wolfreys: 2004:190) or, if not, which ‘from the position as elite art form, jokingly addresses the status of the art object through construction from or reference to popular culture, thereby collapsing distinctions between high and low’ (190). It is understandable that metafiction which reveals the unnoticed nature of fiction flourishes in the postmodern view.

However, the history of metafiction as a narrative strategy seems to start much earlier. Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1760), which according to Waugh ‘can be seen as the prototype for the contemporary metafictional novel’ (70), shows impossibility, dilemma and absurdity in the attempt to write, as early as the mid-eighteenth century. However, the emergence of metafiction in this early period is perhaps not something to be surprised at, if a view regarding the link between metafiction and the novel is taken into consideration. Waugh emphasises that ‘[...] metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in all novels’ (5: italics in original). In that sense, it is possible for any novel to carry a metafictional element. Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, which is often regarded as the first novel, as mentioned in the Introduction, had been published in 1719, not far from the time Sterne’s novel was written. As mentioned in the Introduction, the definition of novel as a genre is contested, but realism is often regarded as its fundamental element.
Metafiction deals with the nature of realism by revealing what realism is and how it is constructed, rather than merely including realism. As far as paying attention to its artifice to create realism, it may be possible to interpret any novel as metafiction, as Waugh hints. However, on the whole, metafiction represents overtly and explicitly what all fiction is.

In recent children’s literature, texts with postmodern features have appeared more and more frequently. This phenomenon can be explained as being due firstly to the influence of mainstream literature, and secondly to the reflection of the society in which we live today. As examined in Chapter Two, society changed in the last forty years of the twentieth century in that the individualism progressed and the emphasis of ‘self’ developed significantly, even to the stage where the awareness to the sense of self paradoxically questions its existence. This time period fostered an almost ironic attitude towards literature, avoiding taking self too seriously, whilst simultaneously showing the way in which self is portrayed and how serious it really is. In the realm of children’s literature, postmodern features often involve metafiction. The interpretations of metafiction in the realm of children’s literature are not different from the view mentioned earlier. For example, Robyn McCallum suggests, ‘to the extent that we use language and narrative to represent and comprehend reality, as well as to construct fictions, metafictions can, by analogy, show readers how representations of reality are similarly constructed and ascribed with meanings’ (1996:408). Dudley Jones also appreciates metafiction’s emphasis on its fictivity and artifice (1999). Nikolajeva states that ‘because it interrogates our own existence, metafiction reflects the chaos and ambivalence of our life and the loss of absolute values and truth’
For example, Roberta Seelinger Trites values the fact that metafiction facilitates active reading and highlights the reader’s agency (1994). Metafictional (or ‘metafictive’) features are often seen in the chosen texts for this project, therefore it is important to examine the topic of this research, writing characters, with reference to metafiction. In this sense, it is significant to explore the functions and the effects of employing such literary techniques. However, at the same time, the definition of ‘metafiction’ itself has become controversial, with some claims that metafiction is not applicable to writing for children, whilst others claim that metafiction is beneficial in children’s literature, and consequently multiple interpretations of these texts have become possible.

No literature can avoid ideology, and children’s literature in particular has a complexity regarding the power relationship between its providers and its consumers, generally rephrased as adults and children. Ideological implications aimed at children, the readers, by adults, such as authors, publishers, critics, educationalists and parents, are inevitable. Thus the connection between ideology and metafiction can be considered as being the use of metafiction to convey ideology. In particular, the ideology regarding subjectivity seems to be fostered by metafiction in the late twentieth century. Although the interpretation of the metafictional novel within the realm of children’s literature is similar to that in mainstream literature, as mentioned above, the understanding of the effect of metafiction for child readers may reveal different tendencies. On this point, Mark Currie’s view regarding metafiction in adult literature, that it is ‘a borderline discourse, a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and
criticism, and which takes that border as its subject’ (1995:2) will be referred to, in order to make a comparison with the interpretation of ‘metafiction’ in the realm of children’s literature. Currie’s remark regarding fiction and criticism recalls the significant issue of the above-mentioned power relation between the adult and the child in the area of children’s literature and adult literature. Consequently, in this chapter, I propose initially to explore ways of interpreting metafiction, and, in particular, to demonstrate the characteristics of the interpretation of metafiction in children’s literature. Then I will display and analyse the use of metafictional features in the texts containing characters who write, and will relate these to the literary techniques which create these effects for readers, and the issue of subjectivity. I find the increase of metafiction in recent children’s literature in particular to be significant, as it suggests the ideology expressed in these texts and their expectation of young readers in present day society.

In his Introduction to *Metafiction*, which he edited, Mark Currie states that the characteristics of metafiction, such as self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-knowledge and ironic self-distance, were listed as its definition in the 1970s in the realm of adult literature (1995:1). Currie points out that, although the term ‘postmodern’ is often used in the definition of ‘metafiction’, as seen in Hutcheon (1989) and Zavarzadeh’s view (1976), there are difficulties and problematic issues in the use of these terms (15-17). These hurdles are as follows: the impossibility of dependence on the concept of ‘self-consciousness’ due to the inconsistency of the concept of ‘self’ itself, in postmodern literary criticism; and the insufficiency of the definition of ‘self-consciousness’. If one’s self-knowledge is acute enough, one is able to recognise the fact that one’s own existence can be metafictive, thus its
existence is not certain. It is also inadequate to associate metafiction with the postmodern period without recognising metafictional texts in the past, such as texts by Chaucer, Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Austen, Joyce and so on (1995:1-2, 5-6). Following these characteristics and problems, Currie states that metafiction cannot essentially be defined without proposing a categorical separation of literary types and critical constructions, and postmodernism is equally indefinable, without some authority that could arbitrate between its meaning as a kind of art, an historical period, or some total ideological and political condition (16). In this way, the interpretation of metafiction, in particular, in association with postmodernism, involves various elements, and this suggests that the analysis of metafiction is not simple. Currie’s above mentioned definition of metafiction as ‘a borderline discourse’ (2) appears to be the most comprehensible.  

When we consider this view of regarding metafiction as ‘a borderline discourse’, it becomes a question whether this interpretation of metafiction becomes similarly accepted within the realm of children’s literature. As mentioned earlier, studies of metafiction in children’s literature reach a similar conclusion thus far, that metafiction reflects modern day society, is a radical form of culture for a young audience, and a pedagogical instrument (assuming that texts help children develop as better members of society) for the young reader (Chambers, 1985, Jones, 1999, McCallum, 1996, Nikolajeva, 1996, Sainsbury, 1998), although there

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84 Currie later states that he prefers ‘theoretical fiction’ to ‘metafiction’. ‘Theoretical fiction’ can avoid mentioning the metalanguage, which carries contradiction as it is fiction itself, for its definition. ‘Theoretical fiction’ implies it is a performative narratology rather than a constative one and a convergence of theory and fiction (1998:52-3). However, I use the term metafiction, which is still widely used in children’s literature criticism. I suspect ‘theoretical fiction’, preferred by Currie, will not be likely to be accepted in the realm of children’s literature, as the word ‘theoretical’ may give the impression of excluding child readers.
is a general view that metafiction is ‘too difficult for children’ as McCallum points out (1996:398). In his review of Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb’s *Introducing Children’s Literature: from Romanticism to Postmodernism* (2002), Rod McGillis (2003) also points out that their book may suggest that postmodernism may be interpreted in a certain way, in the realm of children’s literature. The chosen texts in the examination of postmodern texts by Thacker and Webb, such as *The Stinky Cheese Man and other fairly stupid tales*, certainly have postmodern characteristics, including parody and subversive elements. In a similar way to which the above mentioned critics interpreted postmodern metafiction, these authors interpret metafiction as promoting active reading and creating positive effects on young readers. However, McGillis states, ‘what appears as playful subversion of canonical texts’ (441) in *The Stinky Cheese Man* is ‘orchestrated, […] and] does not challenge in any serious manner the master narratives of liberal humanism’ (441). It does not exceed the expectation of it as a children’s book and is tolerated as such. Taking his view into account, the positive attitudes towards the effect of postmodernism from the critics of children’s literature raise the question regarding the interpretation of postmodernism in the realm of children’s literature. It questions whether postmodernism is interpreted, referring to Hutcheon again, as ‘de-naturaliz[ing] some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as “natural” (they might include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are, in fact, “cultural”’ (1989). Or postmodernism may be simply regarded as a novel feature, in order to promote good old liberal humanist values. If the latter case is the majority attitude in children’s literature criticism, perhaps it is possible to say that metafiction has its
own unique definition, within children’s literature. In that sense, metafiction in children’s literature seems to function to convey a specific agenda suitable in children’s literature, which is not same as that in mainstream literature.

In addition to the above-mentioned general attitudes toward metafiction in the realm of children's literature, it is significant to bear in mind that any text can be seen as ‘metafiction’ depending on its interpretation. In particular, the topic of the current research, fictional writing characters in texts for young readers, is particularly liable to be so interpreted, due to the representation of any writing as a creation emphasised by the fictional writer within the text. The connection between metafiction and the texts with characters who write lies in the second of the two categories mentioned in the Introduction. The first category of the two was characters appearing in texts which depict them, often objectively, in third-person narrative written by the authors of the texts. These texts portray the characters’ act of writing. The second category was characters appearing in texts applying personal writing formats, such as diaries, journals, letters, and autobiographies. This latter category has a strong link to metafiction since it facilitates the creation of self-consciousness and representation of the fictivity of the novel explicitly. The distinction between these categories can be difficult, as there are texts which include both types of narrative styles. As mentioned in the Introduction, to differentiate between these literary styles can also be interpreted as irrelevant, since the difference between the two categories is derived from the differences in the form of their representation. Yet, there appear to be more metafictional approaches in the latter case than the former.
Geoff Moss excludes the latter case, or what he calls, ‘texts which have characters telling stories within their own narrative’ (in Hunt, 1992:46) from his study of metafiction because of what he sees in them as a lack of self-consciousness, although he recognises their self-reflexivity. Those excluded by Geoff Moss are in fact examined extensively as a variation of metafiction by Anita Moss in her article (1985). Anita Moss explores texts such as *A Holiday Romance* (1868) by Dickens and *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899) by Nesbit as early examples of metafiction in children’s literature. Her study shows the roles of narrators as connecting the fiction and the outside reality where the readers exist. Although McCallum (1996) acknowledges Anita Moss’s argument regarding the novel as ‘an explicit form of metafiction’ (401)\textsuperscript{85}, McCallum points out that these texts do not have a reader’s position within them. The ‘audience’s position within text’, is what McCallum regards as an essential factor for making a text more experimental, so that the text promotes active reading for the readers.\textsuperscript{86} On the one hand I grant the arguments of Geoff Moss, who regards ‘the self-awareness’ as the metafictional feature, and Robyn McCallum, who claims the ‘audience’s position within text’ as the essential metafictional element, as mentioned above. However, I find the recent increase in the category of texts employing the form of personal writing formats, which do not necessarily carry the elements pointed out by Moss and McCallum\textsuperscript{87}, as too significant to be disregarded. Although not all of

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\textsuperscript{85} Anita Moss’s interpretation of the novel suggests that she has similar views regarding metafiction to those of Waugh, as referred to in page 230 of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{86} The section ‘Readers of texts’ in the Introduction deals with the issue of audience position.

\textsuperscript{87} See Appendix.
these texts have ‘the self-awareness’ which is the metafictional feature Geoff Moss appreciates, many of them explicitly reveal their fictionality as texts.

This fictionality is significant in terms of the issue of self. As acknowledged when the issue of self was examined in Chapter One, the self as creation, or construction of an individual, is often emphasised in children’s literature. In this regard, it appears to be possible to argue that such texts with fictional writers simultaneously reinforce the image of self-identity as being constructed, rather than being fixed and consistent, as well as interrogating the subjectivity of the readers of these texts. This interpretation is not so different from the views of the critics mentioned earlier, such as McCallum, Nikolajeva and Jones, regarding more ‘explicit’ metafiction.

In the previous chapters, I have examined the primary texts with writing characters according to the categories of characters’ age and gender respectively. In this chapter, I intend to appraise the texts in terms of the ways in which metafictional features are employed. Some of the primary texts examined in this chapter have already been explored in the previous chapters. Robin McCallum’s section, ‘Metafictions and Experimental Work’ in the International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature (1996) is extremely helpful in understanding the numerous effects of metafiction, in brief, what she calls metafictive strategies. McCallum lists these as follows: Intertextuality and parody, Narratorial and authorial intrusions, Narrative forms: mystery, fantasy, games and readers, Narrative disruptions and discontinuities, Mise en abyme and self-reflective devices, the linguistic construction of texts and the world, multistranded and polyphonic narratives, and postmodernist historiographic metafictions. Some of the
chosen texts in this chapter can be associated with these categories. Just as McCallum has avoided the classification of individual texts, due to the complex tendency of each text to combine several strategies, this chapter does not attempt to create a straightforward chart regarding metafiction. The difficulty of classifying texts is noted here for the same reason, therefore. The effect of the metafictive features will be mentioned, together with examples from primary texts. Inevitably the same texts appear in several categories of metafictive features. As this thesis limits the primary texts to those containing characters who write, the following categories, which I found essential in metafiction, will not necessarily correspond to the points McCallum has made. In this chapter, texts which have been previously discussed will be examined together with some new texts, which contain particularly interesting elements, in the light of postmodernism and metafiction.  

Generally speaking, there are two ways to interpret the texts examined in this chapter. It is possible to regard metafiction as applicable to self-conscious texts, which, therefore, lets readers realise the identities of characters and the texts as creations. Furthermore, through the experience of reading metafictions, sometimes readers may also learn that their own existences are creations, which are neither stable nor complete, and therefore require constant work. On the other hand, it is possible that some of the supposedly metafictive features in such texts, are, in fact, mere devices in order to create a realistic effect. These two aspects are complementary to each other. The significance of these two interpretations is examined later, in relation to the role of the reader.

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88 The bibliographical details of the texts already examined in other chapters will not be repeated.
To begin with, chosen primary texts will be explored according to the first interpretation, in other words they will be regarded as self-conscious metafiction. However, in some cases, the possibility of a different interpretation will also be stated. Yet, the texts examined here were mostly published in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

**Writing as self-reflection**

Some texts show ‘self’ as a construction, as well as the texts themselves. It is possible to say that every text is a collection of multiple pages and words. In particular, some texts emphasise the common construction of the text and ‘self’ in both a physical and a narrative sense by going through the pages, and the story, by degrees. The link between the text and representation of ‘self’ in metafiction is particularly noted by the critics of children’s literature, due to its pedagogically positive effects. As referred to at the beginning of this chapter, children’s literature critics point out the fact that metafiction connects the texts with reality, where the young readers belong. Metafictions demonstrate to young readers that ‘self’ is a changeable and unstable construction, which they are, therefore, required to work on constantly.

The text of Aidan Chambers’s *Dance on My Grave* (1982) takes the form of the writing of the protagonist Hal regarding his experience with his friend/lover Barry. The text emphasises that the experience of writing the memoir initially helps him to come to terms with his past and the loss of his loves, and, simultaneously, his own ‘self’, and, secondly, leads him to (re)create his new identity. The text illustrates what writing means for Hal with his own words:
[...] I learned something. I have become my own character. I as I was, not I as I am now. Put another way: Because of writing this story, I am no longer now what I was when it all happened. Writing the story is what has changed me; not having lived through the story.

Similarly, the last entry of Hal’s writing implies his understanding of the nature of his identity and its future prospect,

I have written all this so you can see how I got to be what I am. But that is not what I am any more, because what I am now is someone who is making sure that he is no longer influenced by what made him what he has become. The only important thing is that somehow we all escape our history.

In this way the text illustrates the changeable and negotiable nature of identity by presenting the accumulation of self-reflective writing of the protagonist. This implies the significance of the continuous attempt to be.

Rebecca Stevens and Steve Jeanes’s *Me (and Charlie): A life in Bits and Pieces*, Janet Fish and Charlie Wells, Typed by Rebecca Stevens and Steve Jeanes (2002) also features writing characters in a metafictive manner, but the mode of the book appears to be very different from *Dance on My Grave*. This is a book for much younger readers than *Dance on My Grave*, whose implied audiences are at least at the adolescent stage. This text offers comical and playful mood, in the design and layout of the book. The text represents two characters with their writings by employing a mixture of their perspectives, fonts and handwritings. (See Figure 6 and 7).
THANKS TO:
Our mums and dads and sisters cos without them we wouldn’t have had much to write about.

To Rebecca Stevens and Steve Jeanes, who typed it for us. They’re a couple of oldies who live downstairs. They don’t get out much, but their typing’s OK, so we let them do this. And we let them be in the book.

To my art teacher, Claire Fletcher, who’s forgiven me for the school hall incident, and says that I show promise but need more application. (I think this means I have to use tons of paint.)

To Prince William, because he’s GORGEOUS!

This is our first book, but now we’ve started, I bet we do loads!

Janet

Janet Fish (Author and Artist) and Him
(Charlie Wells – did a few bits and pieces)

(Typed this bit myself – good, eh?)

Sorry about the lip-bits
and ink splodges.

The text includes a page which seems to be a copy of a paper on which hand writing, a lipstick trace and a smear of ink are added. This dedication page again emphasises the involvement of Rebecca Stevens and Steve Jeanes as typists; however, the copyright of the text belongs to them.
This text mainly employs a light tone, although it also has a story line of the protagonist Janet’s overcoming loneliness, and establishing connections with the people around her. The text strongly emphasises that the authors are the protagonists, Janet and Charlie, and the text has only been typed by adults, who have the copyright of the text. It raises the question of the ownership of the word, character and story. However, at the same time, there is no clear indication regarding the nature of Janet and Charlie’s writing, (whether it is a diary or correspondence between these two children), nor the purpose of this writing. In that sense, although this text implies the two protagonists’ existences through their
words, employing the writings of the protagonists seems to be used only as a literary device in order to create mere illusions that the writer of these words exists. This text does not represent the writing characters' search for and creation of their sense of self, thus their self-identities, as distinctly as *Dance on My Grave* does. Thus, it may be possible to interpret this text as realistic non-metafiction rather than metafiction, which is how I categorised the text initially.

**Metafiction or non-metafiction?**

Jacqueline Wilson’s *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1991) is also targeted at younger readers. This text could be interpreted as offering a more cheerful and amusing impression, together with its colourful covers, and Nick Sharratt’s cartoon-like illustrations, as well as the employment of various fonts and handwriting. Despite the apparently light tone taken, the text also tells of the protagonist Tracy’s difficult life and her survival, with the strength she gains from her writing experience. The text takes the form of ‘Tracy’s story’ written by a child writer, therefore it emphasises Tracy as the writer, who creates the writing and her life. However, as will be discussed in the section on the ‘ambiguous author’, the text is clearly the creation of the text’s author Jacqueline Wilson, and does not have the vagueness regarding the author of the book of *Me (and Charlie)*. In that sense, although the format of Tracy’s Life Book metafictionally represents the writing character with reflective layers, it appears to function to create a realistic effect and to portray a young character who expresses herself rather than to create the self. Thus, this text does not qualify as a metafiction in the postmodern sense. This kind of text suggests that metafictional features do not necessarily create postmodern effects.
Historiographic metafiction – Is it necessarily postmodern?

Similar formats of diary or journal are used in different ways in historical fiction. Since written materials such as diaries, journals and letters can be a means of conquering the passage of time, and exist over a long period of time, they can connect people from different time periods. Personal writing accounts are employed in some historical stories in order to provide direct and realistic perspectives of the period and to depict human nature and activity of that time. However, the realistic historical mode, which identifies a text as historiography, creates further complicating elements in the case of metafictional historiography. In order to understand the complication created by the historical mode within a type of literature, it is important to take account of the concepts regarding ‘history’ and ‘literature’.

Although within the classical period it was difficult to distinguish these modes, they have gradually developed into different fields, which can almost be rephrased as the opposite sets of ‘factual narrative’ and ‘fictional narrative’. Hutchenson also states that, as late as the nineteenth century, literature and history were considered branches of the same tree of learning, at least before the rise of Ranke’s ‘scientific history’. The view of this tree (discipline) sought to ‘interpret experience, for the purpose of guiding and elevating man’ (Nye 1966:123 cited by Hutheenson in Currie 1995: 72). Historiographic metafiction has the characteristic feature of mixing these two concepts, which were previously united through the concepts’ developments. As Hutcheon suggests, historiographic metafiction signifies ‘novels which self-reflexively mix fictive and historical modes.
of representation so as to pose questions about the relationships between fiction, history and reality’ (1989:50). Additionally, Mark Currie points out the importance of historiographic metafiction as ‘its ability to contest the assumptions of the “realist” novel and narrative history, to question the absolute knowability of the past, and to specify the ideological implications of historical representations, past and present’ (1995:71). This ideological implication becomes the key issue for the interpretation of the texts for young readers.

Strange Objects is a combination of fiction and fact, described by the author, Gary Crew as a ‘creative nonfiction novel’ (2005). As a result of a fictional discovery of the objects concerned, such as an iron pot, a journal and a mummified human hand (with a ring), the protagonist Steve Messenger’s life becomes entangled with an incident which really happened in the seventeenth century. The text takes the form of a document created by the fictional protagonist Steven Messenger. It contains first-person narratives, regarding the incident, which happened to Messenger himself in our contemporary period, as well as supposed-to-be-factual materials collected by Messenger, such as a journal (of castaway Wouter Loos in the seventeenth century), a transcript of the content of a police conference; historical information regarding the ship-wreck, and academic research writings on the subject of white settlement in Australia. (See figure 8 and 9).
Figure 8 shows the writing of Messenger as well as Michael's writing which analyses the former.
much as a sign of humanity, I began to doubt that this place was inhabited at all, and considered it rather as the barren face of the distant moon, empty of life, and we the first persons who had trodden upon it.

So I passed most of the day, dragging the sled upon the sea shore. If this was covered in stones from a rocky outcrop, I turned up into the bordering sandhills and towed my burden there. The heat was very great and the boy's complaints of thirst were constant. At first I stopped to tend to these, allowing him sips of our remaining water, of which we had little more than a quart, until at length I ignored him, as he did nothing to help or otherwise earn his reward, and I feared that unless I pressed on, we would die of thirst before reaching our shaded destination.

Later in the day, I was pleased to find a remarkable lake, where the sandhills ended. Yet, this is indeed a strange land, for the water of the lake was like nothing on this earth, being of a rose color, and not fresh, but thick with salt.3

Beyond the lake, we arrived at a point where the sand had been deeply channeled by water running off the land. These channels were dry, but it was evident that a torrent of water had passed here, and I concluded that inland, no great distance, a dam or water gate had burst, causing this destruction.

As the boy was mourning and set to fall down in a faint, I took the water and left him with the sled while I followed the channels inland to locate their possible origin, presuming this would be a small or irrigated field.4

In this search I was disappointed. I had left the boy barely twenty minutes and proceeded inland, when the deep channels disappeared, and a great floodway opened before me, its dry, sandy bed covered with rocks and the dead trunks of many trees. The deep banks were dotted with trees also, and I had no doubt that these were what I had seen from our earlier camp in the South. It appeared to me that this vast and open area, gouged from the earth, was the result of a mighty disaster, but having walked on for almost an hour, I could find no evidence of its cause, or any form of human habitation.

Knowing that the boy would be fearful in my absence, and aware that night was near, I stumbled back down the floodway toward the sea. It was then that I saw a flock of white cranes rise from beside a mound of rocks in the middle of the sandy bed, and, knowing that in the Lowlands of my home these birds fed by water, I turned to the spot where they had been.

I was quite correct in my guess, for here, protected from the burning sun by the shadow of the rocks, lay a small pond. The water's edge was muddied and the surface green with slime, but being overcome by thirst I fell on my knees to drink.

As I leaned forward the slime was broken by an upheaval from beneath and I leapt back, thinking some creature or water sprite lurked in the depths. Then I saw the cause of my fear: nothing more than fish, many of good size, flopping about in the shallow water that hardly covered their bodies, streaked green and gray by the clinging slime.

I was glad no one had been about to witness the foolishness of my reaction and, recovering myself, I cleared away some of the scum, then managed to scoop several handfuls of the muddy water to my parched lips. The taste was very

Figure 9 represents Loos's journal which is accompanied by the comments of the editor, whose existence is also uncertain.

In addition to these 'factual' materials, there are several footnotes containing references to real and existing materials. These footnotes are added by an 'editor', whose identity remains ambiguous; the reader cannot tell whether this editor is fictional or factual. According to his own statement, Crew in fact had the intention of making the text 'as authentic as possible', so that he added these footnotes and references 'to “verify” [his] sources' (2005). He also comments that his deliberate 'collage' style is suitable for telling the unresolved and mysterious story. Furthermore, it seems to be that several perspectives in the text also suggest that the objective truth is unknowable because fact and history have more than one version, and consequently the border between fact and fiction is blurred,
something which challenges the reader’s interpretation. It is also possible to conclude that metafictional features represent that everything—the existence of the book, readers, their self-identity, truth, history, etc.—is sheer construction.

In a similar manner, Celia Rees’s *Witch Child* purports to be the factual diary of a girl in the seventeenth century and provides an existing e-mail address to connect the contemporary reader and the fiction. The author reveals her intention of showing the protagonist Mary, as quoted earlier in Chapter Four: ‘to seem real. […] and] to cut the distance between her and the reader’ (Rees 2005). In this sense, the text seems to be intended to be merely historiography. However, the protagonist’s almost twentieth-century psychology may suggest to some readers that history cannot avoid modern interpretation. Therefore, history and the present day, like fiction and reality, are not contradictory pairs. History only exists within the interpretation of modern minds. Yet, the text appears not to be intended in that way. The text on the whole carries the message delivering the recovered voice of the female in the past, which was hidden or lost. The emphasis on the truth of the other or marginal side does not necessarily question the validity of the attempt to hold the absolute truth. The text surely destabilises history and truth, which has been presented by the mainstream side. However, if I follow Hutcheon, in whose view postmodern fiction does not ‘aspire to tell the truth’ as a documentary novel does (as defined by Foley (1986:26)), as much as to question whose truth gets told (in Currie, 1995:91), *Witch Child* may not appear to be postmodern metafiction.

The *Dear America* series by Scholastic carries similar characteristics to *Witch Child*. It shows various elements, which become a contrast to the noticeably historiographic metafiction, such as the presentation of the real author’s name of
the text and the treatment of a fictional diary. The series seems to be factual diaries/journals, and the incidents in the fictional journals are supported by the insertion of the factual historical materials in the background. Sudden endings are the common feature of the series, and they have the effect of making the texts more realistic than more obviously fictive texts, such as *The Story of Tracy Beaker* and Beverly Clearly’s *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983), examined in Chapter Three. The series also uses old fashioned fonts, and unevenly cut pages, which emphasise the historical element in a physical sense. (See Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*So Far From Home* from ‘Dear America’ series from Scholastic, : Note cut of papers.

In many ways, this series is similar to the above-mentioned *Witch Child*. Additionally, the series contains the further elaborate device of presenting the diary/journal as a real one, by real children, in the past, by means of the elimination of the actual adult authors’ names on the cover page. These techniques seem to suggest the intention of creating a realistic text. Simultaneously, they imply that ‘historical realism’ has great assets, which young readers are expected to interpret as such. The main purpose of such a series appears to be to give to the modern
day child reader the ‘real account’ of real people from certain time periods. There are two ways to interpret the series: as a historical resource or as literature, depending on the particular viewpoint. Ironically this ‘try-to-be factual’ series offers multiple understandings, and, in terms of multiple interpretation, paradoxically, the series may be interpreted as metafictional after all. However, as mentioned above, the aim of the series appears to be to give a real account of real people in the past, rather than raise questions readers’ mind about the existence of such an account. Thus, it will be inappropriate to attempt to call the series postmodern metafiction. It is important to note here that there is a potential difference between adult and child readers. Adults will recognise the artificiality of the diaries straightaway, whereas children may not.

A good example of a text which offers multiple interpretation, is Jan Mark’s *The Hillingdon Fox* (1991). It consists of the diaries of two brothers from different time periods. The purpose of each of the writings is initially different, and, at the end, these two different self-reflective diaries respectively represent each writer with his own individual mind, living a different life from the other. However, the diarists in this text are not self-conscious of their act of writing and the issue of self identity to the same extent as Hal, the protagonist of *Dance on My Grave*. The brothers’ writings are diaries which generally record things in chronological order soon after the things have happened, whereas Hal’s writing is largely retrospective and written down after a certain time has passed, since things happened. When compared to another text with diaries, the treatment of two diaries in *The Hillingdon Fox* is very different from that in *Brothers* discussed in the previous chapter. The existences of these two diarists in *The Hillingdon Fox* implies that each individual is
represented and also created through each individual’s writing, and the reader of the text can appreciate from a distance each writer’s gradual development. In particular, a mystery element, which is common to both brothers, catches the attention of the readers of the text and suggests to them the link between two brothers. This can be interpreted as the text giving the information that they are different, independent and unique individuals, yet, simultaneously, that they are connected with each other. In addition to these two brothers, characters around them also have links with each other, and this ultimately suggests that any independent individuals also have social and communal existences. As much as the book is a compound of pages which consist of the collections of words, the diaries represented in the text are also collective existences. The metafictive structure of text in the form of collection of pieces of diary entries, represents the fact that the individual subjectivity is neither solid nor stable.

The text also offers interpretations regarding the concept of history. Although the time periods represented in the diaries of two brothers (the years 1982 and 1990), may not be early enough to be called history, the text manages to illustrate the concept of present, past, history and time. The diaries of two time periods appear in the text bit by bit. For example, the first entry is the diary of 16th August 1990 written by Geoffrey, which is followed by the entry of the elder brother, Gerald, 2nd of April, 1982. Readers come across one day’s entry for each time period, one after another. The mixing of the diaries from the two different time periods is effective, in showing that any twenty-four hours history or the past, which has significance from a different perspective, seemed in its period just an ordinary day. The abrupt and open ending of the diaries, which is also the ending of this
novel, represents the fact that reality never ends, unlike in a fairy story where, there is a satisfying sense of closure. I consider that the text could be regarded both as metafictive and non-metafictive, however, in terms of having multiple interpretations, I suggest that this text is metafictive.

**Metafiction as parody and re-telling**

When metafiction is understood in the conventional sense as fiction with 'self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-knowledge, and ironic self-distance' (Currie 1995:1), as stated above, ‘parody’ can be seen as one of its most typical forms. Waugh states parody’s function, saying it ‘renews and maintains the relationship between form and what it can express, by upsetting a previous balance which has become so rigidified that the conventions of the form can express only a limited or even irrelevant content’ (68). In order to make parody function, the reader has to have knowledge regarding the conventional story and ideas behind the original narrative, as a precondition. Intertextuality is occasionally employed in parodied texts in order to create the link to the source of the parody. Fairy tales are often used as a basis for parody in children’s literature, and this can be interpreted merely as a retelling of fairy tales which are already well known among even young readers. Alternatively, they are intentionally referred to in many texts as fairy tales, and are regarded as significant in carrying cultural and social conventions, which everyone is expected to know. Some of these implications are also referred to as being typecast, and often old-fashioned, for present day society; therefore, the fairy tale motifs appear to give the ‘anti-model’, (or negative model, in the texts), which the readers are expected not to follow.
Jack as a narrator in Scieszka and Smith’s *The Stinky Cheese Man and other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) includes a parody of ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’. Although the story is very different from the original, Jack beats the giant, as in the original story. The text includes a parody of nine other fairy tales, and Jack the narrator is shown as trying to organise them. In that sense, it is also possible to interpret Jack’s new role of narrator as innovative and subversive, since, in an original story, he is merely a character of one fairy tale, who does not have any control over his own story/life. This subversion may be a message from the authors to adult readers on one level. However, with the parodies of other fairy tales which create playful tones in the text and references to the physicality of the text as a book, which suggest the text’s self-consciousness regarding its fictionality, the text appears to emphasise an entertaining element for young readers, rather than the creating of a democratic/liberal view, through giving autonomy to a character. In this way, this text offers several interpretations, and readers may change their view towards this text according to their reading experience as well as life experience.

*The Story of Tracy Beaker* can also be interpreted as a parody of fairy tales. The protagonist Tracy is practically an orphan, which is one of the common conditions of fairytale characters. Yet, she does not have the right conditions to be promised a happy ending. Tracy herself realises the fact and shows her antipathy toward fairy tales as her words reveal.

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Tracy Beaker. That sounds a bit stupid, like the start of a soppy fairy story. I can’t stand fairy stories. They’re all the same. If you’re very good and very beautiful with long golden curls then, after sweeping up a few cinders or having a long kip in a cobwebby palace, this prince comes along and you live happily ever after.
Which is fine if you happen to be a goodie-goodie and look gorgeous. But if you’re bad and ugly then you’ve got no chance whatsoever. You get given a silly name like *Rumpelstiltskin* and nobody invites you to their party and nobody’s ever grateful even when you do them a whopping great favour. So of course you get a bit cheesed off with this sort of treatment. You stamp your feet in rage and fall right through the floorboards or you scream yourself into a frenzy and you get locked up in a tower and they throw away the key.

(1991:24, italics original)

In this way Tracy mocks and criticises the unreasonableness of fairy tale formulas. As if she is against ‘being good’, which is appreciated in fairy tale morality, she continuously behaves as a rude, obstinate, unfriendly, aggressive and ungrateful child. She refuses to be patronised by selfish adults and authority. The text gradually illustrates that her rebellious attitude comes from her disappointments in her earlier life. In addition to the quality of protagonist, the narrative style of the text differentiates it from fairy tale. Fairy tales are told in third-person narrative, but *The Story of Tracy Beaker* takes the form of the writing by the protagonist, thus being told in first-person narrative. This is parallel to Jack’s role as a narrator as mentioned above, although the emphasis of the use of Tracy’s voice appears to represent her, rather than ridicule fairy tale. In fact, Tracy’s happiness mainly comes from her strong ego and ability to voice herself, and the text ends up showing the ‘happy ending’ as a positive outcome, as her final words include these, ‘This started like a fairy story. And it’s going to finish like one too. Happily ever After’ (158). In this sense, *The Story of Tracy Beaker* is neither as revolutionary nor original as *The Stinky Cheese Man* regarding the treatment of fairy tales. On the contrary, it carries the optimistic view that anyone, even without likeable qualities, may achieve happiness in the end. Perhaps it may be more suitable to consider *The Story of Tracy Beaker* as a kind of retelling of fairy tale.
Yet, if these elements differ from fairy tale in *The Story of Tracy Beaker* are interpreted as enhancing the humanist view regarding individual freedom and happiness, there emerges a question regarding the validity of calling them ‘parody’. Or this may be linked to the speculation mentioned above that children’s literature may have its own interpretation regarding metafiction and postmodernism. However, my own conclusion is that this text is not metafictive.

A similar reference to fairy tale is evident in a trilogy which places the act of writing in the foreground. Adèle Geras’s *Happily Ever After* (2005) (originally published as The Egerton Hall Trilogy, *The Tower Room* (1992), *Watching the Roses* (1992) and *Pictures of the Night* (1993)) involves the rewriting of the fairy tales ‘Rapunzel’, ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Snow White’. Geras shows the use of the past as a story setting and the image of writing activity, in order to convey a feminist view. Geras employs the 1960s as a story setting in order to give a period more contemporary than the fairy tale setting, yet still ‘once upon a time’, for present day readers; this means that the restrictions for these twentieth-century female characters do not appear to be too unusual, for the modern readers. The three protagonists of each story, Megan, Alice and Bella, represent the fairy tale figures, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White respectively, and go through each ordeal, which is expressed by their own writing. In fact, Megan is the only active writer, whereas Alice only employs the act of writing for self-consolation and healing and does not have the intention to keep writing, and Bella is an unconfident and unwilling writer, who only starts writing when she does not have a companion.

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89 The use of the past as story setting in order to represent feminist ideology is examined in the section of ‘Story setting as a special effect for certain ideological implications’ in Chapter Three on adolescent female characters.
to talk to. However, the ‘voices’ in each character’s writing effectively represent the power, independence and autonomy these female protagonists achieve, after conquering their fate of being female. In this sense the protagonists of these re-telling stories are not as passive as the heroines of original fairy tales. Although this text employs the fairy tale storyline as the basis of its story, categorisation as metafiction is not straightforward here. Depending on the viewpoint, the difference from the original becomes either too great or too little.

The physicality of metafiction

The conventional definitions of metafiction include its ‘self-consciousness and self-awareness’. Metafiction as a literary creation is recognised in its physical existence as a creation. Firstly, this involves an awareness that texts are the accumulation of words or letters, and this is clearly demonstrated in Chambers’s works such as *Toll Bridge* (1992) and *This Is All* (2005). Secondly, in particular, multiple perspectives or voices are often represented in the employment of various media, which include further variations, such as different fonts, handwriting, illustrations, copies of published material, official writings and so on. These illustrate the nature of the individual writing character, the purpose of writing, and also the social and historical background where the fictional writer belongs. Margaret Higonnet (1990) refers to these devices as ‘peripheral’ features, which also include ‘the cover, title page, table of contents, chapter titles, epigraphs, postfaces and above all illustrations’, as containing additional information. In her article, Higonnet also mentions that the use of ‘peritext’ in children’s literature shows ‘a faith that the child who makes and remakes the story will become a better
reader and maker of stories’ (49). This remark also supports the above views of McCallum and Nikolajeva that metafiction and postmodern texts can provide an ideal for young readers.

*The Dear America* series creates an old fashioned atmosphere by physical devices such as employing old lettering, bookmarks and the uneven cut of the papers of the text. The whole series adopts the same format, no matter how different the time setting of the story may be. It may suggest that the series treats history as a kind of commodity, from the present day reader’s view.

*Me (and Charlie)* includes the combination of several lettering and handwriting styles, which, together with the collage of illustrations and pictures, imply the existences of the (several) writers. As parts of the text’s subtitle, ‘A life in Bits and Pieces, Janet Fish and Charlie Wells, Typed by Rebecca Stevens and Steve Jeanes’ implies, the text declares that the authors of the texts are the child protagonists Janet and Charlie. The illustrations and collages, which imply they are created by young characters, seem merely to be an attempt to support the claim that the text is genuinely children’s work.

*Strange Objects* employs an academic medium such as footnotes and endnotes within the text, as well as including the format of documents and reports by more than one writer, in order to represent multiple views, time periods and worlds. By showing the link between past and present through physical materials in the story, the text also implies the existence of the text and that of the reader. *Witch Child* also contains a modern figure, Alison, who is concerned with the past in the text. In particular Alison’s existing e-mail address shortens, in the text, the distance between the world where the present-day reader belongs and the past.
These additional physical elements from the contemporary time period also operate to re-insure the ‘authenticity’ and ‘factuality’ of the accounts from the past.

The opposite case to texts which display consciousness of their own physicality, such as the above mentioned titles, would be Ted Van Lieshout’s *Brothers* (originally published in the Netherlands in 1996 and translated and published in the U.K. in 2001), examined in a previous chapter regarding male adolescent writers. The text emphasises the protagonist Luke’s obsession for keeping his deceased brother, Maus’s diary as a physical proof of his existence. The story tells of Luke’s psychological journey to recovery, from the loss of his brother, via the writing experience. The creation of a conversation with the dead brother in the diary he left is the key element for Luke’s healing process, and it is emphasised in the text that the blank pages and the gaps between the lines written by Maus are gradually filled by Luke. However, there is no attempt in the text to represent the diary in a physically realistic way, or to include the changes created in the diary over the period. The text suggests that, at the time of Maus’s death, the diary is half-filled, and then it has been gradually added to by Luke. As a result, although the physicality of the diary is depicted as having great significance for Luke in the story, *Brothers* as a text does not emphasise this physicality. The poignant story of the two writers simultaneously questions the benefit of having ‘accurate’ physicality in a text.

The major genre which would be regarded as realistic is historical texts, and the above discussion on historiography has already referred to the interpretation of historiography as realistic text. Interpretation is the key to treating a text as
metafiction or as a realistic text. The following section further examines the possibilities of interpretation.

Ambiguous author

The issue of ambiguous authors seems to be significant for multiple interpretations. Some metafictional texts have unclear authorship. This issue is related to the above-mentioned two ways of interpretation of the same texts, as ‘metafiction’ or ‘realistic fiction’. The ambiguous author can be understood in two parallel ways, as either creating complicated texts in order to make readers’ reading experiences challenging, or to question the existence of the author, the text and, ultimately, of readers themselves, or in creating the illusion of realism, by blurring the nature of the creation of the text.

The ambiguous author as a postmodern effect- the interrogation of the existence of author, text and reader

*Gospel According to Larry* purports to claim that the author of the text has received a manuscript from the protagonist. This can be interpreted as merely employing the Chinese box structure, which was often used by a relatively early form of novel, as illustrated by a text such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). However, in addition to the protagonist’s experience of creating another identity through his production of a Website, the ambiguous, multiple possibilities in the identity of the creator of the story/author of the text demand from the readers a consideration of who the characters are and how they have become what they are.
In a similar manner *Me and Charlie* asks whether the child protagonists are the real authors of the text. The copyright shows the name of the people who typed on behalf of the characters according to the protagonists, Janet and Charlie. Constant claims that the protagonists are the authors of the text and Janet’s creation of her best friend Tiffani questions the reliability of the words in the text and the identities of the characters, as well as writers/authors of the text.

The ambiguous author as a realistic effect

As mentioned above on page 258, fictional diaries and journals in the *Dear America* series present themselves as ‘real’ diary/journal by a ‘real’ person who existed in history. The names of the actual adult authors of the texts only appear under the copyright notice on the reverse of the title page.

The *Dear America* series, *Strange Objects* and *Witch Child* all employ the combination of fiction together with apparently realistic information. *Dear America* series includes historical resources such as maps, photographs, newspaper articles, etc. *Strange Objects* and *Witch Child* incorporate editorial footnotes. *Witch Child* also incorporates an existing e-mail address. This mixture enhances the plausibility of the writings (both personal writing and the text which is mainly written in third-person narrative but also includes personal writing) and of the writers. *Dear America* series includes historical resources such as maps, photographs, newspaper articles, etc. The insertion of the realistic information creates the illusion that the stories related to them are ‘real’. There is a possibility of reversing this equation, to imply that the insertion of fiction makes everything seem fictive. However, the former interpretation seems to be the majority view still,
as some public libraries offer the above-mentioned *Dear America* series as reference books for history.

These interpretations of ambiguous authorship as in ‘texts with a postmodern effect’ and ‘texts with a realistic effect’, in fact overlap the above-mentioned double interpretation of the texts as, ‘overtly and self-consciously metafictional fiction’ and as ‘trying-to-be realistic fiction’. The possibility of having two interpretations in both cases of texts and authorships already suggests the postmodern element in either the texts or the readers. The possibility of multiple interpretation of text is similar to the Rorschach test, which uses an arbitrary figure to let a subject imagine what the figure is. The figure is not intended to lead to a particular answer. It can be interpreted in various ways, and these varied answers are considered as representing the psychological aspects of the subjects. It is also possible to say that the first category includes the other in each case, since the first category can perceive the text in relation to the reader in a larger context than the second one. In other words, regarding the interpretation of text, to understand text as, ‘overtly and self-consciously metafiction’, can also allow the interpretation of, ‘try-to-be realistic fiction’. Similarly, regarding the interpretation of authorship, the interpretation of author as ‘texts with a postmodern effect’ in a postmodern manner, includes ‘texts with a realistic effect’ in a realistic sense. In this sense, the metafictional interpretation deepens and extends the possibilities of the texts depending on the nature and quality of each individual text.

As discussed above, many texts with ‘writing characters’ can offer multiple interpretations. The phenomenon of the increase in these texts in recent
publishing may suggest the situation of today's society. The characteristics and the nature of such texts may be positively perceived by contemporary society. The next section explores the perception of metafiction in children's literature in terms of children's literature criticism. In particular, the view regarding the function and meaning of reading for young readers is significant.

**Metafiction and ideology**

The word, ‘interpretation’ is associated with ‘those who interpret (it)’ and it shows that ‘the interpreter’ becomes the key factor of interpretation. However, before examining the role of readers, there are important issues to consider in terms of the nature of texts. According to Roland Barthes (1974), there are two kinds of texts: the ‘readerly’ (lisable) as a closed text that directs the reader to an intended meaning, offering passive reading, and the ‘writerly’ (scriptable) as an open text that promotes the reader to act as an interpreter to fill in gaps in the narrative, and to create meanings, offering active reading. The ‘writerly’ text recalls what McCallum values, the texts with audience positions constructed within them (1996). This may suggest that the study of metafiction should go back to the starting point of classifying texts. However, David Lodge’s remark that 'a lisable text can become scriptable in the hands of a clever critic' (1990:89) questions the validity of the distinction between the two kinds of texts. This view is also not dissimilar to the argument I make above, regarding the multiple possibilities of interpretations of text. Nevertheless, Lodge's remark needs to be treated with some caution with regard to children’s literature, since the child reader is normally assumed to be the main interpreter of the text in modern children’s literature.
criticism, and the term, ‘the clever critic’ will probably exclude the child reader. Consequently, contemporary children’s literature can be seen as requiring ‘writerly’ texts, as many critics argue. As mentioned above, McCallum regards readers’ positions in the texts as being significant for making the text experimental and ‘writerly’. In terms of the readers’ role in reading, and their connection to the texts, the concept of ‘the reader in the book’ celebrated by Aidan Chambers (1985) and Peter Hunt (1990), sounds similar to what McCallum appreciates in such texts.

However, in a different light, the readers’ position in the text is also seen as a less beneficial element, since at the same time it is potentially controlled by an author who does not offer much freedom for the reader. Neil Cocks (2004:110) points out that what Hunt and Chambers value can be interpreted as an ‘implied reader’. John Stephens regards this ‘implied reader’ as merely an ideological existence. Stephens states that the ‘implied’ reader often mingles with ‘a notion of an “ideal” reader’ (1992:55), which is ultimately based on ideology. Since this kind of reader ‘will best actualize a book’s potential meanings’ (55), that kind of reader is most convenient, suitable and ideal for the authors. This issue was already discussed in the section on ‘Readers of texts’ in the Introduction. The view regarding an ideological position for the reader recalls a similarly positive attitude towards metafiction. Interestingly, metafiction is also treated as a welcome phenomenon by critics in the realm of children’s literature. For example, as mentioned above, Trites values metafiction. In her article on the metafictional picture book, ‘Manifold Narratives: Metafiction and Ideology’, she examines the picture books which offer several interpretations. She states,
 [...] the most important product of metafictionality is the autonomy that the

text’s ambiguity gives to its readers. When no single interpretation asserts
itself on the readers, they are more likely to escape the type of ideological

manipulation that totalizing texts produce. Manifold narratives allow the

reading subject to suture in a nonlinear way that may escape the prescribed

limitations of the dominant ideology.

(1994:240)

Trites also claims that she is aware that her preference for such metafictional

books is ‘in itself value-laden’ (240). Yet she still ‘admire[s] manifold narratives for

at least attempting to make readers conscious of the suturing process so that they

are less vulnerable to the pressures of ideological manipulation’ (240).

Interestingly, both Peter Hunt and Aidan Chambers, who are eminent critics

in the realm of children’s literature, have produced novels with metafictional

features. Hunt’s Going Up (1989), a story of first-year students at university,

shows several points of view by employing various narratives, as well as media,

such as official documents and letters. In his Backtrack (1986), there are five

discourses to describe the same train accident in the past, which are varied in

terms of narrative style and focalisation. The variations in the description of the

same incident suggest the difficulty, complexity and ambiguity of seeking ‘truth’.

Chambers has also produced a number of experimental, thought-provoking and

critically acclaimed novels for young readers such as Breaktime (1978), Dance on

My Grave (1982), The Toll Bridge (1992), Postcards from No Man’s Land (1999)

and This Is All (2005).

The characteristic of Chambers’ fiction is its unconventionality. He employs

various experimental techniques, such as multiple perspectives, mixing media and

lettering fonts. These make the texts challenging and ambiguous. There appears
to be in his fiction some influences from being a critic himself. His ‘An Author
Reads Himself in *Booktalk: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children* (1985) illustrates clearly that his choice of the way of telling, the construction of story and characters are influenced by numerous literary, cultural and psychological theories. Some of the characters in his fiction are depicted as those who read, think and live ‘actively’. These figures appear to be ‘ideal readers’ from the perspective of Chambers, who states that ‘all reading is an act of contemplation. […] Contemplation is important to me because only in contemplation do I realize myself’ (1985:114). However, in order to create such active characters, he ends up depicting them as such active readers to the readers of his texts in order to show ‘model active readers’. In this sense, the text depicting such characters cannot avoid being a ‘readerly’ text.

Chambers himself seems to be caught between the two ideal ways of reading referred to in the Introduction. On the one hand, he produces experimental works, which include many ambiguities, therefore multiple possibilities of interpretation, in order to encourage readers to participate in the creation of meaning by their act of reading. On the other hand, he seems not to be able to resist showing ‘ideal reading’ performed by his characters in his ‘readerly’ texts. Considering two opposing elements in the texts by the same author, it seems to be that, as well as the ‘readerly’ texts offering the ideal reading to the reader, the ‘writerly’ texts also carry expectations that the reader ‘ideally’ performs ‘active reading’, which the author longs for.

Children’s literature constantly carries adult ideologies. ‘Writerly texts’, or to be exact, metafictional texts, convey adult ideologies in a less straightforward and obvious way than ‘readerly texts’, yet at the same time, metafictional texts also
demand ‘ideal readings’ from their readers. The readers may be allowed to have
more freedom and independence in their interpretation of the texts, yet, at the
same time, it is possible to say that these are qualities expected by the author. In
that sense, metafiction seems to be the creation of an author based on an opinion
regarding what is a child, what is a children’s book, what is children’s reading, and
so on. Interestingly, the above-mentioned Currie, who defined metafiction in
mainstream literature as ‘a borderline discourse [...] between fiction and criticism’
pays attention to the phenomenon that some metafiction is produced by writers
who are at the same time critics such as Martin Amis, John Fowles and Salman
Rushdie (1998:53). This may be parallel to the situation concerning Hunt and
Chambers. However, as Currie suggests, the possible broadness of implication of
‘criticism’ is too narrow-minded to interpret that this ‘criticism’ comes from literary
critics only. Every reader of the texts is entitled to have some reaction and make
some criticism of the texts. If Currie’s remark can be interpreted as metafiction
meaning ‘literature which requires the reader’s active involvement’, what he says
about metafiction appears to be valid regarding the treatment of metafiction in
mainstream literature and children’s literature. From one perspective, it is possible
to conclude that metafictional children’s books cannot avoid analytic criticism
regarding children’s books and reading. No matter how good and how beneficial an
intention the adult creators believe them to have for young readers, such an
intention is not free from ideological implications, since ideological implications are
unavoidable, as mentioned earlier. However, on the other hand, analytic criticism
at the same time may indeed help child readers to survive in a chaotic world.
Questioning analytic criticism as ‘bad/negative’ may reveal that I interpret children’s literature as being associated with romantic and optimistic messages.

In the Introduction, issues regarding the ideal reading of children’s literature were discussed, and it was suggested that generally speaking, there are two aspects to ideal reading, which carry opposing interpretations. One of them is when a reader interprets the text as the author intended, the type referred to in Chambers’ article, as mentioned above. The other ideal mode of reading is where each reader interprets the text in the reader’s own way as a result of their independence and autonomy. Interestingly, Chambers, who seems to be comfortable with the first kind, also agrees with this latter idea, as he expects readers to be active and autonomous enough to appreciate his message. This double standard may be related to the general understanding of the significance of children’s literature. Firstly, as John Stephens states ‘[a]rguably the most pervasive theme in children’s fiction is the transition within the individual from infantile solipsism to maturing social awareness’ (1992:3): children’s literature gives a message that an egocentric and self-interested child gradually grows into a social being who can communicate and coexist with others in the world and therefore needs to undertake both kinds of reading. Secondly, from the humanistic view, a perspective which children’s literature traditionally has taken, an ideal individual is an independent and stable being. These two elements can be regarded as opposing facets of the same phenomenon.

Metafiction also offers two opposing effects to child readers. As McCallum states, ‘as a radically self-reflexive and playful genre [metafiction] is ultimately self-indulgent and solipsistic’ (in Hunt, 1996:399); she suggests it has elements of
disturbing children’s socialisation. However, as I have stated above, several critics, including McCallum herself, comment on the influence of metafiction as encouraging children’s active reading and thinking as well as leading them towards a realisation of the ambiguity of existence, and ultimately directing them towards sustaining their selfhood by active involvement.

Both of the two main interpretations of metafiction imply that metafiction is not free from ideology, regarding its effects for young readers, however it is interpreted. The recent increase in fiction with metafictional features or rather texts with features which enable the texts to be regarded as metafiction, in the publishing industry, may suggest that such metafiction is seen as suitable for young readers. This phenomenon can be interpreted as encouragement for young readers to be more critical, to act as critics, and to be sophisticated. It may also explain the rise of texts with writing characters, as the pattern is often associated with characteristics such as self-reflectiveness, self-consciousness and playfulness, which can be interpreted as metafictive features. Considering all the effects of metafiction which are claimed by critics to be beneficial and positive for young readers, it is also possible to argue that the production of metafiction as a kind of literature is strongly influenced by criticism and analysis. These in turn have some links to the publishing industry, as critical approval helps sales. This seems to qualify Currie’s view of metafiction as ‘borderline discourse between fiction and criticism’ within the realm of children’s literature.

Conclusion

There have been various examples of metafiction, within the topic of this thesis,
texts including writing characters. Metafiction itself has a long history and it does not necessarily contain postmodern features. Although metafictive texts have certainly appeared throughout literature, they seem to be more abundant lately, and that can be associated with the recent social and cultural background in which subjectivity is highly developed. However, metafictional features appear to be significantly noticeable in the postmodern view, and they have the function to destabilise conventions and the effect of drawing the attention of young readers to such features to promote their autonomy and independence. Those texts with metafictional features within the topic of this thesis are of various types, and analysis of the types has led me to further understanding of the use of metafiction in writing characters. Although metafiction functions to subvert convention in a postmodern sense, its origins in the strong link with realism paradoxically create a binary interpretation of metafiction. Several texts reveal that the use of metafiction may create unconventional and perhaps subversive impressions, on the surface, for adult or experienced readers, but the overall effect turns out to be merely for realistic effect, for young or inexperienced readers, since the texts may be interpreted as ‘real’ by those readers. In this sense, the interpretation of metafiction requires exploration with the understanding of expectations of children’s literature itself. Also necessary for the interpretation of metafiction is an understanding of literary criticism, to enrich the understanding of literature, including postmodernism. The expectation and ideology towards texts for child readers may thus have influenced the way in which children’s literature is approached in terms of criticism, thus interpretation of literature in a wider sense.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

As well as the summary of the findings of my research, this conclusion will refer to Aidan Chambers’s recently published latest work, *This is All* (2005) as it depicts various points regarding writing characters which I have argued thus far. Moving on, I reflect on my research, and conclude by raising possibilities and questions, for further research.

This thesis has explored the characters who write within texts for young people. When I chose the topic of ‘writing characters’ in children’s literature for my research, I was motivated by a feeling that this literary phenomenon was on the increase. 90 This presumption was supported by the creation of the database of writing characters, and became a factor in my decision to concentrate on texts post 1960. I have also identified that, generally speaking, there are two types of texts featuring writing characters in children’s literature. The first type is those texts which depict characters who are conscious about their act of writing and aware of the effect of the act on them. The other more common type is texts which employ the writing characters as a literary strategy to create effects such as realism and immediacy. I was particularly interested in the former kind and focused on primary texts of this type in this research, and I speculated that there might be a link between this pattern of writing character and the topic of self-identity. Thus, I started my research with a hypothesis,

Positive images regarding self-identity are central to the creation of writing characters in texts for young readers.

90 See footnote 1 page 4.
I therefore intended to uncover the use of the pattern of writing characters in this thesis.

I selected primary texts with characters who are positively involved with the act of writing and who recognise the benefit of writing. My criteria for the primary texts were that they had been published post 1960, and depicted characters who are consciously and positively involved with the act of writing. I aimed to be as impartial as possible in the selection of primary texts; however, it is necessary to state that there was an influence from my subjective personal preference but that the texts are nevertheless representative, as selected from my database. As a result of the examination of primary texts, the first discovery from this research emerged as:

In each text examined in this thesis, the act of writing and the process of searching for and establishing self-identity by the characters run in parallel.

This finding subsequently encouraged me to propose the concept of ‘autologous’ writing, as suggested in my Introduction. This term relates to diverse forms of writing by characters in texts like these, forms which all represent discourses of the respective individuals. The types of personal writings of writing characters in texts are varied, including diaries, journals, letters, autobiographies, creative stories and poems. In terms of describing the nature of writing representing sense of self, the term was useful for concise illustration. However, as seen in Chapter Six, when there are multiple interpretations for a text, the use of the term is limited.
Case studies

In order to decide on my methodology for the analysis of texts, I have attempted several ways of interpreting the characters’ writings and their sense of self as represented in texts. These include examining the choice of format of writing, the nature of the writings of the characters, their motivations for writing and the effect of writing as an act for characters. In the end, I have reached the view that the writing experiences of fictional writers seem to be related to their development as individuals. This became obvious, in particular when I compared the pattern of the story to the age group of the writing characters. The characteristics of development as an individual may be seen to correspond to the developmental stages suggested by Erik Erikson. Each developmental stage is roughly associated with a certain age. Using Erikson’s stages as a guide, I arrived at another possibility:

The age and gender of characters who write within texts influence their self-identity, and each story reflects a specific pattern, according to the characters’ age and gender identity.

Bearing this view in mind, I conducted case studies. The grouping of the case studies in chapters Three, Four and Five was based on the age and gender identity of protagonists, and dealt with characters with specific characteristics: pre-pubertal male and female characters; adolescent female characters; and adolescent male characters, respectively. As the difference between adolescent characters and pre-pubertal characters lies in the different developmental stage they belong to, it became apparent that:
Texts with pre-pubertal writing characters tend to offer simple linear story-lines as well as optimistic resolutions.

This can be interpreted as carrying the ideology that a young child is expected to develop strength, and constantly to show improvement. Novels for pre-pubertal audiences, on the whole, have this characteristic. Yet, the writing character seems to create some advantageous effect in texts, as I have demonstrated above, especially in chapters two and three:

The pattern of using a writing character is particularly effective in representing the autonomy of characters, as it employs young characters’ ‘own’ words and voices in order to illustrate their existence.

Even when these young characters are in trouble and suffer from difficulties, their act of expressing these issues can be regarded as revealing their autonomy, creativity and authority in expressing themselves. However, when we consider the fact that these ‘able and independent’ young characters are the creation of adult authors, who are also dependent on their own act of writing for the creation of these books and characters, the young writing characters no longer offer a simple affirmation. The use of young writing figures in texts suggests further implications, as explored in chapters two and three.

There is more apparent manipulation by the adult author, when creating young(er) writing characters.

An ostensibly autonomous young writer thus starts to resemble the puppet of a ventriloquist.

The difference between an adolescent character and a pre-pubertal character is that the former is at a stage of confusion regarding self-identity.
Although both the adolescent character and the pre-pubertal character are portrayed as encountering problems, in each case experiencing loss and being influenced in terms of their self-identity, the effect on the adolescent character is often seen as being greater and more severe. Because of tragedy and difficult experiences, adolescent characters either realise their lack of sense of self and consequently commence a search for this quality, or feel their existing self-identities to be incongruous, eventually losing them and thus requiring the creation of new ones. Compared to pre-adolescent characters, adolescent characters show the influence of their gender identity more ostensibly, since they are in the process of maturing into adulthood, where in these texts they are expected to follow gender patterns. Chapters Four and Five reveal that:

The concept of self is significantly related to the characters’ gender identity, and each text carries a certain message about gender identity.

Chapter Four, on female adolescent characters, demonstrates that fictional writing characters are portrayed as bearing similarities to real female writers of the past. The image is conveyed that they gradually achieve their power, independence and sense of self through their experience of writing. The emphasis on rediscovering female writers in the late twentieth century was noted here. In this sense:

Adolescent female writing characters are frequently created from a feminist perspective.

The examination of the adolescent male characters in Chapter Five illustrates further possible patterns of writing characters, since the writing experience offers flexibility and does not limit the number of attempts for creating self-identity:
Characters with an unconventional gender and sexual identity are often used to convey a message that writing activity enables them to create identities which suit them.

The writing characters are represented either by what is supposed to be their own writing, in the form of a diary, letters, story, and so on; or by ostensibly objective depiction of them in third-person narrative. It appears to be that the use of personal writing to give the impression of including the character’s ‘authentic’ voice has increased since the 1960s as demonstrated in the database. This can be interpreted as suggesting that society’s expectations of young readers, as represented in books, is that ‘you have to be strong and independent enough to voice and express yourself in order to claim your rights as well as independence, so that you are not dependent, since you eventually have to stand up for yourself’. In this sense, the case studies in chapters Three to Five together have suggested that:

The image of a writing character is a useful strategy for adult authors to represent powerful and able characters, who express themselves with the might of the pen in their hands.

The use of writing characters has another advantage for the author, as:

Language is often regarded as being essential for one’s process of thinking and contemplation, which is vital for the achievement of subjectivity.

Thus, the use of language becomes crucial. Language is significant in two ways for the establishment of self-identity. It contributes to the creation of the identity of the
individual, through internal reflection, as well as to the creation of identity externally, as the character becomes a social being and accepts the external elements of identity which are given by society and relationships with other people. In this sense, the use of ‘autologous’ writing to describe the writings by fictional characters in texts appears to be valid, as words represent a part of the characters themselves. Characters' words reflecting their consciousnesses in texts are useful to demonstrate the gradual process young characters go through in their lives, as well as their creation of their own self-identity. Victor Watson states, ‘a private journal is a precise metaphor for reflective adolescence’ (2003:27) as it has contents revealing the writer’s thoughts and feelings and the function of letting the writer explore his or her own maturation. A journal also has a free structure; it is episodic, and highlights the writer's experiences chosen by the writer's interests and moral standpoint, and it represents the changes in a writer's life as more or less an utter ‘struggle for meaning’ (27). This remark also sums up the characteristics of fictional personal writings examined in this research.

In the Introduction, I have raised a question regarding the nature of Young Adult fiction and the link between this genre and the pattern of writing characters (p. 51-52). It seems to be not only that the formats of personal writing illustrate the insights of the characters with their own words, but they also represent the characters’ overall process of maturation towards adulthood with the literary characteristics pointed out by Watson. Yet, as examined in Chapter Three, this ‘personal writing as symbol of progression’ is more obviously employed in texts with younger characters. Paradoxically, in addition to the image of maturation, I suspect the format of personal writing is also effective in representing the nature of
consciousness of young people, which can be scattered, arbitrary and spontaneous, instead of being organised, steady and stable. It is not surprising that the YA genre often employs personal writing formats to depict such modern human consciousness. In this way, the writings of writing characters can also be interpreted as representing the fragments of self. It is paradoxical that personal writing formats, typically ‘diary’ and ‘journal’ were employed in the early examples of the novel, a genre which symbolises and celebrates the independence of the individual.

In diary narratives in the YA genre the self is represented as something flexible and fragmentary, thus, something not absolute.

The interpretation of selfhood as not fixed, nor absolute, in fact shows the influence of the post-modern view. In that sense:

Personal writings represented in texts for young readers may reflect contemporary consciousness more effectively than third-person narration.

Following the above findings, in Chapter Six I examined writing characters from a postmodern standpoint. The use of personal writing formats seemed to be on the increase in recent years as the database in the Appendix suggests. The medium of personal writing has variations as well. There are more and more texts which reflect the spread of recent technologies in modern society, such as e-mails, text messages, Web sites, including Web logs and chat rooms, etc. These new forms of narrative contribute to giving multiple perspectives, and, in some cases, they also create identities which simultaneously suggest the fragmentary nature of self-identity. Yet it was necessary to scrutinise whether every text with a personal writing format reflected postmodern characteristics such as being self-conscious,
self-contradictory and multi-signifying. These characteristics are regarded as the advantages of postmodern literary features in children’s literature (McCallum and Nikolajeva). Books with these characteristics facilitate representation of the fluidity and disorder of life to young readers, therefore such books give young readers the opportunity to think about their own existences. Chapter Six has demonstrated that the image of writing is often used for illustrating that:

**Individual selfhood is something to be questioned rather than being regarded as stable and absolute.**

The postmodern view may cause some uneasiness and anxiety for those who wish for definiteness and absoluteness. However, it creates possibilities of satisfying various kinds of people. The texts with characters with unconventional sexual identities examined in Chapter Five may have already suggested the greater possibilities of a form of selfhood which can be regarded as typical of the postmodern interpretation of identity. In this sense, the increase in the number of postmodern texts may reflect a message for society, one of asking for understanding and compassion for diversity. Perhaps such a message may already imply a reality which has instigated further change. At the same time,

**The pattern of a writing character is an effective means of representing multiple possibilities in the definition of selfhood, thus, it can be used as a versatile tool to promote the possibility and significance of self-identity.**

Although the examples of employing writing characters in postmodern texts seem to be increasing in number, some texts merely employ the pattern to create the illusion of realism. Authors who use the pattern of writing characters for a realistic mode seem to create literary effect, which is different from that of employing the
pattern of writing characters for a postmodern and fragmented effect. On the whole, the former make attempts to let readers believe the illusion and absorb themselves in the story, whereas the latter raise the awareness of readers regarding the nature of books and give them an opportunity to think. Some texts which seem initially to be postmodern can be interpreted as employing these formats just for the sake of innovation and the attraction of style. At the same time it may simultaneously imply the effectiveness and popularity of writing characters as a literary strategy.

The case studies examined from various viewpoints in this research have demonstrated that:

**Writing characters as a literary strategy provide a means to create various possibilities regarding self-identity.** Self-identity can be something absolute, to be aimed at, and to be achieved, as represented in the humanist view. It can also be something flexible, so that each individual can make several attempts to create self, according to a postmodern view.

Perhaps the versatility created by the pattern is the reason for the employment of writing characters, as it manages to convey various different ideologies to young readers. This relates directly to the statement above regarding ideology, where I suggest that positive images regarding self-identity are central to the creation of writing characters in texts for young readers.
Writing characters in *This is All*

*This is All: The Pillow Book of Cordelia Kenn* (2005) is the last book of Chambers’s series of books dealing with teenage characters; *Breaktime* (1978) *Dance on My Grave* (1982), *Now I Know* (1987) *The Toll Bridge* (1992) and *Postcards from No Man’s Land* (1999). Chambers’s other protagonists are also conscious of the power of writing, as seen in the case of Hal in *Dance on my Grave*, explored in Chapter Five, yet I feel that *This is All* depicts the significance and influence of writing as act for young characters, in addition to appearing to be autologous writings, in more ways than one. The reason for referring to this book here and not in the case study section is partly because it is a very recent publication issued after case study choices were made, and partly because this text includes numerous elements regarding writing characters, and I felt that it is more suitable to treat this as a representative example of a text with writing characters on a bigger scale rather than discussing it in one of my chapters. Additionally, I felt that a focus on such a complex, multilayered text on writing makes a fitting postscript to my thesis. The text also incorporates various kinds of personal writings, including diary entries, poems, essays, text messages, etc., as well as some unconventional techniques such as including two separate narratives in sequential pages, and listing short paragraphs in alphabetical order of the title of each, regardless of the chronological order of the content. These postmodern techniques offer various ways of reading and interpreting the text.

The protagonist Cordelia indicates early on that the purpose of her book is to be given and read by her unborn child on its sixteenth birthday, to share their
youth together. Cordelia’s pillow book itself appears to contain the texts written by her earlier, during her teenage days, as well as her remarks and comments in footnotes, at the time of compilation. The text illustrates everything about her life, love, family, friends, and her thoughts about them as depicted through her own words. Importantly, Cordelia recognises the importance of the act of writing from an early stage. Discussion with her best friend Izumi about having children in the future has made her realise that having children will not be enough, as children are not their parents, but themselves. Thus she feels she needs something for herself, and subsequently she writes a poem. She describes it as ‘the first of many. Not as a school exercise, not for a competition, and not because anyone asked me to, but because I had to. Writing it wasn’t an option, something I chose to do, but was a necessity’ (2005:2, italics in original). As much as she recognises the significant element of her self-identity in the act of writing, Cordelia is also depicted as being able to analyse the self appearing in her writing. Her writing, entitled ‘Who am I writing to?’ and her poem within it may reveal the views regarding writing and subjectivity of the author, Chambers.

The self who is writing each time is the self who needs to say something, and the self who is being written to is the self who needs to read it.
This must be how I tell myself about myself.
This must be how I find out about myself.
This must be why writing is so important to me. And my poems are the most important because they tell me more about myself than anything else. They are my best way of telling me not just about myself but about everything.
I read my selves
for I am Myself
the self made
of my all selves
who must learn each other
in order to make Me
the Self who is Myself.
The text takes the form of a pillow book (or rather a collection of writing contained in ‘pillow box’) as Chambers states, which is inspired by a Japanese classic book *Makura no sōshi* (*Pillow Book*) by Sei Shōnagon, as Chambers states. Chambers quotes the definition of pillow book, by Ivan Morris, translator of Sei Shōnagon’s *Pillow Book*, as ‘[a] notebook or collection of notebooks kept in some accessible but relatively private place, and in which the author would from time to time record impressions, daily events, poems, letters, stories, ideas, descriptions of people, etc’. This description is valid for the style of writings by the author Sei Shōnagon. The significance of *Pillow Book* in the historical context is noteworthy, as it ultimately implies the power of writing within the book. A thousand years have passed since it was initially written, readers are still fascinated by the contents of the book; life at the court, the thoughts and feelings of the author, and, ultimately, the existence of the woman who created this book. In this sense, it appears to me that Chambers not only adopts the style of the book in his novel. He also incorporates the elements of literary devices, such as the list

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92 The prologue of *This is All*, contains spelling mistakes in the original Japanese title and the name of the author of *Pillow Book*. I refer to the correct spellings here.

93 Sei Shōnagon was working for Chūgū Teishi (one of the wives of Emperor Ichijō) at his court in the late tenth and early eleventh century. There are many theories concerning the origin of the title ‘Makura no sōshi’. An episode is noted within the text as its origin. Sei Shōnagon’s brother Fujiwara no Korechika, a minister, presented papers, which were precious in those days, to Emperor and Empress Teishi. The Emperor used the papers to copy *Shiki* (*Records of the Grand Historian*). Questioned by Empress Teishi on the use of the papers, Sei Shōnagon instantly answered ‘the papers will be makura (pillow)’ and was given them by the Empress. The word makura is interpreted in several ways. One theory suggests that ‘makura’ (‘pillow’ in English) was used as a joke to correspond to the word shiki (shortened from shikifuton, which means ‘mattress’ in English), which pleased the Empress. Makura can be a memorandum, which was kept by a pillow. Makura also appears to function as an encyclopaedia for a writer, by containing sections on information and rules necessary for creating poems. In particular, ‘makura kotoba’, set words, required in poems, are listed in the book. There are some other views regarding the origin of the book, but there is not an absolute theory. It is said that *Pillow Book* was written over a long period of time. It was copied by various people, thus several versions exist nowadays.
of words becoming topics, which are depicted as helping Cornelia’s development as a poet/writer, and ultimately succeeds in creating the essence of a female writing figure, and thus the character herself, with what are supposed to be the character’s own writings.

Writing comes alive when it is read, even though the author does not necessarily exist in the world any longer. The other writing character, Will, in *This is All* goes through this experience, through his reading of Cordelia’s writings. The text gradually reveals that Cordelia’s writing has eventually been edited after her death by Will, who became Cordelia’s husband and the father of their child. Will states his reaction as:

> When I read anything she has written I always feel I am meeting the real Cordelia. There is something of her deepest self behind the words - under the words – conveyed by the words – held in the words – I don’t know how to express it – that amazes and captivates and – yes! – arouses me. She would have called this presence her soul – the essence of herself. And this is the Cordelia I was and still am in love with.

(777-778)

His words clearly show that the significant link between Cordelia and her writing is also recognised by those who read her writings, in addition to Cordelia herself. Thus, the idea of editing Cordelia’s writing for him was uncomfortable, as: ‘[i]t would have been like chopping Cordelia into bits and sticking her together in a different shape - re-cycling her into someone who resembled her but wasn’t her’ (804). Not only does Will edit Cornelia’s writing but he also experiences being a writer. In addition to giving accurate details regarding Cornelia’s writings, in The Green Box section of the text, Will reveals his reaction toward Cordelia’s writing, as well as his grief over her death. Will is not a natural writer, unlike Cordelia, yet Chambers depicts Will as also achieving the benefit of writing. Initially, he has
appeared to be struggling with writing itself, yet, the more he reveals his feelings by writing, the less closed he becomes and the more he is able to reflect a happy and painful past, so that he can move on to the future. The text ends with Will’s depiction of his wedding to Cordelia, and the naming of their child. However, the text does not reveal the child’s name itself, as the last sentence is ‘And each in turn we spoke your name’ (808). The naming of the baby signifies the birth of the reader of Cordelia’s Pillow Book. Yet, I interpret that the fact that it does not include a specific name may offer the possibility that anyone who reads Cordelia’s Pillow Book will be able to know Cordelia, who does not exist in the world any longer (or not at all in the real sense). This may be interpreted as the author Chambers’s positive message. His hope and trust in the power of writing, which are represented in his young female and male writing protagonists, are ultimately linked to my above-mentioned hypothesis explored in this thesis, ‘Positive images regarding self-identity are central to the creation of writing characters in texts for young readers’.

Reflections on my research

In this research, I have referred to a number of literary and cultural theories and subjects. These include narratology, the history of the novel, subjectivity, the genre of the Bildungsroman, feminist theory, theories of masculinity, gender issues, queer theory, postmodernism and ideological content. It has not been my intention to conduct a superficial examination nor has it been possible to perform a vast piece of multi-disciplinary research. As I have demonstrated in the Introduction, the writing character has a long history as well as many rich aspects, so it was
necessary to take various issues into consideration. In particular, the issue of self, which is the most significant factor in the examination of the writing character, involves various related topics.

As mentioned earlier, the categorisation of case studies through Chapters Three to Six was decided by the characters’ age, which is linked to their developmental stages and gender identities, and also a postmodern interpretation. However, now looking back at the structure of the thesis, (reading Chapters 3 to 6 in order), these chapters consecutively seem to imply the development of literary and cultural theories in the realm of children’s literature, and, (perhaps, also) the influence of these theories on the authors who created these texts. In other words, Chapter Three, on young writing characters, implies the conventional and perhaps simplistic and optimistic view of human beings, in particular children, in that they are constantly progressing and improving. Chapter Four, on adolescent female writers, recalls the phase of the progress of feminism, when things were examined not only from the perspective of the majority, but also from the perspective of those who are members of minorities, ignored and subjugated. The following chapter shows the further possibility of generating power to resist the pressure of conventions and create new and more versatile possibilities. Chapter Six, furthermore, suggests the futility of attempting to settle on a definite meaning. On the one hand this creates anxiety and helplessness for human beings, yet, on the other hand, it signifies possibilities and freedom. Following these outcomes, I feel the structure of my thesis has turned out to be doubly valid. Yet, I acknowledge that texts do not follow a chronological order between the chapters, thus there are cases of some texts published later appearing in earlier chapters.
Secondary to the pattern of writing characters, I have dealt with controversial topics such as gender, sexuality, child abuse, bullying, divorce, illness and death. Each of these is a significant enough issue to be a research topic in its own right. These social issues are simultaneously linked to the changes in society. There was no conscious intention to choose texts primarily because they dealt with these issues. I speculate that this tendency of involving serious issues in stories already suggests the effectiveness and possibility of ‘writing characters’. As I have repeatedly mentioned, characters are illustrated as overcoming tragedy and difficulties on their own, while they develop personally, through the experience of writing.

As I have stated in the Introduction, my purpose in creating a database of texts with writing characters was to select primary texts for textual analysis in case studies, and not for carrying out numerical research. Yet numerical research might be possible as another approach for scrutinizing the pattern of writing characters. However, it might reveal more about the influence of the publishing industry and the marketing of the texts for young people than about the literary characteristics of the writing characters, as the format of diaries and exchanges of correspondence are often employed in series fiction, the numbers of which are high, as seen in the database.

It would have been possible to choose other texts as primary texts for this study. Although I intended selecting texts with writing characters which were as representative as possible, I acknowledge that personal preference influenced the process of choosing the texts for analysis. However, even with different primary texts, I believe the outcome would have been the same. Since I set the post 1960
period as one of the conditions for my research subject, I attempted to choose a selection of primary texts which were published over this whole time period. However, as discussed above, certain types of texts have appeared only in recent years; they are a more recent phenomenon.

In relation to the overall study of children’s literature, it would be difficult to pinpoint the standpoint of my research, due to its wide range of subjects and critical approaches. However, I trust that my study will shed new light on, and provide a more profound understanding of the well-used literary pattern of writing characters. ‘Writing characters’ have been examined by different critics and scholars in articles or mentioned in some studies as secondary to main discussions, yet there has been no extensive study on this theme. I would speculate that the reasons for this lack of in-depth study on this topic related to reactions to the issues implicated in writing characters, rather than to the ‘writing character’ itself. The complex issues associated with the topic create an impression of an unmanageable research topic. I also think that, since the pattern has existed in literature generally and children’s literature, for a long period of time, and in many different books, scholars may have become used to this, not questioned its existence. Perhaps my non-Western background may have alerted me to the fact that this literary pattern is a potential subject for study. With new perspectives, some subtle implications appear to be clearer.

This research experience has been a constant joy as well as a challenge on the personal level. As the writing characters in the books show their struggles and conquests in their journeys, I have also experienced various stages, such as being excited by, confused by, pleased with, lacking in confidence, and finally achieving
fulfilment. I now re-read this thesis as my Bildungsroman; however, I am also aware of the postmodern view that nothing is absolute. In fact, I already contemplate further possibilities regarding research into writing characters.

Towards further research

As I stated at the beginning of this thesis, this whole research project was triggered by my questioning, as a Japanese student, the significance of the issue of individuality in Western society. In this sense, I would like to investigate writing characters within Japanese children’s literature, ultimately, in order to conduct a comparative study between Japanese children’s literature and English children’s literature. Many changes are occurring in Japanese society, regarding the issue of identity, people’s sense of self and the treatment of individuality, as seen in the educational policy, 個人の尊重 (respect the individual) and changes in work places which are tending to prioritise individual ability rather than using a seniority system. However, generally speaking, Japan is still very much a group oriented society. People’s sense of identity also often relies on external elements such as which group, organisation, institution one belongs to. In this sense, it will be very interesting to examine the treatment of personal writings in Japanese children’s literature, as personal writings illustrate the insights of individuals, thus revealing the internal elements of identity. Conversely, the genre of 日記物/日記文学 (diary, diary literature), 随筆 (essay, which employs free prose style to express the author’s personal view regarding things they encounter in life), 私小説 (Ich-Roman, a genre of novel which is mainly based on authors’ personal experiences), all of
which are highly private and personal, have a long history in Japanese literature, and are regarded as characteristic of national literature. These cultural differences lead to speculation that the use of personal writing characters in Japanese children’s literature may be different from children’s literature in Western society. However, the influence of obvious humanism and democracy from the West on Japan, in particular after World War Two, may produce a similar pattern in Japanese children’s literature too, although not simultaneously. Perhaps any literature is indeed a highly private thing, before it is read by others.

However, it is noteworthy that the development of technology has influences on the nature of writing. The use of the Internet to write and show personal insights is both a personal and a public act. There is a much more public nature to the writing in cyber diaries using blog (Weblog) than writing in conventional paper-based diaries, as the latter can be hidden for good, or be disposed of, before others read them. Yet the recent phenomenon in publishing implies that new technologies also have an influence on the boundaries between countries and different languages. More and more publishers, authors and translators seem to make efforts to create a synchronized world-wide phenomenon and trend, as seen in the publication of best-selling books, such as J. K. Rowling’s ‘Harry Potter’ series.

As I have stated above, in my initial view, the issue of ‘self, identity and subjectivity’ may be too commonplace to be noteworthy in Western society. At the same time, I was wary of this view, and sympathetic to young people, where the expectation is for them to show initiative, as well as to have a positive and powerful self image, the whole time. Thus I wondered how such a concept would be
accepted in Japanese society, in which individuals may be comfortably hidden in
the group. Furthermore, due to my recent relocation to the Middle East. I have
also become familiar with a whole new world, with a different set of values. The
global economic downturn also questions the validity of capitalism as well as
people's value systems and perhaps suggests another way of living is required.
However, at the same time, I realise that the notion of subjectivity which comes
from inside each person would give individuals freedom to choose, create, define
who they are, regardless of nationality, race, religion, etc., rather than struggling
with imposed expectations. In today's world, with its variations and rapid change,
this may well be the key to survival and success for anyone. Thus portraying such
a view may be inevitable in children's literature, where the ultimate aim is for a
better future for young readers.
Appendix

Whilst I was studying for my MA, I came across many characters who write within texts, and I started to collect titles of works which contained writing characters. Initially, I wanted to examine all such characters, but I realised the numbers were too great, and started to filter my choices, according to the types of texts with writing characters by creating a database. The search engines have developed, since 2002, when I began this research, but the search engines then available were limited, in terms of numbers and ranges of function they offered, so my aim in using them was to have a general view of writing characters. Some of the titles, in the database are added due to the results from other databases. In particular, I judged that it was not necessary to read every title from a fiction series. Following this, the length of the content of each data entry varies. As I mentioned in the thesis, in some cases, there were some difficulties in identifying the age/stage of characters. When I could not identify the age, I used the terms ‘young’= for young age, approximately 4-7 years, ‘pre-adolescent’ = 8-12 years, ‘adolescent’ = 13-16 years, ‘teenager’= 13-19, and ‘adult’ = adult. Not all columns are filled when the information was judged not necessary, in particular, in the case of individual series fiction.
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