DOCTORAL THESIS

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

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

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of writing characters in children’s literature post 1960. The term ‘writing characters’ suggests fictional figures who get involved in some kind of writing action within the texts. The period selected as the subject of this research, post 1960, established through creation of an annotated database regarding texts with writing characters, which indicates an increase in such texts after 1960, is dependent on the difference in nature of the characters’ writing action in post 1960 texts, compared to that in earlier examples. The post 1960 texts employ writing formats not only for literary functions, as the earlier examples did, such as the creation of intimacy, immediacy and reality, but also for the ideological images contained in the act of writing, in relation to the creation of ‘self’, something which is much rarer before this period. 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 implications concealed in the image of writing activity and the author’s expectations for the target audiences of these texts.

This thesis examines how the image of writing as act is employed in connection with the issue of self-identity, in texts for young readers. The selected primary texts for this research are divided into four different categories largely, in terms of gender and age group, three of which are ‘pre-pubertal male and female characters’, ‘adolescent male characters’ and ‘adolescent female characters’, and, finally, ‘texts which have metafiction as the main feature’, which focus on style of texts rather than the situation of the protagonists, thus including any of the first three kinds.

The intention of this research, therefore, is to establish the link between the image of writing activity in texts and the ideological message for young readers, that self is something one can create, and, perhaps, that such a creation should be attempted.
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements**  
Table of figures  

## Chapter One: Introduction  
1  
The subject of this research: writing characters  
3  
Methodology  
5  
Writing characters in the narratological sense and in relation to the history of the novel and narrative  
13  
Writing characters in children’s literature  
22  
First-person narrative in children’s literature  
29  
Readers of texts  
34  
Types of texts  
37  
Categorisation of texts: age, gender and the structure of the thesis  
45  
Conclusion  
53  

## Chapter Two: Writing as act and issues of self and subjectivity  
55  
Self and child in Romanticism  
60  
Change in the concept of self/subject  
64  
Ideology and characters who write  
69  
The implication of writing as act  
75  
The child writer as ideological being  
78  
Conclusion  
81  

## Chapter Three: Young Writers  
84  
The implications of Bildungsroman: children’s literature?  
87  
The paradigm of the young writer  
94  
Harriet the Spy  
98  
Dear Mr. Henshaw  
102  
The Story of Tracy Beaker  
107  
Love That Dog  
115  
Child writing figures as puppets?: Ventriloquism as manipulation  
118  
Conclusion  
124  

## Chapter Four: Female characters  
129  
Children’s literature and Feminist criticism  
135  
Story setting as a special source of ideological implication  
148  
*Z for Zachariah*  
150
### Chapter Five: Boys and writing

- Autobiography and boy writers
- Gay boy writers
  - *Dance on My Grave*
  - *Brothers*
  - Sporty boy in *Ironman*
  - New Age boy figure in *Kit's Wilderness*
- Identity through new technology: *The Gospel According to Larry*

### Chapter Six: Writing characters in postmodernism

- Metafiction
  - Writing as self-reflection
  - Metafiction or non-metafiction?
  - Historiographic metafiction – Is it necessarily postmodern?
  - Metafiction as parody and re-telling
  - The physicality of metafiction
- Ambiguous author
  - The ambiguous author as a postmodern effect- the interrogation of the existence of author, text and reader
  - The ambiguous author as a realistic effect
- Metafiction and ideology

### Chapter Seven: Conclusion

- Case studies
  - Writing characters in *This is All*
- Reflections on my research
- Toward further research

### Appendix

- Bibliography
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## Table of figures

- **Figure 1**: Limiting the research subject
- **Figure 2**: Wall’s idea on communication between addresser and addressee
- **Figure 3**: Writing characters in children’s literature
- **Figure 4**: Patterns in writing characters
- **Figure 5**: Nikolajeva’s chronotope patterns
- **Figure 6**: *Me (and Charlie)* 1
- **Figure 7**: *Me (and Charlie)* 2
- **Figure 8**: *Strange Objects* 1
- **Figure 9**: *Strange Objects* 2
- **Figure 10**: *So Far From Home* from ‘Dear America’ series