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Posudek Magisterske Prace(Vedoucky Report): “But It’s Only A Children’s Book”-Children’s Literature As A Vehicle Of Ideological Dissemination

Report on Master's Thesis(Supervisor's Report): “But It’s Only A Children’s Book”-Children’s Literature As A Vehicle Of Ideological Dissemination

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“But It’s Only A Children’s Book”-Children’s Literature As A Vehicle Of Ideological Dissemination

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General Remarks:

The phrase from Peter Hunt’s seminal text on children’s literature employed as title hereby serves notice on the reader that one of the biggest issues here is the tendency not to accept that the issue is important at all- to marginalize and ignore the content of such texts because they are of minor

importance and “merely” for children. This has enraged academics in the field and is revealed as misguided within the context of the pedagogical formation of the child and of necessity, of the future adult/reader. This thesis is a solid attempt to grapple with the issue of Ideology in British Children’s Literature through an analysis of the terminology and rhetorical issues inherent in writing for children and the pedagogical freight thereof. In order to analyze this, the author employs a raft of theoretical interrogative strategies and historical paradigms and applies them to key texts in the Genre: *The Secret Garden* by F. H. Burnett, *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis and *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley. The relevant theories employed are explained clearly from the outset in the subsection entitled *Children’s Literature in Context* as are the limitations of the student’s area of concern. What the student then embarks upon is a detailed and thorough reading of the three major texts under consideration which have been carefully selected as representative examples replete with the problems associated with propaganda/catechism in the potent allegorical/symbolic and mythopoeic narratives. The polemic of embedded ideology in literature for children is central here and Moravčíková makes good use of a raft of secondary texts which have reflected upon and deconstructed this often highly charged debate- one which ranges from assertions of cultural inculcation to accusations of brainwashing. This thesis then completes a sustained and detailed analysis of the relationship of the texts to the personal perspectives of their authors and also to the historical context of their creation and publication, as well as considering the issues of pedagogy and the progressive development of concepts of ‘the child’, ‘the child reader’ and ‘childhood’ itself which such texts are both contributory to and products of. The later stages of the thesis discuss, quite convincingly, the relative exceptionalism of these texts within the broader social and literary formation of a canon of children’s literature. Finally, the author offers her own perspectives upon the latest developments in the genre, new texts, authors and ideological concerns. All told, this serves as an interesting consideration of one of the oldest hobby-horses in the academic consideration of Children’s Literature, Hunt’s question of how it can provide both “Instruction and Delight” without being ideologically patronizing or insidious.

This thesis has focus and demonstrates the clear ability on the part of the student to pursue a theme and, moreover, a component of academic synthesis which, while not yet truly the spirit of independent enquiry, is nonetheless gratifying. There is very little within the scope of the thesis which is not explored here and the material under consideration is exposed useful analysis.

Structurally and there are only minor formatting issues here and none worthy of particular note. The most limiting factor I see here is the somewhat vulnerable work on Kingsley and the lack of tenacity in pursuing the trajectory of this theme into modern children’s fiction which, while a discrete area of study in terms of the assertions of this work, is however thematically contiguous and it is a shame it is not further explored at least in as much as to what extent the concerns of Burnett, Lewis, and Kingsley et al have persisted or declined within the market-driven economy of modern children’s publishing .

Recommendation

Bearing in mind the foregoing comments, I would recommend that this work should be passed at a grade of 2 (Velme Dobre) or 3 (Dobre)and I commend it for consideration at that level .

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