**A draft of "Making Boys Appear: The Masculinity of Children's Fiction."
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Making Boys Appear:

The Masculinity of Children's Fiction

In the course in children's fiction I teach at the University of Winnipeg, I always include a number of texts that allow for discussion of the ways in which literature might play a part in how readers understand what it means to be of a specific sex and gender. Until recently, however, the sex was always female, the gender feminine, the books I chose to include ones about girls. That focus was hardly surprising. A couple of decades of important work by feminist scholars has taught all of us who work in literature a repertoire of significant and revealing ways in which texts express ideas about women and work to help shape the femininity of female readers. By now, in fact, the mostly female students who choose to take my course in children's fiction come already equipped with a number of strategies for reading texts in terms of femininity, learned from courses they've taken previously. While they enjoy using the skills they already know, it occurred to me a year or so ago that it wasn't any longer acting as a particularly challenging learning experience. So I decided, instead, to choose a number of books about boys, and to focus on questions of masculinity.[i]

To begin with, this new focus distressed my students, in what strikes me as a highly revealing way. They saw it as a waste of time. They were convinced that there was nothing to explore. In their minds, girls were clearly victims of stereotypes, but boys—well, boys were just boys, just themselves and allowed to be whoever it was they wanted to be, already enjoying the

freedom from stereotyping that girls might aspire to. Why bother even thinking about masculinity?

After I got over my surprise at this response, I realized that the opinions my students were expressing were versions of assumptions about gender that have a lengthy history and that remain widespread in the culture these students and the rest of us North Americans live in. As traditionally understood, femininity manifests itself as a form of dress—a costume or role one puts on, and therefore something that has increasingly come to be understood as repressive of individuality. But masculinity is often understood exactly as *not* being a form of dress—as resistance to the act of putting on costumes or being repressed by conventional roles. It's instructive here that adult males can easily impersonate females with the appropriate clothing and makeup, much less easy for adult females to impersonate males by those means—the costume is less obviously and less artificially a costume. The currently sanctioned appearance of maleness remains more or less what it always was: not a matter of wearing a costume, but instead, supposedly, a matter of not having one on. Masculinity is taken to be, somehow, natural and free—the role one achieves by resisting societal roles and being one's natural self. For this reason, traditional femininity is more clearly a role, a constructed position for girls to take—easier to notice and to condemn as an artificial construct imposed societally on individuals. A major strain of what my students and many others in mainstream contemporary culture would consider feminist thought imagines as a utopian goal the adoption of traditionally male assumptions for everybody as the natural and non-restrictive ones. One simply rejects the role, takes the costume off and becomes free to be oneself. From this popular point of view, the repressiveness and artificiality of our current constructions of masculinity tend to disappear. No wonder, then, that my students were surprised by my attempts to encourage them to focus on

them.

But ideological theory teaches us that the things that matter most to us, and that most affect our dealings with each other, tend to be the things we take for granted—what we see as being so obvious and so natural that we simply assume it's the way things are.[ii] In the light of my students' response to my efforts to get them to think about masculinity, it might well be a prime example of this sort of obviousness.

Let me suggest another kind of evidence for that. Having chosen to focus my course on explorations of masculinity, I was happy to see that a bookstore I was visiting had a section called Gender Studies. Expecting to find a variety of books about being male, about the nature of our cultural ideas about masculinity and so on—ideas that would help me think about the boys in children's books—I made my way toward it. On closer inspection, however, that section turned out to have just two subsections, one for books about women and one for books about lesbians and gay men. About men or boys in general, about non-gay men or boys, nothing.

The absence of a section for books about non-homosexual masculinity is a logical result of our tendency to construct normal masculinity as the non-constructed natural state of being human, the norm from which gay men and all women diverge. Perhaps for that reason, there simply wouldn't be very many books to keep in a section on non-gay masculinity. As the mere existence of this book reveals, and as I've discovered since that trip to the bookstore, there has been growing interest amongst academics in exploring masculinity lately, including the heterosexual kind. I've found a good half a hundred or so theoretical books about what maleness might mean published in the last few years, albeit hidden in other sections of bookstores than ones devoted to Gender Studies. But even this relatively vast outpouring is nothing like the interest in femininity or in what is now known as queer theory. For the most part, ideas about

non-gay masculinity tend to be of interest for those who think about them at all only as that which in fact they usually are: the taken-for-granted backdrop of power and privilege against which gay men and both gay and straight women experience their oppression. What we believe non-gay masculinity itself is or should be; what we think boys need to learn about being male; how masculinity of any sort might be as oppressive a burden for the males expected to feel it and act it as it is for others around them: these are not subjects much considered by most people, male or female, most of the time. Even those who, like myself, are committed to noticing and undermining stereotypes of femininity that are dangerous to girls tend to be unaware of the degree to which our ideas about appropriate normal male behavior are equally stereotypical, and I suspect, equally dangerous for boys and men.

A central and obvious example is the common response to young boys acting exuberantly or even violently. "Boys will be boys," people say, as if aggressive or antisocial behavior is an inherent and unchangeable aspect of maleness—natural. Michael Gurian, author of a popular guide called *The Wonder of Boys* believes that "a boy is in large part, hard-wired to be who he is. We can't, in large part, change who he is" (5). Gurian's insistence on hard-wiring might suggest another reason why exploring masculinity in children's books is a waste of time. If we can't change masculinity or ideas about what boys should be as males, then there's no point in thinking about it at all.

But despite conventional assumptions, and despite Gurian's outrageously mechanistic electrical metaphor and his assertion that the maleness of boys is an unavoidable effect of "their dominance by the hormone testosterone" (60), I have to insist that these qualities are not necessarily natural or biologically mandated, and certainly not unchangeable. I have deeply personal reasons for doing so. If masculinity as Gurian understands it were indeed inherently

biological, then the boy and the man Perry Nodelman are weird freaks of nature. Let me be brutally frank: I never wished to act as Gurian insists all boys always do. As a boy, I was not aggressively physical, not competitive, not interested in taking part in or being a spectator of sporting events. I am none of these things even now. And yet I feel happily masculine, thank you—or, I guess, happily male, since I am happy about who I am and I am in fact male, despite my lack of conventional masculinity.

What we call "normal" is just about always the imposition of culturally constructed and therefore, politically motivated ideals that have the main purpose of repressing individual difference by identifying the supposed ideal as the norm. Normal, or more exactly, normative, masculinity is repressive in exactly this way. Like femininity and being female, masculinity is a social construct that connects with but doesn't necessarily always coincide with maleness. That's why we can have tomboys, and why we can tell certain boys (boys like I was once, for instance) that they throw like a girl. Logic would suggest that the way a boy throws, whatever it is, is like a boy, since it is, after all, a boy who is doing the throwing. But societal gender assumptions tell us that's not the case.

Clearly, then, a main function of these normative assumptions is to make people like me feel guilty about being who we are as opposed to whom others in general think we should be. I suspect a lot of conventionally non-masculine boys feel exactly this guilt about their presumably faulty hard-wiring. And so they should. Believing, as Gurian and many others do, that boys are somehow inherently and inescapably captive to their testosterone—a biological imperative—allows many children and adults to stigmatize boys who act in what I would call a more mature fashion as sissies or wimps or just plain "girls." It also allows many boys who buy into theories like Gurian's to be dangerously aggressive to others and to themselves and to be approved for

doing so. They and the adults in their lives can simply blame their testosterone for behavior that ought to be objectionable, and that can in fact be controlled—for after all, if biological urges were so truly hard-wired as to be immutable, then none of us would ever have been toilet-trained. In matters like these, our believing something to be so does in fact make it so, at least as a powerful social truth we all too often act on.

It then becomes deeply important to surface our assumptions about masculinity, to see what they are and consider them and decide whether they truly are things we want to go on assuming. And it becomes equally important for us to investigate how books for children express these assumptions, how they both conscious and unconsciously help boys and girls to develop a perhaps dangerously repressive sense of what it means to be a male and desirably masculine.

In order to have my students see the importance of this sort of investigation, I had to get them to see how unnatural masculinity is as we conventionally understand it. I had to find a way to make its constructedness more visible—make masculinity appear.

I tried to begin to do so by asking the class if it mattered that the main character in the novel they'd been reading—it was Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet*, the story of how a boy survives on his own in the wilds of northern Canada—is male. They all unanimously and immediately said no, that nothing happened to the boy in this novel that would have happened any differently had he been a girl. I said, okay, then, imagine for a moment he is a girl. How would you respond to a book about, say, Brianna, which described more or less the same experiences happening to a girl?

Everyone still insisted they'd respond exactly as they already did. I had visions of my wonderful plans for the course disappearing into thin air. Were students so firmly enmeshed in

their ideological assumptions about maleness that they refused to believe there was anything worth talking about? If they were, then I had firm evidence of how deeply important constructions of masculinity are to the maintenance of things as they currently are. Ironically, however, I had no way of making anybody aware of what they so obviously needed to be aware of.

But then one student got a perplexed look on her face. "Hey, wait a minute," she said, "it would matter! It would be totally different." She went on to say that a girl who behaved as the boy in this novel did would have to be clearly characterized as a tomboy, as unusually brave, resilient, unemotional. Otherwise, she would just seem weird. What kind of girl would get a hatchet from her mother as a parting gift as she heads north to visit her father? What kind of girl would figure out how to use the hatchet to reinvent fire for herself and single-handedly create the circumstances for her own survival in the wild, almost never despairing and hardly ever giving way to tears? An admirable one, perhaps, but certainly an unusual one—one whose exceptionality would need to be commented upon, as Paulsen's Brian's wasn't. My mostly female students had to agree that none of them thought they'd behave so sensibly or do so well.

As the course continued, and in other courses in children's fiction I've taught since then, I've had experiences like the one my University of Winnipeg class had with *Hatchet* again and again. Reading the ways in which female characters are afflicted by gender stereotypes is almost always an easy task—as my students and I discovered, for instance, when we tried to imagine a book modeled on Kevin Henkes' picture book story about Lily, but now called *Liam's Purple Plastic Purse*, a story in which the young animal Liam would feel great passion both for his purse and his male teacher. What we took for granted as perfectly natural behavior in Lily—what little female beings do—seems quite different and quite firmly related to questions of

gender confusion and sexual orientation when attached to a male child. Imagining Lily as a male clearly spotlights the ways in which her story as Henkes tells it expresses assumptions about femininity most of us still tend to take for granted most of the time. The imaginary Liam seems odd because he behaves in ways we tend to think of as feminine or effeminate. He is not manly simply because he *is* womanly, and his lack of manliness therefore tells us nothing more about masculinity than its oppositional relationship to a more clearly and obviously marked femininity or homosexuality. Being masculine means not carrying a purse, not having a crush on a male teacher—not being feminine.

In the contemporary culture of childhood, indeed, the idea that being masculine consists exactly of not being feminine is becoming ever more strongly entrenched. Perhaps as a backlash to the feminism of the seventies, it has become increasingly important at increasingly younger ages for girls to think of themselves as girls, boys as boys, for girlishness to represent quite different characteristics than boyishness—and for all children to understand and display the behavior that is supposedly proper to their gender. Toy stores like Toys R Us have clearly marked sections for boys and for girls, with very little unisex to share between them. In such stores, the exact same oven comes in the girl's section in the pinks and purples of Barbie packaging, and its box shows little girls at play making cakes. In the boy's section, it is in black and acid greens and yellows, and its box shows boys at play making gross insect-like creatures. An advertising flyer arrived at my house this past week offering a suitably macho black and scarlet Hot Wheels™ computer for boy, a suitably womanly pink and mauve Barbie™ computer for girls. It was basically the same computer. But the boys' computer came with a steering console so that young males could play at running dangerous machinery and being violent. The girls' computer came with a digital camera so that young females could take their own picture

and develop a master makeup strategy as they stare obsessively at their own image on the monitor. There is hardly any childhood anymore, only a boyhood and girlhood clearly marked as separate and different from each other. And pity the poor child who dares to move too far away from conventional gender roles.

This state of affairs is obviously damaging for girls, who are expected to focus their attention on clothes and makeup and accept the deservedly controversial talking Barbie doll's wisdom that math is not for them. For boys, it is equally but perhaps less obviously disastrous.

Far more firmly than femininity is understood to be the antithesis of masculine, masculinity has come more and more to be defined as, quite simply, not feminine. While girls can be acceptably and even admirably what is called tomboyish (as long as they wear pink and mauve sportswear), a girlish boy is anathema. Boys are therefore not easily or generally allowed to do or to be anything considered feminine, such as carrying a purple purse as my imaginary Liam so scandalously did.

But when my students and I played the reverse trick, and tried to imagine Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit or Max of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* as female children, we almost always found ourselves insisting that nothing would seem very different or very odd. Girls acting as these boys do didn't seems to be doing anything particularly obvious that marked them as unusually unfeminine. A little tomboyish, perhaps, but not egregiously or dangerously so. Not, at least, at first: It took some longer and deeper thinking to see how very much these stories about boys are just that—about boys, about boyishness, about what it means to be male.

Consider, for instance, *Where the Wild Things Are*. My students and I could easily imagine a Maxine wearing a wolf suit and making enough mischief to infuriate her mother. But we began to realize that once we imagined her, we had quite a different attitude towards her than

we were tending to take to the male Max. The classes I'm thinking about at the University of Winnipeg and at the Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Simmons College in Boston consisted, as children's literature courses in universities around the world always do, mostly of women—an instructive fact I'll say more about later. The students found themselves admiring Maxine for doing what they'd been more or less annoyed about Max doing as the story begins. Max being wild was just being a boy in all the ways in which boys often drive their elders crazy—being loud, being active, being aggressive, being violent, being rude. Such behavior is, well, not exactly annoying, maybe, but certainly not anything to get happy about and celebrate—the kind of behavior we tend to think we have to just put up with from boys (for "boys will be boys") and hope they'll grow out of someday. But Maxine, doing exactly the same things, seemed like an admirably strong, admirably self-possessed girl—a role model for other girls to follow. What was desirable for Maxine was merely natural and even inevitable from Max—just boyishness.

Similarly, imagine a girl doing what Peter Rabbit does. In class, we called her Honeysweet on the model of Potter's whimsical names for Peter's sisters, Mopsy, Flopsy, and Cottontail. Doing exactly what Peter does—defying her mother, going off to Mr. McGregor's garden, and nearly getting herself killed—Honeysweet would seem admirably more forthright, admirably less passive and obedient and otherwise traditionally feminine than her three sisters, who do just what mother says and spend what looks to me (admittedly a male) like a very boring day in the hot sun picking berries. Honeysweet would, in fact, be acting like a conventional male—expressing masculinity, as we tend even a hundred years after Potter wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* to think of masculinity.

But then the story comes to an end, with poor Honeysweet, having finally rescued herself

from the evil McGregor, being chastised by her mother for losing her clothes yet again and being sent to bed feeling sick with a dose of chamomile tea. When all this happens to Peter, most readers see it as a just punishment, a warning to children to obey your parents. When it happened to Honeysweet, my students admitted to feeling disappointment. While it seemed acceptable for Peter to be punished in this way for following male stereotypes, punishing Honeysweet for her willingness to defy stereotypes seemed counter-productive, a blow against feminism.

This is strange, I think. A female acting aggressively by choice does not deserve to be punished, presumably because the choice was a wise one and it should be reinforced and applauded. But a male acting in the same way, apparently, we assume, *not* by choice, but only by virtue of his inherent maleness, does deserve to be punished.

One reason for that seems to be simply that the punishment has no effect, and in any case is not really, we secretly have to admit, a punishment. Potter tells us that Peter had lost his clothes in the same way a short time earlier—presumably he has behaved like this before and will behave this way again. He's incorrigible—incorrigibly male, a rapscallion by nature, all rabbit, no choice about it. And therefore a hero—a hero for having undergone a kind of manhood or, I suppose, bunnyhood, ritual, bravely confronting an enemy on his own territory and coming out alive. Peter's illness at the end is just a continuation or inevitable result of the test—something more he must suffer to prove and celebrate his ability to suffer and survive, his heroic maleness. What would have been a defeat for and a criticism of Honeysweet is a confirmation of Peter's triumph.

And meanwhile, of course, we have to pay lip service to the idea of punishment. We have to pretend that Peter is a bad rabbit for not doing what his mother wants and acting like a

man. The reason for this pretence is interesting. Acceptable masculinity, as defined here and in many other books for children and adults, is perceived as being inherently anti-social. Being obedient, keeping safe, following the law—these are seen by many people as female virtues, something girls find easy to achieve but that boys have to struggle with, simply because, they are "hard-wired" that way. Once more: boys will be boys, i.e., anti-social rapscallions. Yet we do have a social obligation to imbue children with a respect for the law, for their elders, for being good and doing right as adults perceive it. We want to tell boys that their boyish wildness is inevitable and natural and even and especially, desirable. We also want to tell them that acting on it is wrong. Or more accurately, we want to tell them it's wrong in a way that will make it clear it's not really all that wrong after all, that being male is a matter of defying social convention and the rule of law and yet pretending to believe in it in a way that allows you to keep on defying it. Thus, the strangely slippery ending of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*—and the strangely interesting fact that *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *Wild Things*, *Hatchet*, and many other books about boys and male animals show them admirably on their own and being admirably self-sufficient in ways that might well be defined as dangerously anti-social or, quite exactly, wild.

In *Hatchet*, for instance, Brian's survival depends on his learning to see and think as wild animals do, to survey the world with the detached eye of a hunter looking for prey. And as a result of these experiences, Paulsen tells us at the end of then novel, "Brian had gained immensely in his ability to observe what was happening ands react to it; that would last him all his life" (193). It seems that allowing oneself this sort of self-sufficient detachment natural to male hunters in the wilds is what might make for successful masculinity in the social world also. Indeed, it allows Brian to be one the fittest who best survive and save others in the series of sequels Paulsen has written about him.

As we tend to think about them most of the time, boys *are* wild things—animals. In the old nursery rhyme, boys are snakes and snails and puppy dog's tails, animals and/or the parts of animals (I'm not quite resisting an urge to comment on the phallic shapes of the animals and animal parts in question, their inherent maleness), whereas girls are sugar and spice and everything nice—mere harmless condiments. It's no accident, therefore, that Peter is a rabbit, or that Max wears a wolf suit and eventually imagines himself as king of wild things—or, for that matter, that in *Hatchet*, Brian identifies himself with a wolf also, in one key passage of the book:

> The wolf claimed all that was below him as his own, took Brian as his own. Brian looked back and for a moment felt afraid because the wolf was so right. He knew Brian, knew him and owned him and chose not to do anything to him. But the fear moved them, moved away. . . . He knew the wolf then, as the wolf knew him. (121)

On the cover of the paperback edition of this novel my students read, the image of the wolf is superimposed on Brian's head, a sort of manifestation of his inner self as he becomes a triumphantly dominant possessor of wolf-like wisdom.

In *Wild Things* and *Peter Rabbit,* meanwhile, some fascinating parallels are set up. Above all, the male child is to his mother as the animal is to the human, the wild to the civilized. The boy and his mother each represent one part of a set of oppositions that define their essential meaning and the nature of their conflict with each other. And obviously, the essential meaning is that boys are wild things and inevitably therefore in conflict with the anti-wild repressions of their female parents.

But *Peter Rabbit* also adds to this stew another set of opposites with what seems to be an opposite implication, one with a different set of cultural significances. It does so, I think, in two ways.

First, there's the question of nudity. When I read my class at Simmons my gender-switching *Tale of Honeysweet Rabbit*, there was some uncomfortable giggling at the part of story where Honeysweet loses all her clothes and is depicted in Potter's illustration in all her naked rabbit glory—the Beatrix Potter version, it seems, of the Playboy Bunny. Nobody thought a naked Peter was worth giggling about. Why?

On the one hand, it might be just because, being a male, it seems appropriate that Peter lose his human clothing, the mask of humanness that his mother has tried to impose upon him, and become just a plain, unclothed, natural wild thing. And in fact, Potter makes it clear that this animal can survive only when he divests himself of the trappings of civilization. The jacket gets him caught in a net, the shoes slow him down. The story is telling us that the repressive covering of civilization that hides and works to prevent his true wildness, his animal ability to survive in the wild hampers this male animal. It's not funny that he gets naked. It is triumphal animal masculinity.

Honeysweet's nakedness carries a different message. She is a girl. A naked girl is a sex object—even a naked girl rabbit. A naked girl makes us giggle, makes us uncomfortable because the revelation of her nakedness, like Peter's a revelation of her animal nature, implies not aggression and competence, but availability, lack of control or restraint, a dangerously or deliciously unbridled giving in to passion and instinct. I'm thinking here of some common and traditionally sanctioned cultural assumptions about femaleness—that women are somehow lower on the evolutionary scale than men, less rational and less capable of reason, more controlled by their bodies, more natural, less civilized. In terms of this set of assumptions, we tend to identify nature as a mother, for instance, and to see such things as menstrual cycles and the ability to give birth as evidence than women are more tied to their biology, more natural.

And the naturalness of the female body is something that we don't as a culture really like to think about all that much. We are, in fact, afraid of it, or have been led to believe by a certain kind of masculine thought that we have been invited for centuries to take for granted as the only truly rational way to think that we *should* be afraid of it, men and women both. Women need to be policed and restrained more than men, need to put on makeup and get plastic surgery to disguise and conceal their natural bodies—thus the costumes that female impersonators so easily impersonate. Women need to work harder to repress their natural instincts and urges. They tempt men. They are tempted by their own natural weakness themselves. Their naked bodies must be kept hidden from view lest we men become victims to their natural powerful incitement to act in ways against our better, less bodily, more masculinized selves. A naked male rabbit is just an animal. A naked female rabbit is a female animal, dangerous and for that reason exciting and for that reason upsetting. Honeysweet would have been better to keep her clothes on.

The second way Potter suggests that men are more human, somehow, than women, less animal-like, is in the names she chose for her characters. The one male, Peter, gets a human boy's name. The three girls get the names of pet bunnies. Honeysweet seemed appropriate to me as another cute and bunny-like addition to Potter's Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail. Girls are animals. A boy is human.

Viewed from this perspective, women as less civilized than men. Femininity represents nature, masculinity the civilized ability to control nature. But earlier, I'd described Peter as representing an animality that opposes him to his mother's civilized values. Two different and opposite ways of thinking about maleness and femaleness are being expressed in the same story. Potter seems to be suggesting to her child readers–or more likely, I suspect, just unconsciously assuming and therefore inviting her child readers to unconsciously assume—two different and

even contradictory ideas about their gender at the same time.

For girls, I suspect, the recommended response to that impossible contradiction is relatively obvious. Don't pay any attention to any urges you might have to be a Honeysweet and move past obedience to parental authority and communal rules and values. Acting like Honeysweet is dangerous and dirty and depraved. You need above all to defy your natural female instinct to be natural lest you lower yourself and your male companions on the evolutionary scale.

The message for boys is less clear. To be appropriately male, you must be triumphantly animal-like, express your true masculine animal nature. But in doing so, you will have to be punished for defying civilized values, and you will have to take your punishment like a man. The world works by using animal male power to support a structure that purports to repress and control animal male power. You must be neither a man nor a rabbit. You must be both opposite things at the same time. Thus, as we've already seen, the ambiguities of the end of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. And thus, the peculiar triumph of Max controlling and ruling over and repressing the Wild Thing's wildness because he is the wildest thing of all.

The kinds of contradictions I'm outlining here are not exclusive to these relatively old children's books. They continue to play themselves out in current books for children. Consider, for instance, Lois Lowry's delightfully comic novel *Stay! Keeper's Story*. Keeper is a dog. In his character, Lowry captures exactly the peculiarity of what we as humans most often imagine dogs to be. They are creatures who are animals and who must in their appearance express the savagery of animals, but who are required in their lives as pets hardly ever to actually act on the animality they represent for us. Keeper knows how to look impressively doglike, like a magnificently savage male animal. His maleness is delightfully confirmed by his obsessive

regard for his own tail, his "particularly magnificent tail" (22), his "young but already glorious tail" 28), his tail that makes him so unlike "little, cross-bred females with mottled fur and inadequate crooked tails" (75), his tail which becomes "a useless appendage" when he rolls over onto his back to signify his lack of masculine aggression towards two cats, and which "stays limp" 98) when he feels an unmanly fear, but which sometimes disconcertingly tends to rise to the occasion: "Considering its importance as an appendage, the sad lack of control over one's tail is astounding" (19). As we men know, some appendages are like that. As he says himself, Keeper is indeed "well endowed" (120).

But for all his appearance of savage manliness, Keeper feels only horror when, having run off to the woods, he gnaws at a rabbit and think of himself as being "reduced" to a "primitive" creature (81). What he wants is to be a "keeper," to be kept in safe domestic surroundings with French cuisine—to play out a role traditionally occupied by women and children in human society. The interesting irony is that he gets his wish by appearing savagely animal-like—by looking like but never acting like a magnificent wild beast. In this way, he suggests something surprisingly similar to the paradox of masculinity we find in Peter Rabbit and Max—he who must seem savage and be domesticated at one and the same time.

Keeper is a particular contemporary version of this paradox simply because his aggressive male dogginess is all a matter of appearance. Traditionally, it was women who were supposed to find their power in their ability to appear attractive, to attract an admiring male gaze or an envious female one. Men, meanwhile, had the greater power of being the observers and making the judgments about who was worth looking at. In the last twenty years or so, men have become increasingly the objects of such gazes. We now have naked male pinups in magazine, semi-naked male beauties in perfume ads, Chippendale dancers and other male exotics. We have

a culture-wide fetish among females for commenting on the behinds of men they see on the street and among males for shaping up and body-building. Body-building is about *looking* strong and powerful, not necessarily being so. According to the art theorist John Berger, the assumption behind traditional European paintings and contemporary pinups photos of nude women was that men act and women appear. Men now appear also—and boys must therefore learn to do so also. But paradoxically, in order to appear well, they must appear aggressive, strong, dangerous—like Keeper. They must, as the title of a recent book by Mark Simpson suggests, be *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*. In this strange way, nowadays, to be a man is very much like being a pet dog—apparently savage, but only apparently.

The appearance of masculinity has another significant resonance. It may have come to be so important in recent years as a manifestation of homophobia. I suggested earlier that masculinity is becoming ever more firmly defined as *not* feminine. Increasingly, in a North America in which homosexuality has entered public discussion widely enough for hidden fears about it to become more publicly apparent, that also and increasingly means *not* gay—and therefore, not looking or acting in ways commonly understood to be gay. Thus, the increased importance of appearing masculine.

These days, adult situation comedies on television such as *Friends, Drew Care*y, and many others endlessly repeat variations of the same joke about the horror of friendship between males being understood by others as homosexual attraction. The significance of not being gay in the culture of boyhood is a little less obvious. But it is, I believe, there nevertheless.

Abby Harper, a student in the symposium I taught recently at the Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Simmons College in Boston, works in a toy and children's book store in a small town in Massachusetts. She told the class that, while her adult customers are generally

willing to buy anything in the store for girls, they tend to have a firm set of prejudices about what is appropriate for boys. They will not buy boys any sort of doll. They will not buy any boy over the age of two any sort of stuffed animal. They will not buy boys any dress-up costume of any sort, no matter how macho the character it represents, nor any craft kit except those that involve woodworking: no copper work or decoupage, and certainly never anything involving a needle and thread. Indeed, these adults will not buy boys over the age of seven or so most of the things this toy store sells, except for Lego building kits, car and plane models, and things related to sports and science. Otherwise, they simply don't shop there for boys any longer.

I feel safe in suspecting that these toy store customers who refuse so many kinds of toys for boys do so out of a fear that a boyish interest in supposedly female pursuits is most significantly a sign of homosexuality. Wishing to dress up and play at being someone else, pretending to be a nurturing parent, being imaginative or artistic; in a culture that tends to conflate effeminacy and creativity with homosexuality, all these are signs of gayness. If that is in fact what drives Abby's customers, then the possibility of a young male child having gay tendencies in early childhood is surely of less significance than the possibility that others, children and adults, might *perceive* the child as having gay tendencies—the appearance of unmanliness.

In terms of having success and making friends in the culture of childhood at large, nothing could be less desirable. The sociologist Michael Kimmel, who was written extensively on the history of masculinity in America, speaks in an interview available on the Internet about a relatively new form of homophobia,

> which is the fear that other people might perceive us as being gay. This is where it ties in most directly to the ideologies of masculinity or femininity as we know them. To make

> sure no one could get the wrong idea that I might somehow be gay, one goes through an elaborate repertoire of behaviors, ideas, displays . . . . That terror that someone might see us as gay fuels all the ways in which we talk, act, dress, move in the world--to make sure no one could get that idea. As a result, homophobia becomes a real straitjacket, pushing us toward a very traditional definition of masculinity.

If that's true, then Keeper's appearance of a traditionally savage masculinity may be working to disguise other fears than the ones I mentioned earlier. What Keeper assumes about the importance of appearing acceptably dog-like might well represent the importance for boys of appearing acceptably and conventionally masculine.

Indeed, I suspect that Kimmel's remarks here might throw light on a range of recent texts for children about boys. Consider, for instance, Jerry Spinelli's *Wringer*, in which a boy resists taking his required part in his town's annual pigeon shoot, an event which also acts as a ritual of manhood for boys by requiring them, once they reach their tenth birthday, to wring the necks of pigeons shot but not quite dead. Palmer always knew he didn't want to be a wringer, male in the conventionally acceptable way, but he wants nevertheless to belong to a male group that thrives on competitiveness and bullying and other antisocial behaviors upsetting to female adults. In joining this group, Palmer learns how to appear—and believes therefore he is—successfully masculine. Then Palmer is befriended by a pigeon, a weakly vulnerable object of the hunt. It takes up residence in his closet. He comes to feel tenderness towards it as a pet and companion. And he knows it must be kept a secret from the other boys, or else he will lose his standing as an acceptably manly member in good standing of the male group.

When I first read this novel, I found myself thinking about it as a coded story about being gay, having a secret in your closet that would destroy your macho image and prevent you from

being acceptably just one of the guys. But interesting as that possibility is, it's far more instructive, I think, to realize how the image of the closet resonates in terms of what aspects of male vulnerability and concern for others must be kept from other men in order to allow one to be considered acceptably masculine. Remember the toy store. Being gay is not the only thing boys and men must closet in our culture, but it operates a powerful example of how these closets operate to maintain cultural norms and keep boys and men safely "normal" in their masculinity.

Spinelli seems to want us to admire Palmer for bringing his attachment to the pigeon out of the closet. But he also makes it clear at the end of the novel that Palmer, bravely revealing the attachment by standing defiantly alone in front of a crowd cheering on men with rifles, is a triumphant and quite traditionally masculine hero—an isolated outsider in defiance of conventional norms. As my students and I think about our own assumptions about masculinity and about those at large in the world around us, we find ourselves coming again and again to the perception that we were expecting boys to be opposite and contradictory things. The phrase "tough but tender" comes up a lot. And we've found it instructive that we feel the need, for instance, to have Max in *Wild Things* want to be back where someone loved him best of all—to express a tenderness, a need for nurturing, a possible sign of a weak inability to make it on his own, just as Keeper endearingly does in *Stay!*

In *Hatchet,* Brian does not do that. He very much makes it on his own. Indeed, Brian is alone among the heroes of the books I've mentioned thus far in winning by means of values that might represent some traditional idea of masculinity. Like *Wringer*, a surprising number of books about boys seem to be at least superficially about how the boys learn to see through and beyond the conventions of machismo, the power of aggression, and the rituals of male bonding. On the other hand, though, we were all quite firmly convinced that a boy who didn't, as Palmer

does, wish for and experience conventional masculinity before seeing through it, or a Max who expressed a need for nurturing without an opposite urge to wildness, would be merely depressing, not to mention quite unlikely—not a real boy at all.

In his widely popular book *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood,* the American psychologist William Pollack says, "We want our boys to be sensitive New Age guys and still be cool dudes. Is it any wonder that a lot of boys are confused by this double standard?" (xxv) Pollock's main purpose in this book is to encourage parents, teachers, and other adults to move beyond what he calls "the boy code"—a set of assumptions about how boys ought to hide any tender feelings of empathy or aesthetic sensitivity or vulnerability they might have and express no emotions but the manly ones of anger or rage. But while Pollack calls the boy code a "myth," his many pages of advice for adults about dealing with boys focuses on ways of encouraging boys to express their feelings through words or tears rather than through the violent actions we can, presumably, expect from them. On the one hand, the boy code is a cultural construct, something we impose on boys that we can move past. On the other hand, it's in place from the beginning firmly enough that we need to keep it in mind in all our dealings with boys from their earliest years. Even the main current spokesperson for the danger of our cultural ideas about masculinity seems unable not to speak as if they were eternally true.

On the other hand, Michael Gurian believes that boys are "hard-wired" and unchangeable. Yet his book is subtitled "What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Boys into Exceptional Men," and it is about what that subtitle asserts: shaping boys, changing them, manipulating them into what we want them to be. After insisting we can't change what a boy is, he adds, "We can teach him how to develop who he is with confidence, and towards a direction that contributes to our world" (5). Gurian, too, wants it both ways. He

wants to insist that boys are boys and that boys will be boys, period. He also wants to insist that only certain forms of maleness are acceptable and that boys must and can learn to be masculine in these specific ways.

In the age-old dispute about nature vs. culture, Pollack represents culture, Gurian nature. Yet both end up saying almost the same things in the same way. Masculinity in our time is a weirdly contradictory thing—and perhaps the weirdest things about it is how separate it finally is from the fact of being biologically male, even in the mind of a biological imperialist like Gurian. Just about all of us believe that real men are not born. They are made, as in the old phrase, "I'm going to make a man out of you." Manhood is something that does or does not happen to males—as by and large, presumably, it never happened to me, at least not in Gurian's terms. It consists of choices. And always, I think, it represents an ideal and impossible-to-achieve state of being that *all* males must always fail to meet and must constantly therefore worry about failing to meet, especially since it claims to represent, not an ideal, but mere normalcy. No wonder boys, and men, get confused.

As my discussions here reveal, all these weirdly contradictory threads move through and animate children's books about boys and male animals. In my children's literature classes, we knew all this, and revealed our knowledge of it in our responses to books like *Hatchet* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *Wild Things.* But until we imagined Maxine and Honeysweet, and made the masculinity of the boys they replaced appear we did not know we knew it—did not know how very much our responses to the story were tied up with assumptions we were making about Max and Peter's masculinity. I find that especially interesting.

The distinctions between masculine and feminine behavior in Potter's century-old tale seem fairly obvious, more than a little old-fashioned. The girls wear pink jackets, Peter a blue

one. The girls are so passively obedient as to be a kind of indiscriminate mass, distinguished from each other in no way other than their names and usually depicted as a cohesive group. Peter forthrightly insists on his independence, his separation from the family, his ability to handle the world on his own and in his own terms. Indeed, Potter always shows him in her pictures as distinct and apart from the blob of girlhood. We'd like to believe we've moved beyond the identification of passivity and emotional dependence with femininity, of aggression and independence with masculinity. But replacing Peter with Honeysweet quickly reveals how firmly we still do attach these two sets of values to being either feminine or masculine—how very much the story still speaks to us and, if writers like Pollock and Gurian represent our world at all well, our not-all-that-much–changed conceptions of gender.

But as I said, it took some fancy dancing and gender-switching for us to come to that realization. We had to develop some ways of making ourselves conscious of what we tended to take for granted. In the course of my teaching about masculinity in the last while, my students and I have discovered a range of ways in which fiction for children seems to imply and reinforce ideas about masculinity. I'd like to briefly outline some of these—not because I claim to have a full understanding of them but because I don't and would like to encourage others to help me think about them and develop that understanding.

First, as I've suggested, a number of children's books focus on a separate and solitary male bravely confronting danger and being considered a hero as a result of it. Such books put a large premium on separation and detachment, on the hunter's power of being far enough away from others to have them safely in your gun sights and your control. We admire such heroes, but claim to despise the "boy code" that reinforces this sort of emotional detachment from others in everyday life. How do the books relate to or reinforce or perhaps undermine the social reality?

Second, many books present masculinity as a force in opposition to the law, to manners, to the social fabric in general. In a tradition going back at least as far as S. E. Hinton's *Outsiders*, perhaps even back to Twain's *Adventure of Tom Sawyer*, the boys who get praised tend to be the lawless outsiders, not the law-abiding plodders. In K.A. Applegate's recently popular series of Animorphs books, both boy and girl characters continually and repeatedly deal with a traditionally masculine dilemma—that in order to save their world from evil alien forces, they must forgo the luxury of being soft or tender or worrying about the feelings of others or the morality and even the legality of their exceedingly violent actions. Boy or girl, they must be lean, mean, law-breaking fighting machines, masculine in the ways that soldier and other warriors have traditionally been masculine—admired thugs because of their successfully anti-humane viciousness. This interest me mostly because so much popular literature for children and adults similarly moves to make what was one traditional image of masculinity desirable for all of us, regardless of sex. Nowadays, it seems, we're all supposed to be just one of guys. Even girls aren't supposed to throw like girls anymore. Why, I wonder?

Third, and in contradiction to what I just said: a lot of books about boys—indeed, most books for children that purport to transcend the formulas of popular fiction—are about boys seeing through conventional conceptions of masculinity, learning to be more sensitive or more loving or more openly imaginative or literate, or less caught up in the pleasures of aggressive bullying. In addition to *Wringer*, there are books such as Spinelli's own *Crash*, Diana Weiler's *Bad Boy*, Rich Wallace's *Wrestling Sturbridge*, and Jack Gantos's *Jack's New Power*. This isn't surprising. As I suggested earlier, most of the students I teach, indeed, most adults interest in children's literature as authors, editors, librarians or teachers are women. In our contemporary culture, anything to do with children remains what it traditionally was, primarily the domain of

women. As a result, children's literature often tends to be a maternal sort of literature, even when produced by men following the conventions of the genre. It often admires the kinds of boys mothers might love—good, safe, non-rowdy boys who don't break rules and cause maternal anxiety.

In any case, books for children by both men and women tend quite logically to admire boys who share authors' more or less automatic interest in reading and writing and being imaginative. Bookish people tend to write books in celebration of bookish people. In contemporary North American culture, however, being bookish is increasingly understood to be a girly kind of thing—anything but manly. Among the long list of other imagination-encouraging items Abby Harper's customers won't buy for boys are just about any sort of book at all. In February 2000, as I've been writing these words, the federal government here in Canada has released statistics showing that boys are doing increasingly and alarmingly less well than girls in elementary school. Pollack cites American studies that show that "at all age levels . . . females continue to outscore males in reading proficiency" (234) and that demonstrate "a correlation between boy's low reading skills and their association of reading with feminine skills" (246). It's instructive that the huge popularity of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books has been ascribed in part to the fact that boys are actually and unusually willing to read them.[iii] Nobody knows why—but it might have something to do with Harry's exuberant and never censured display of conventional masculine attributes. That raises a highly important possibility. Boys might tend to associate reading with effeminacy and not read much children's fiction simply because children's fiction almost always celebrates "effeminacy" and addresses conventional masculinity as a problem to be transcended. The bookish boys of children's fiction may speak merely to the bookish audience—boys like me—already defined as unmanly by virtue

merely of their willingness to read, and by virtue of speaking to boys like me, not speak to other boys at all. The portrayals of boys defying conventional machismo so common in children's fiction may then have little influence on boy readers in relation to the huge power of cultural conventions about desirable masculinity and of boy culture itself. When it comes to what it means to be a man, many boys are less likely to listen to their mom and librarians than to the guys. I'll return to these matters later.

Fourth, masculinity is always and inevitably relational. We tend to understand it only and always in terms of how it is not femininity and opposite to femininity, and just as significantly, how supposedly normal masculinity, inevitably assumed to be heterosexual, is not homosexuality and opposite to homosexuality. Boys who resist the boy code are therefore popularly considered to be girly or gay—which in the popular mind, as I've suggested, are usually one and the same thing. Even books like Diana Wieler's novel *Bad Boy*, a sensitive depiction of a gay teenage hockey player and the straight friend who comes to accept his gayness, replicates the common oppositions. The gay boy is lithe, quick-moving and mercurial, emotionally expressive, erratic, and passively masochistic in his sex life. The straight one is stocky, muscular and deliberate, in control of his emotions, stolidly dependable, and aggressively sadistic as a hockey player and pursuer of women. What gets communicated most here, the acceptance of gayness, or the confirmation of tired clichés about it? I suspect the latter.

Fifth, and continuing to explore the ways in which questions about homosexuality become intertwined with our conceptions of masculinity: exactly how do the focus on masculinity as a way of appearing and the closeting of theoretically unmanly emotions and feeling that the closeting entails relate to the ways in which we construct and understand homosexuality? Is children's literature about boys sometimes unintentionally homophobic

without even bringing up the idea of homosexuality?

Sixth, I'm becoming conscious of a network of interconnected concerns about fathers and boys' relationships with them. These often involve secrets—secrets fathers keep from boys, as in Tim Wynn-Jones's *Stephen Fair* and Edward Bloor's *Tangerine*, or secrets boys keep from fathers, as in *Hatchet*. They often involve the acceptance or rejection of a father—and a boy's right to choose who will father him, who his real father is. They also often involve questions of competition—boys in rivalry with their fathers.

Some of this rivalry might be Oedipal in psychoanalytical terms. In *Hatchet*, for instance, Brian's wants to tell his father his scary "Secret"—that he has seen his mother in a car on a mall parking lot kissing a younger man. But Brian finds himself unable to tell, and somehow feels personally guilty about the Secret, "the worry of the shame of it" (68) and about his parent's subsequent separation and divorce. It's possible to interpret Brian's shame as the result of seeing his own Oedipal fantasies come to life. Here is Freud's own description of the Oedipus complex:

> As a result of the constant combined operation of the two driving forces, desire [for the mother] and thirst for revenge [directed at the mother for being unfaithful to the boy with the father], phantasies of his mother's unfaithfulness are by far the most preferred; the lover with whom she commits her act of infidelity almost always exhibits the features of the boy's own ego, or more accurately, of his own idealized personality, grown up and raised to a level with his father. (392)

A man younger than his father but older than himself seems the perfect representation of Brian's own idealized personality—and that man's secret, the tryst in the parking lot, becomes Brian's own Secret. After his plane crashes, Brian connects the guilt-causing Secret with the crash, as if

one had caused the other: "If he had good luck his parents wouldn't have divorced because of the Secret and he wouldn't have been flying with a pilot who had a heart attack . . ." (94). But then Brian learns to see properly, not guiltily but with the appropriate detachment, and proves himself to be a man during his adventure in the wilds—using, not coincidentally, the phallic hatchet that was a gift of his mother. He no longer needs to feel challenged by his father, and he appears to separate himself from what might well have been his guilty desire for his mother. The last sentence of the novel reinforces the otherwise inexplicable significance of the Secret by highlighting it again: "Brian tried several times to tell his father, came really close several times to doing it, but in the end never said a word about the man and what he knew, the Secret" (195)

I realize that interpretations like this one, dependent as they are on unprovable assumptions about the contents of the unconscious, are easy to dismiss. Perhaps it's merely my own repressed Oedipal concerns, but I find myself looking for other ways to understand why the Secret plays such a prominent part in *Hatchet*, a book that seems to have nothing obvious to do with its protagonist's parents' relationship troubles. I can't think of any. The frequent recurrence of issues like these in books about boys—secrets about fathers and mothers and secrets kept from fathers—suggests how much we need to understand them better.

Finally, then, I have more questions than answers. The one thing I know for sure is that the male children of children's literature are complex, conflicted, and shot through with all the interweaving threads that shoot through all our current cultural constructions both of masculinity and of childhood. Like all the books adults write for children, the ones these boys appear in are anything but simple, and deserving of great respect for, and much careful investigations of, their complexity.

That seems particularly true if a large number of boys don't read such books. It'd be easy

to suggest that they should—that reading books that engage assumptions about masculinity in complex ways might be a particularly productive way of breaking whatever versions of "the boy code" boys have taken for granted already. But it's unlikely they will learn to see past conventional masculinity by reading such books when they are committed enough to conventional assumptions about masculinity to eschew reading altogether. And that raises one final and particularly significant question. If the large numbers of boys who have already adopted the conventional assumptions about masculinity that children's novels engage and sometimes challenge aren't reading these novels, then who is? Why do they exist at all?

The answer, I think, is that they exist for the pleasure of a large number of readers with a vested interested in critiquing the assumptions about masculinity conventionally shared by large numbers of "normal" boys. These readers include anyone marginalized or oppressed by conventional assumptions about masculinity. They are girls (and adult men and women who parent or who deal professionally with boys) who don't want to accept the supposed male right to power or testosterone-initiated aggression or lust or rage. They are gay boys or potentially gay boys coming to terms with their sexuality. They are supposedly effeminate boys and scholarly geeks and imaginative freaks and other male outsiders. They are anyone with a need to confirm or develop a negative view of the conventionally masculine values and behaviors that oppress and discredit them.

In most children's novels that make masculinity an issue, such readers are being invited to understand themselves as the good guys in opposition to the badness of conventional males—to see themselves as wise and good exactly in terms of how they are at odds with the conventional masculinity the books critique. In a very real sense, then, these books invite their readers to replicate a pattern of thinking that constitutes masculinity as, exactly *not* feminine and *not* gay.

In this case, though, in reverse, non-masculinity is constituted as, exactly, *not* masculine as conventionally understood. Thus, being either acceptably male or acceptably not male depends on one basic shared characteristic: both require the demonizing and denying of their opposite. A normative heterosexual masculinity based on this pattern engenders and institutionalizes homophobia and the rejection of a demonized homosexuality as a requisite foundational component of being masculine. It's not too far-fetched to conclude that an acceptable non-masculinity as constructed by such books —being acceptable female or gay or simply an acceptably defiant male reader or thinker—similarly institutionalizes a demonized conventional masculinity, the rejection of which is a requisite part of self-fulfillment as a successfully non-macho girl or gay boy or imaginative and sensitive male reader.

If that's so, then it's possible to conclude that such books have the express purpose of making conventional masculinity acceptably demonic for those who see them themselves as oppressed by it. A side effect of that is the insistence that conventional masculinity and the males who express it be and continue to be as demonic as the books imply, so that those who escape and transcend the conventional can continue to have something to understand themselves in opposition to.

Paradoxically, then, liberation from conventional masculinity as described in numerous novels about boys may be working to re-inscribe and make permanent the very thing it claims to wish to get rid of. And in the process, it may well be re-inscribing and making permanent the currently popular assumption that reading isn't an activity for manly boys to pursue. Obviously it isn't, if the main endeavor of most of the books available and recommended specifically for boys to read by adults who care about such things is to attack and demonize masculinity as conventionally understood. Why would any self-respecting boy want to read books that attack

the kind of self-respecting boy who is manly enough not to want to read books in the first place?

All of this suggests a provocative dilemma for those interested in getting boys to read about, think about, and see beyond popular assumptions about masculinity. How can we make that happen, when that masculinity is constructed in ways that undermine the value of the whole endeavor of reading and thinking, and when the act of seeing beyond almost inevitably demonizes what so many boys already have so much invested in? At the moment, I see no way out of this dilemma. I only know that the only way likely to suggest a way out will emerge from us all, adults and children, becoming more aware of the convoluted nature of the problem. The more the masculinity of the boys in children's books appears to us, visible as the set of changeable and non-hard-wired cultural conventions it is, the more we'll be able to think about and possibly even revise its implications.

NOTES

[i] An earlier version of this chapter was presented as the keynote address at Haloes and Hooligans: Images of the Child at the Turn of the Century, a symposium at The Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Simmons College, Boston, MA, July 1999. I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone at the Center who helped me to develop the ideas I'm exploring here: Susan Bloom, Cathie Mercier, and the students enrolled in the institute that accompanied the symposium: Tamara Depasquale, Naomi DuBois, Elissa Gershowitz, Abby Harper, Karyn Hartstone, Mary Holt, Sheila Hussey, Deborah Kaplan, Mary Kielbasa, Jim Kuehl, Fiona Feng-Hsin Liu, Kathy May, Debby Porter, Erin Postl, Deb Shapiro, Shannon Small, and Eileen Stokes. Students in children's literature courses at the University of Winnipeg have also been helpful—especially Alexis Gaston, the first to perceive Brian's masculinity in Paulsen's *Hatchet*.

[ii] I'm thinking here of ideology as understood by Louis Althusser: "It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are "obviousnesses") obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (loud or in the "still small voice of conscience"): "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!" (245)

[iii] "*Harry Potter* has captured the imagination of many in the most difficult group for reading—adolescent boys—and turned them into readers" (Matas). As a result of appealing to those boys and many other children and adults, the first three of the Harry Potter novels not only represented

a significant breakthrough--the first time texts of children's fiction figured prominently on the *New York Times*' bestseller list—but actually occupied the top three positions on that list for many months.

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