



The Re-Enchanters of the World

The Wind in the Willows (1908) and an Edwardian View
on Childhood

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Contents

List of Illustrations	4
Introduction Childhood and Nostalgia	5
Chapter 1 The Uses of Nostalgia	8
1.1 A Search for Arcadia	9
1.2 The Hidden Adult	12
1.3 Cult of the Child Critique	13
1.4 The Future of Nostalgia	14
Chapter 2 Days of Wonderment Revisited	16
2.1 The Nostalgic Antithesis	18
2.2 Constructing the Idyll	19
2.3 The Skewing of the Picture	22
2.4 Revisited – not Returned	24
Chapter 3 Representations of Childhood	25
3.1 Confusion and Mixed Reviews	27
3.2 Second Stage of Reception	29
3.3 Restorative Nostalgia Recognised	30
3.4 For Youth	33
Conclusion The Re-Enchanters of the World	34
Summary	36
Bibliography	37
Appendix I Summary of <i>The Wind in the Willows</i>	39
Appendix II Original Frontispiece	40

List of Illustrations

Detail of a watercolour by Henry Sutton Palmer (1984-1933) titled ‘On the Eden’, date unknown.	front
Portrait Kenneth Grahame by unknown photographer, around 1910.	8
Black and white illustration of Mole and Rat paddling down the River in search for Portly by Ernest H. Shepard (1879-1976) for the chapter ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’, around 1930.	16
Black and white frontispiece of A. A. Milne’s play <i>Toad of Toad Hall</i> with drawings by Ernest H. Shepard for the chapter ‘The Return of Ulysses’, around 1930.	25

Childhood and Nostalgia

Introduction

In England, we may choose from any of a dozen different centuries to live in; and who would select the twentieth century when he might live more simply in the spacious times of great Elizabeth?¹

When the critic Clayton Hamilton, an acquaintance of Kenneth Grahame, wrote down the author's words as quoted above, Grahame's book *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) had already become a classic. Just like his other work it has been set in what seems to be a more 'simple' past. More than a century later the book still conjures up thoughts about 'endless summer, boating on a quiet river, large hampers of food, a peaceful, unthreatening way of life'.² The main characters Mole, Rat, Toad and Badger enjoy outings on the River, elaborate picnics on the River Bank and a crackling fire. It is no small wonder then that *The Wind in the Willows* is seen as a nostalgic book, far away from the hustle and bustle of English modern city life. Because of this nostalgic characterisation and the period the book was published in, it became a prominent example of golden age children's literature.³

The rather elusive term 'golden age of children's literature' is used by critics and scholars to refer to a period in British children's literature that spans from the mid-nineteenth century until the first two decades of the twentieth. Authors from Lewis Carroll to A. A. Milne have contributed to this period which is called a golden age for three main reasons. Firstly, during this period the British market for children's literature flourished: publications increased in number and children's literature received more attention and recognition from contemporary critics than before. Secondly, children's literature from this period is set apart by 'sheer quality' and innovative character.⁴ Because of that it would have a great influence on and be a criterion for children's literature thereafter. Finally, the period is called a golden age because of the literature's subject. Many children's books that were published during this period were set in a distant era and were driven by an intense longing to escape modern time and its social structures to a more simple and better past: a golden age. It was also nostalgic in its idealisation and reverence of childhood.⁵

The Wind in the Willows ticks all the boxes: it was published in said period and although the present study has no intention to draw any conclusions as to its literary quality, it

¹ Kenneth Grahame as quoted by Clayton Hamilton, critic and lecturer at Columbia University, in an essay published in Kenneth Grahame and Elspeth Grahame (ed.), *First Whisper of The Wind in the Willows* (London 1946) 26.

² Peter Hunt, 'What on Earth is The Wind in the Willows?' (version 18 August 2010), <http://blog.oup.com/2010/08/wind-in-the-willows/> (25 May 2016).

³ Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens. A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (London 1985) x.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

is safe to say that even today its influence is widespread. However, it is the third reason that is of particular interest to the cultural historian. It is true that *The Wind in the Willows* is at first glance nostalgic in an undisturbed and pastoral way, but the story does not escape modern time outright, nor is its world completely idealised. This calls for a more thorough analysis of the representation of childhood.

The question comes to mind why Grahame and his fellow golden age authors wanted to escape to the past in the first place. Over the years, many literary scholars have tried to answer this question. Most of the time a biographical method has been opted, the result being that studies on e.g. Lewis Carroll inevitably lead to the question of his sexuality and his relationships with under aged girls, and any text written about A. A. Milne or J. M. Barrie has to take a stance in the debate about the nature of their relationships with respectively their only son and adoptive children.⁶ This kind of approach is influenced by psychoanalysis, a study and theory contemporaneous with the golden age of children's literature that sprung from the mind of Sigmund Freud. The problem with this approach is that it hardly takes the broader aspect of English society into consideration. Moreover, the discourse is so rooted in these vague yet persistent prejudices that it is difficult to examine the facts in a light that is not tainted by sexual and pedagogical allegations. The same goes for the youth of the golden age authors. Critics like Perry Nodelman and Jacqueline Rose saw in Barrie's, Grahame's and Carroll's 'failed' childhoods the impetus for their works and their longing for an idealised childhood. But biographical research as the sole approach leads to devaluation of the historical context and a limiting discourse.

This psychoanalytical approach of Rose, Nodelman and others has often been referred to as part of the 'cult of the child', an expression which has been in existence since the 1960s. It is often taken for a single theory, although there has been no original or single creator of the term and as a result it had better be described as an approach and an entity of theories. As an approach towards children's literature from the golden age it assumes that the Victorians and Edwardians have adopted the Romantic idea of the innocent child – a 'tabula rasa' or blank slate that has not yet been corrupted by civilisation. As a result, it is believed that Victorian and Edwardian authors often created an idealised child character in their books: a child that should forever be isolated from the real and dangerous adult world in order to remain uncorrupted and pure.⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s critics applied this idea more specifically to children's literature from the golden age, arguing that the authors from that period even tried to coerce their child readers into conforming to that nostalgic ideal.⁸ Childhood became a nostalgic place to escape to from the troubles and anxieties of adulthood.⁹ In this way, nostalgia in children's fiction was used to escape modern life in general and adulthood in particular.

The cult of the child has left its mark on the golden age of children's literature debate, but a recent study has made an effort to unclench its grasp. Marah Gubar has argued that the golden age children's authors were far more sceptical about this 'pure child' ideal than was thought before and that they 'do not represent young people as untouched Others, magically

⁶ Anthony Lane, 'Lost Boys. Why J. M. Barrie created Peter Pan' (version 22 November 2004), <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/11/22/lost-boys> (1 March 2017).

⁷ Martha P. Hixon, 'Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature (review)', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36 (2011) 2, 240.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

free from adult influence.’¹⁰ Contrary to the cult-theory, the authors ‘generally conceive of child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by the culture, manners, and morals of their time.’¹¹ Gubar does not deny that the golden age literature was nostalgic, nor that it could be seen as an escape from modern life and adulthood, but refutes the idea that the majority of the childlike characters in these books were idealised to the extreme (i.e. made into an image of a pure, uncorrupted child) or that the authors tried to force their readers into this ideal. She draws attention to the imperfections of both the characters in the books and the ‘ideal’ worlds the authors created. She therefore pleads to see the representations of childhood in golden age literature as diverse and dynamic.

Thanks to Gubar’s research the debate on the representation of childhood in children’s literature of the golden age has opened up to new ideas and research possibilities. It is now possible to question the cult of the child instead of taking it as starting point. Therefore, the present study aims to answer the following question: how does an analysis of the representation of childhood in *The Wind in the Willows* and its reception history assess the cult of the child? As the main question touches on both literary studies and history, methods from both fields have been used. Literary analysis of nostalgic themes was used to analyse how childhood was represented in the text. At the same time, it was necessary to place Grahame’s book in the historical context to see how the representations of and Grahame’s views on childhood were received. Only then it is possible to answer the main question and determine one’s position in the golden age of children’s literature debate.

The first chapter is historiographical and answers the following subquestion: What theories and studies have led to the cult of the child and what new perspectives does Marah Gubar’s most recent study offer? So much has been written in contribution to the cult of the child that it is necessary to see how it came into being. Subsequently, Gubar’s study will be introduced as well as Svetlana Boym’s notion of nostalgia and it will be argued how these theories can help us to analyse *The Wind in the Willows*. This brings us to the second chapter, which will answer the subquestion: How is childhood represented in *The Wind in the Willows*? Boym’s theory on the different uses of nostalgia in literature will be used to overcome the book’s most obvious difficulty: the childlike animal characters that make Grahame’s representations of childhood implicit. The third and final chapter will answer the last subquestion: How was *The Wind in the Willows* received and what does that mean for the cult of the child? The book’s reception history is analysed to see how Grahame’s representations of childhood were seen by both the press and the public.

This present study’s aim is to move beyond the emphasis on the biographical approach and combine literary analysis with historical research. With *The Wind in the Willows* as case study it wants to contribute to the debate on the golden age of children’s literature not by discarding the cult of the child, but by making some necessary differentiations and placing it in the broader context of nostalgia and longing.

¹⁰ Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers. Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children’s Literature* (Oxford 2009), 4.

¹¹ Ibid.



Chapter 1

The Uses of Nostalgia

The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plaques the human condition.¹²

Nostalgia lies at the very heart of the discussion about children's literature from the golden age. As an expression that is nostalgic by definition, a golden age denotes a period of blossoming of the arts, commerce or society as a whole. It also indicates that this period is in the past: there might be no exact date to mark its ending and beginning, but it is a more or less clear-cut period that has come to an end. A golden age is a period to look up to, to command admiration and maybe even long for. The term in itself is never balanced or subtle, discarding the darker aspects of the period and only emphasising the period's accomplishments. In referring to a golden age of children's literature, nostalgia is not only part of the expression's definition but also of its very subject. As we will see, the overarching theme in children's literature of the golden age *is* a golden age, both in terms of space (enchanted places like Neverland and Wonderland) and time (childhood). It is here that nostalgia's 'obliterating' character becomes apparent, which eventually led to the rise of the cult of the child.

In this chapter, the theories and studies that have led to and challenged the cult of the child will be discussed in order to build a theoretical and methodological framework. Starting with the coining of the term 'golden age of children's literature' in the 1960s, it will be explained how this periodisation became an invariable and how this gave rise to the theory that these golden age books are a manifestation of the Victorian and Edwardian's fascination with the idea of a pure child and an idealised childhood. Subsequently, the cult of the child's limitations will be substantiated with the help of Marah Gubar's research. Finally, it will be argued that Svetlana Boym's notion of nostalgia not only offers an inclusive view on childhood in which there is room for the traditional stance of the cult as well as that of Gubar, but also a method for analysing the text of *The Wind in the Willows* and placing it in the historical context.

A Search for Arcadia

The golden age of children's literature spans from the 1860s to the First World War and included children's books as *The Water-Babies* (1862), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), *The 24 Tales* by Beatrix Potter (1902-1930), *Peter and Wendy* (1911) and *The Secret Garden* (1911). The first to use the expression was Roger Lancelyn Green, a children's book author himself and a biographer of golden age au-

¹² Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York 2001), xv.

thor Lewis Carroll (*Alice in Wonderland*, 1865) and his fellow Inklings member C. S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, 1950-1956) amongst others. He first used the phrase in his 1962 article 'The Golden Age of Children's Literature' in which he described the development of children's fiction from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and explores several new genres such as fantasy and the desert island theme. Green derived the expression from a literary work of fiction by Kenneth Grahame called *The Golden Age* (1895). Although this book was intended for an adult audience, it dealt with childhood memories and therefore was and still is often mistaken for a children's book.

In this collection of childhood reminiscences, Grahame portrays the adults as Olympians who have forgotten what it was to be young and the children as inhabitants of Arcadia or Arcady, a utopian place unknown to adults. The collection consists of seventeen short stories with titles that are consistent with the Ancient History theme like 'The Argonauts' and 'The Roman Road' of which several had previously been published in the national newspaper *The National Observer*. In the prologue, Grahame describes the relationship between adults and children. A nameless narrator looks back 'to those days of old' and recalls that adults, 'our betters by a trick of chance, commanded no respect, but only a certain blend of envy—of their good luck—and pity—for their inability to make use of it'.¹³ A distorted balance of power is sketched, enhanced by the description of adults as the powerful and mythological Olympians and the children as powerless creatures who were their moral and creative superiors in everything. The narrator states that it would have been far more reasonable if children had been given authority over adults instead of the other way around, the reason being that 'it was one of the most hopeless features of their [the adults/Olympians] character (...) that, having absolute licence to indulge in the pleasures of life, they could get no good of it'.¹⁴ They were unaware of the magic of life, unaware of the 'pirates (with pistols!)' and the Indians in the garden and they did not care for treasure digging.¹⁵ The narrator ends his prologue with a reflection: 'Somehow the sun does not seem to shine so brightly as it used; the trackless meadows of old time have shrunk and dwindled away to a few poor acres. A saddening doubt, a dull suspicion, creeps over me. Et in Arcadia ego, – I certainly did once inhabit Arcady. Can it be I too have become an Olympian?'¹⁶ A second volume, *Dream Days*, was published in 1898. It was received with the same enthusiasm by both critics and the audience as was its prequel and together they made Grahame's reputation.¹⁷

According to Green it was one of the most important landmarks in the history of children's literature because of its 'approach to childhood and its amazing understanding of the workings of the child's imagination and outlook'.¹⁸ He states that even after what he calls the 'outbreak into amusement' that was caused by the publication of *Alice in Wonderland* (1865),

¹³ Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age* (London 1895), prologue.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford 1984) 211.

¹⁸ Green's article has been revised and republished several times, particularly in *Only Connect*. First published in 1969 and revised in 1980 and 1996, the text is considered as 'the essential tool for everyone concerned with children's fiction'. Unfortunately, only the last but one edition was available to me. Roger Lancelyn Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Literature', in: S. A. Egoff (ed.), *Only connect: readings on children's literature* (Toronto 1980) 12.

children continued to be regarded as undeveloped adults. Literature for children therefore also continued to focus on morality and manners in order for children to develop into successful grown-ups.¹⁹ Although in his article Green admits that a change in the view of childhood was already on its way before the publication of *The Golden Age*, he argues that it was still an important milestone in the sense that it should be seen as a ‘loosening of bonds’ between the adult and the child. The child was, as it were, granted its own domain, apart from adolescence and adulthood. And instead of having to grow up as soon as possible, childhood became ‘a good thing, a joyous thing – a new world to be explored’.²⁰

If Green invented the golden age expression, it was fellow biographer Humphrey Carpenter who firmly embedded it in the children’s literature debate. Referring to Green in the preface of *Secret Gardens. The Golden Age of Children’s Literature* (1985) he states that the expression golden age is appropriate in two ways: because of the ‘sheer quality’ of the books and because many of them were set in a distant era when ‘things were better than they are now’.²¹ With this statement, Carpenter departs slightly from Green’s original meaning of the expression. Green did refer to the nostalgic themes in Grahame’s work, but he did not generalise this for the whole period of golden age authors. And although Green does show admiration for the skill of writers like Grahame and Carroll, he is less impressed with fellow golden age writers Mary Louisa ‘Mrs’ Molesworth (*The Carved Lions*, 1895) and Frances Hodgson Burnett (*The Secret Garden*, 1911). Carpenter therefore adds two new important factors to the expression: quality and nostalgia.

In support of his nostalgia argument, Carpenter sketches the developments in children’s literature from the earliest beginning in the eighteenth century until the 1850s and observes that although the soil had been ready for imaginative writing for children since the 1830s, nothing of that sort could have happened during the first half of the nineteenth century. Prior to midcentury the Romantic movement had changed views on childhood, seeing children as pure and in a higher state of spiritual perception than adults, but still there was something missing. Carpenter explains: ‘It was not enough for writers in general to perceive the qualities of a child’s mind and imagination: before anything of value for children could come out of this, individual authors would have to feel themselves driven away from an adult audience towards a child readership.’²² This could not happen before the 1860s because according to Carpenter the adult world up till then was ‘too hopeful, too inviting’.²³ The foundations of this argument are not too solid, because he constantly lapses in his biographical mode (contrary to his claim in the preface that this would not be his starting point) and returns to his original stance only pages later. Carpenter eventually argues that both the scepticism about the quality of life, especially with regard to the working classes, and the economic uncertainties from the 1870s onwards led to the fact that adult life was not optimistic anymore, paving the way for nostalgic children’s literature.²⁴ Carpenter extends this period to include A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1928), whereas Green lets it end abruptly with J. M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (the play in 1904; the novel in 1911).

¹⁹ Ibid. 12.

²⁰ Ibid. 12

²¹ Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, x.

²² Ibid. 11.

²³ Ibid. 11.

²⁴ Ibid. 14.

Both Green and Carpenter have argued that the revaluation of childhood has laid the foundation of the children's books of the golden age. They have signalled the same developments in children's literature building up to the golden age and the changes in children's literature from that period. Carpenter however deviates from Green's terminology by stating that all the books are nostalgic in that they long for both a past and childhood itself. He also differs from Green in the sense that he argues that a change in the perception of the child and childhood, the loosening of bonds according to Green, was not enough – the historical context is crucial in Carpenter's view. Only when contemporary Britain became too much of a disappointment would adult authors turn to children's literature – only then childhood became a necessary escape.

The Hidden Adult

The fact that the adult author needs the child and its childhood to escape the present – that Perry Nodelman calls the 'hidden adult'. According to Nodelman, the texts of children's literature 'possess a shadow, an unconscious – a more complex and more complete understanding of the world and people that remains unspoken beyond the simple surface but provides that simple surface with its comprehensibility'.²⁵ In other words, there is a subtext that can only be perceived and understood by the adult readership, because of the simple fact that it is written *by* adults – for children but because of the need for an escape. According to Nodelman, this idea of a 'hidden adult' is applicable to most children's books, but Jacqueline Rose takes this idea one step further.

Rose wrote about the adult author and child reader relationship in her book *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). Although she addresses children's literature in general and of all times, she uses Victorian and Edwardian case studies. She argues that children's literature isn't written for the child or meant to meet the child's needs but is in fact written to satisfy the needs and desires of adults. According to Rose, children's fiction is 'something of a soliciting, a chase, or even a seduction'.²⁶ She bases this assumption on the idea that in the world of children's fiction, the space of the adult writer and the child reader are separate from each other and never intermingle, but that there is a more indirect relationship: the adult's desire for the child, as a 'form of investment' which 'fixes the child and holds it in place'.²⁷ To stay with her case of Peter Pan, she explains that Peter's refusal to grow up is the wish of his adult creator, not because it is his (Peter's or the child in general's) wish.²⁸ The adults that created Peter and other characters in children's literature created these characters for themselves in order to perpetuate an idealised childhood that has far more relevance for the adult than it has for the children that read the stories.

Why does this particular adult-child relationship exist? The answer, writes Rose, lies in the history of children's fiction. Just like Carpenter, Rose refers to John Locke and the Romantic Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the stimulators of mid- and late-eighteenth century children's fiction, the period when children's literature became a distinct genre. Carpenter criticises these philosophers who only deemed *Aesop*, *Reynard the Fox* and *Robinson Crusoe* fit

²⁵ Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult. Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore 2008) 206.

²⁶ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London 1984), 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

for the nursery, because according to Locke and Rousseau children should not be given reading matter 'that would merely excite the imagination'.²⁹ Both philosophers believed that the child was a *tabula rasa* or a *noble savage*, meaning it was not yet corrupted by the adult world. As such, children should not be given literature that would damage their purity. Locke and Rousseau both believed in a primitive state to which the child had special access but which was lost once they became an adult. The child was therefore seen as 'a pioneer who restores these worlds to us, and gives them back to us with a facility or directness which ensures that our own relationship to them is, finally, safe'.³⁰ With safe, Rose refers to the psychoanalytical view that the realities of childhood threaten adults. For example the sexuality children possess is dismissed by adults because it threatens the idea of a pure and innocent childhood.

Carpenter does not talk about a oppressive adult writer and child reader relationship wherein the adult tries to project his view of an innocent childhood on the child in order to comfort himself. In his eyes, the Romantics set the child free from adult meddling because they valued childhood in itself. Rose on the other hand states that the views of Locke and Rousseau on children's literature continued well into the nineteenth and even twentieth century.³¹ According to her and Perry Nodelman, who on the whole agrees with Rose, children's literature in general and children's literature of the golden age specifically is still dominated by this oppressive adult-child relationship.³²

Cult of the Child Critique

The ideas of Nodelman and Jacqueline amongst others bear witness to the cult of the child.³³ However, recently Marah Gubar has published her research of that theory and has argued that the golden age children's authors were far more sceptical about this pure child ideal and that they 'do not represent young people as untouched Others, magically free from adult influence'.³⁴ Contrary to the cult of the child theory, the authors 'generally conceive of child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by the culture, manners, and morals of their time'.³⁵ According to Gubar, golden age authors even challenge and ironise the Romantic idea of a pure, innocent child. With this, Gubar does not deny the idea that golden age literature is escapist and a manifestation of a widely felt dissatisfaction with contemporary Britain. She does challenge the view of Rose and the likes on the idea that the pure child ideal was still widely supported in the Victorian and Edwardian age (contrary to the Romantic period), although she does not deny that traces of this thought are still apparent.

²⁹ Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 7.

³⁰ Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³² In a reply to Rose's book, Nodelman states that he values her opinion and that it is clear that every 'children's story reveals its author's assumptions about childhood'. He also states that he supports her demand for the acknowledgement of such assumptions, but he does not share her horror of the fact that childhood is 'misrepresented' in children's literature. Nodelman states that Rose, being a feminist and writing on feminism and women's history, clearly has a political agenda that 'demand her horror at the way children's fiction works to repress children'. Perry Nodelman, 'The Case of Children's Fiction: Or The Impossibility of Jacqueline Rose', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 10 (1985) 3, 98.

³³ Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*, viii.

³⁴ Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*, 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Gubar also disputes the idea that golden age authors as a rule use their nostalgic themes to act with authority over their readership. Gubar calls this idea the ‘colonisation paradigm’ because in Rose’s view the adult authors take possession of, or colonise, the child’s domain.³⁶ Far from being indifferent towards Rose’s view Gubar nevertheless proposes to let go of the colonisation paradigm, which supports a contrast that is too black-and-white. Gubar argues that modern scholars should take the same stance as what she believes was also that of many golden age authors, who acknowledged that they had with their literature a certain power over children, while at the same time they believed children capable of understanding this and therefore not being ignorant nor powerless. Rose’s colonisation paradigm and the resulting cult of the child ‘essentialises’ child readers as passive victims and this is what Gubar’s study tries to counter.³⁷

Gubar has not done an in-depth study of Grahame’s work, but bases her theory mainly on the works of Edith Nesbit, Robert Louis Stevenson, Lewis Carroll and J. M. Barrie. While these authors do cover very different genres within the period of the golden age, it is a shame that Grahame does not get more attention in Gubar’s research, especially since his *The Golden Age* has been the period’s eponym. On the other hand *The Wind in the Willows* has one major but obvious difficulty. Instead of children as main characters, Grahame uses anthropomorphised animals, which makes it more difficult to analyse his views on childhood. This is where the theory of Svetlana Boym on the uses of nostalgia comes in.

The Future of Nostalgia

A short history of nostalgia is necessary to put Boym’s research into perspective. The Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer was the first to introduce the word ‘nostalgia’. In his *Disser-tatio* (1688) he used the Greek words for homecoming (*nostos*) and pain or grief (*algos*) to form the new term. Hofer based his new terminology on vernacular names of the ‘wasting disease’, such as *Heimweh* and *maladie du pays*.³⁸ Hofer states that he felt the need to come up with a name for this disease where ‘certain youths’ were suffering from, because hitherto doctors had failed to observe and explain the phenomenon properly. He also offers the cure, which was that ‘unless they had been brought back to their native land (...) they had met their last day on foreign shores’.³⁹ Over time the ‘sickness’ developed from a *maladie du pays*, a longing for a (native) country or region, to a *mal du siècle*, a longing for lost times. With this development nostalgia became incurable: there was no way to return to the past.⁴⁰

In her book, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), in which she studies literature written by Russian expats in America, Boym considers the uses of nostalgia in literature and discerns two forms: restorative and reflective nostalgia. Both forms of nostalgia come from dissatisfaction with the present day, but they deal with this discontentment differently. A restorative form of nostalgia focuses on the homecoming or *nostos*, which means that the destination of the longing is more important than the longing itself. It wants to restore the time, the home, it longs for as detailed as possible. Reflective nostalgia emphasises *algia*, the act of longing,

³⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Helmut Illbruck, *Nostalgia. Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease* (Evanston 2012), 5.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 7.

instead of the destination of the longing. It focuses on the fact that one is uncomfortable in the present and finds refuge in nostalgia.

Applying this theory to the above-mentioned ideas on childhood, restorative nostalgia in children's books will focus on an idealised childhood. It focuses on the childhood that is gone and in the restoring of that childhood it becomes idealised. This is what Rose sees as oppressive, as it uses childhood, the domain of children, to satisfy the desires of adults. Reflective nostalgia on the other hand is future-oriented in the sense that it uses the past to transform the future. For example, an adult writer could recall his childhood – probably idealised as well – but uses it to make statements or offer solutions for the future.⁴¹ The most important difference is that when nostalgia is used reflectively, the writer makes it clear that it is nostalgia, by stating it directly or indirectly. Restorative nostalgia however presents itself as a truthful recollection of the past and is not open to interpretation.

Boym has stated that nostalgia is a historical emotion and could thus be shared by many in a society. It could therefore be possible that a shared feeling of nostalgia dominated England during the period of the golden age of children's literature. The question is whether the authors of the golden age used restorative or reflective nostalgia in their works. Following Gubar who challenges the cult of the child and states that there was enough room for a balanced image of childhood, children's literature from the golden age should show more reflective than restorative nostalgia. In the following chapter the use of nostalgia in *The Wind in the Willows* is analysed in order to grasp Grahame's view and childhood.

⁴¹ Ibid., 168.



Chapter 2

The Days of Wonderment Revisited

‘It’s gone!’ sighed the Rat, sinking back in his seat again. ‘So beautiful and strange and new. Since it was to end so soon, I almost wish I had never heard it. For it has roused a longing in me that is pain, and nothing seems worthwhile but just to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it forever.’⁴²

This quote is from the seventh chapter in *The Wind in the Willows* called ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’. This particular chapter is at the heart of Kenneth Grahame’s story for two reasons. First of all, the chapter was not in the original manuscript. Grahame wrote the book using his personal letters to his son Alastair who, when away from home, did not want to miss his father’s bedtime stories. His nurse kept all the letters and later handed them over to Elspeth, Grahame’s wife. When Grahame was asked to write another book, the publisher was presented with an epistolary manuscript. Comparing the original manuscript – fortunately well-preserved in *First Whisper of The Wind in the Willows* (1946) – with the eventual book, it is astonishing to see that a lot is reproduced verbatim. However, two chapters are conspicuous by their absence in the original manuscript: the above-mentioned and ‘Wayfarer’s All’. Interestingly enough, these chapters are also the only two in the second part of the book that do not feature Toad but Rat and Mole. While the first part of the book (the first five chapters) focuses on Mole and Rat and to a lesser extent Badger, the second part of the book mainly follows Toad and his adventures: how his obsessive and capricious nature land him in prison, his escape and eventually his attempt to reconquer his ancestral home. These two chapters that were later added by Grahame are an exception to that rough divide and read as two stories that are still connected but at the same time fairly independent to the main storyline.

‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ is also the most enigmatic chapter of *The Wind in the Willows*. It relates a nocturnal adventure of two of the main characters, Rat and Mole, and their encounter with the demigod Pan. They initially set out by boat to look for Portly, their friend Otter’s son who has been missing for some days, but become impressed by ‘the silent, silver kingdom’ that is the River Bank by night.⁴³ Rat is the first to hear Pan’s soft call: beautiful and strange music that seems to come from the wind in the reeds. As the music fades for a moment, Rat almost regrets having heard it as it has roused a longing in him that is pain’. Three things are essential in this fragment. First, the godly music of Pan is unfamiliar to Rat but he finds it enthralling and beautiful: ‘Mole! The beauty of it! The merry bubble and joy, the thin, clear, happy call of the distant piping! Such music I never dreamed of, and the call in

⁴² Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (Aylesbury, 1908/1977) 136.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 135.

it is stronger even than the music is sweet!’⁴⁴ Second, when the music stops, it has awakened feelings of longing that are painful, because Rat can still remember the blissful music. Third, the remembrance of the music controls Rat so completely that only to hear the music again and forever more would redeem him from this pain.

As I will discuss here, the chapter on the meeting with Pan is central to Grahame’s use of nostalgia. Contrary to traditional beliefs Grahame does not solely use restorative nostalgia. By means of analysing stylistic devices and In his book, he uses both restorative and reflective nostalgia, but the latter predominates and culminates in ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ chapter. In what follows Grahame’s use of nostalgia will be discussed in order to answer the question: What image does *The Wind in the Willows* give of the child and childhood? A brief outlay of the book’s nostalgic structure will be sketched first before moving towards its analysis and the conclusion.

The Nostalgic Antithesis

Although *The Wind in the Willows* is a story for children, it features animals, making it difficult to define Grahame’s views on the child and childhood. In this respect it does not compare to other golden age literature like J. M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* or Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, where the main characters are children just like the intended audience. As explained in chapter one, Boym’s theory of reflective and restorative nostalgia can help us overcome this difficulty.

Most literary analyses of *The Wind in the Willows* refer to the tension between the love for the home and a longing to travel. Both themes are nostalgic in their own way and it is the friction between the two forms of longing that shapes the story. Humphrey Carpenter was one of the first to notice this, stating that Grahame had this split longing himself.⁴⁵ Although he is determined not to make the same mistake as Grahame’s most famous biographer Peter Green – who, Carpenter argues, not only incorrectly interpreted Grahame’s childhood as unhappy but also attached too much value to that phase in his life – he cannot escape it completely. To substantiate his claim that nostalgia for adventure and travel is a major plot line in the book, Carpenter states that this was a consequence of Grahame’s admiration for his father, who left his family and motherland to move to the French countryside.⁴⁶ He uses exactly the same kind of argument as his predecessor Green, not even considering the broader historical context. Far from inconclusive is his second part of his argument when he states that the nostalgia of the home, of the idyllic country life that intersperses *The Wind in the Willows* and in fact all of Grahame’s work, is very likely to be a result of not only Grahame’s personal but also a general, wide spread hatred of urban life.⁴⁷ With this stand, Carpenter escapes the purely biographical outlook of Peter Green and others, not only creating room for Boym’s idea of nostalgia as a historic emotion but also for the different uses of nostalgia.

The book’s thematic contrast between home and adventure is enhanced by two nostalgic antitheses: the beautiful and the sublime and the picturesque and the picturesque. These

⁴⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁵ Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 117.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 121.

terms are essential the analysis of *The Wind in the Willows* because they are a manifestation of either reflective or restorative nostalgia. Some explanation is therefore required.

In the artistic spectrum, the picturesque was situated somewhere between what the eighteenth century Edmund Burke had defined as the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘sublime’.⁴⁸ Burke’s contemporary William Gilpin introduced the picturesque as a compromise. Neither the naturally beautiful, nor the Romantic idea of the awe-inspiring sublime covered that what Gilpin described as ‘that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture’.⁴⁹ Compared to the aesthetically pleasing beautiful, the picturesque was more rough and rugged and had to be cultivated to become agreeable. Whereas the first was naturally beautiful, the picturesque was constructed to be beautiful. The sublime on the other hand indicated a sheer vastness provoking awe.⁵⁰ In contrast to the picturesque, the sublime was openly formidable and even dark, whereas the picturesque effaced that part. The terms are often used in painting, but are also applied more generally to other visual arts and literature.

In 2016 China Miéville wrote an article for the *Guardian* in which he stated that there is a counter-tradition in children’s literature opposite the picturesque. Miéville, himself a children’s book author, defines this tradition as the ‘pictureskew’, the unveiling of the savage violence of nature.⁵¹ He explains it as being bad picturesque in which an author or an artist (he uses examples from both painting and literature) deliberately cracks the picturesque, showing its original roughness. By ‘skewing’ the picture, the scene in either a painting or book, the artist reveals the other side to that picture that is dangerous, savage and even cruel. Miéville describes the pictureskew as the sublime pushing through the picturesque facade. In his view, the sublime will never be domesticated and the picture will always skew.⁵² In my opinion his distinction between the picturesque and the pictureskew is what Boym meant with the two uses of nostalgia. The picturesque essentially does what Boym described as restorative nostalgia: it is a constructed beauty, a created ideal, but it hides the fact that it is a creation. The pictureskew on the other hand is the contrasting reflective nostalgia: acknowledging that it is a creation, showing both sides. I will move towards Grahame’s uses of nostalgia in *The Wind in the Willows*, using Miéville’s picturesque and pictureskew.

Constructing the Idyll

It was briefly pointed out in the first chapter that Carpenter discerned two causes for the development of a golden age for children’s literature. The changing perceptive of the child’s mind and imagination created the possibility, but the immediate cause was the combined scepticism about the quality of life and the economic uncertainties from the 1870s onwards. Authors like Charles Dickens had contributed to this fin de siècle feeling by writing about the urban poor and both the Arts and Crafts and the Aesthetic Movement were a response to the feeling of dissatisfaction and discomfort. According to Carpenter, Grahame did not lie awake

⁴⁸ Burke published his treatise ‘A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful’ in 1757. China Miéville, ‘Beatrix Potter, Enid Blyton and the “pictureskew”’ (version 18 June 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/18/china-mieville-beatrix-potter-enid-blyton-and-the-pictureskew> (27 November 2016).

⁴⁹ William Gilpin as quoted by Miéville. Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

from stories about the urban poor or the consequences of industrialisation. Grahame even had a weakness for trains, a passion that he implemented in the character of the reckless Toad. The problem was that the trains and other industrial machines were not enchanting enough. They annihilated the mystery of the horizon, ‘so that the imagination no longer begins to work at the point where vision ceases’.⁵³ In a conversation with the aforementioned Clayton Hamilton, Grahame said: ‘the most priceless possession of the human race is the wonder of the world. Yet, latterly, the utmost endeavours of mankind have been directed towards the dissipation of that wonder.’⁵⁴ The Edwardians had lost that wonderment, that unrestrained way of looking towards the world. Children were the only ‘really living people’ in the world, meaning that they were the only ones that would accept the ‘mood of wonderment, their readiness to welcome a perfect miracle at any hour of the day or night’, a quality that he valued more than ‘any laboured acquisitions of adult mankind’.⁵⁵ The mood of wonderment was further described by Grahame as a curiosity towards life and nature and the hope ‘to entertain an angel unawares, or to meet Sir Launcelot [sic] in shining armour on a moonlit road’.⁵⁶ Science and its influence in everyday life made it more and more impossible to be curious and amazed. He proceeded by stating that his work was an attempt to ‘recapture and commemorate’ the time when this wonderment still existed.⁵⁷ Grahame was disappointed with, as Max Weber would describe it, the disenchantment of the world and his work might be seen as an attempt to re-enchant that world. This re-enchantment is what Miéville would characterise as picturesque: the constructing of the beautiful.

As mentioned before, *The Golden Age* (1895) and its sequel *Dream Days* (1898) were Grahame’s first attempts to recapture the days of wonderment. The atmosphere in these collection of short stories is pastoral:

It was one of the first awakenings of the year. The earth stretched herself, smiling in her sleep; and everything leapt and pulsed to the stir of the giant’s movement. With us it was a whole holiday (...) the holiday was for all, the rapture of awakening Nature for all, the various outdoor joys of puddles and sun and hedge-breaking for all. Colt-like I ran through the meadows, frisking happy heels in the face of Nature laughing responsive. Above, the sky was bluest of the blue; wide pools left by the winter’s floods flashed the colour back, true and brilliant; and the soft air thrilled with the germinating touch that seemed to kindle something in my own small person as well as in the rash primrose already lurking in sheltered haunts. Out into the brimming sun-bathed world I sped.⁵⁸

The same rurality is present in *The Wind in the Willows* right from the start. The original frontispiece (see Appendix II) refers to the biblical idyll of the Garden of Eden. It shows three cherubs, in the shape of little children, seated around a river and surrounded flowers, plants and trees. According to the book of Genesis, it was the task of these angelical beings to protect the Garden of Eden after the exile of Adam and Eve. Instead of ‘a flaming sword which turned every way’ (Gen. 3:24, King James Version) to protect the garden and the tree of life, the cherubs in this illustration are far from soldier-like. Two animals are also visible: an otter

⁵³ Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 122.

⁵⁴ Grahame and Grahame (ed.), *First Whisper*, 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Grahame, *The Golden Age*, 7.

crouches down at the river bank and a rat is watching the cherubs intently from its spot in the reed. Naturally, these are references to the two water characters in the story, Rat and Otter. Beneath the picture it reads: ‘And the River went out of Eden’, again a reference to the book of Genesis: ‘And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads’ (Gen. 2:10, KJV). The artist of this black-and-white artwork was Graham Robertson, a good friend of Grahame’s. When Robertson died in 1948, Grahame wrote the following requiem:

Now he has gone from the riverside that he so much loved to seek the source of that River that ‘came out of Eden,’ I only hope that it will prove to be a nice, ordinary river, laughing as it runs between banks and loosestrife and meadow sweet, past furrow and fallow and cool, shadowy woods. And there should be a boat or two, when wanted, and friendly animals.⁵⁹

Grahame clearly wanted to draw a comparison between the Garden of Eden and the world of *The Wind in the Willows*. The illustration is even more idyllic than the Genesis version, with the cherubs being harmless little infants that admire instead of guard the Garden. Robert Hemmings states in his 2007 article ‘A Taste of Nostalgia’ that the frontispiece represents an adult’s version of childhood: sanitised, ordered and innocent.⁶⁰ The Eden is undisturbed, the children are sexless and there is a clear order of rank: the children are admirers of the intangible mystique of nature and the animals in turn revere both child and nature. So even before the actual story has begun a picturesque image is created, effacing possible disturbing elements like sexuality and temptation. The constructed rural idyll is developed further in the very first chapter ‘The River Bank’. We meet Mole as he is spring cleaning his little underground home. He is suddenly overcome with the desire to go outside and explore the world. Mole goes as far as the River Bank and is thoroughly happy with every new impression. In a few lines Grahame sketches a pastoral scene with talking animals, spring weather and a meandering river. Mole befriends Rat and enjoys ‘messaging about in boats’, feasting upon a delicious and extensive picnic along the way.

Their friendship introduces a second pillar of the picturesque: domesticity. With bright fires, comfortable arm chairs, good storytelling and food Grahame describes the comforts of life. Marah Gubar is of the opinion that this is entirely at odds with the idea that golden age children’s literature was driven by an longing to escape contemporary life and its discomfort and uncertainties, because *The Wind in the Willows* is ‘infused with a deep regard for the pleasures of civilized life’.⁶¹ She uses this argument to demonstrate that the need for an escape and therefore the ‘need’ to colonise the domain of the child as Rose had put it, is absent in this case. But as was mentioned before, Grahame really did feel the need to apply to a picturesque idyll because of his disappointment in the disenchantment of the modern world – he was just not disappointed in modern life in general. Closer scrutiny of the text does show that Grahame carefully picks the parts of modern civilised life that he did not deem disenchanting. Good manners, for example – or ‘animal-etiquette’ as Grahame calls it. It fits the middle and upper class life of the animals perfectly to observe the proper forms because it allows them to

⁵⁹ Carolyn Hares-Stryker, *The Illustrators of The Wind in the Willows, 1908-2008* (Jefferson 2009) 8.

⁶⁰ Robert Hemmings, ‘A Taste of Nostalgia: Children’s Books from the Golden Age—Carroll, Grahame and Milne’, *Children’s Literature* 35 (2007), 56.

⁶¹ Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*, 25.

lead a quiet, peaceful life. It is therefore 'quite against animal-etiquette to dwell on possible trouble ahead, or even allude to it'.⁶² The animals also enjoy – to a certain degree – the comfort of modern travel and leisure. The upper-class Toad serves as a reckless counterpoint to the modest Rat, Mole and Badger, squandering his money and practically giving away his family estate in order to fund his latest craze.

Opposite these very welcome aspects of modern civilisation remains the desire to lead a retired and secluded life. Many opportunities for adventure come and go, but in the end the animals prefer their own secluded home. In 'Dulce Domum' Mole and Rat are walking home through a wintery scene. Walking through a small village, the longing for their own home takes possession of the animals:

... it was from one little window, with its blind drawn down, a mere blank transparency on the night, that the sense of home and the little curtained world within walls – the large stressful world of outside Nature shut out and forgotten – most pulsated. Close against the white blind hung a bird-cage (...) On the middle perch the fluffy occupant, head tucked well into feathers (...) Then a gust of bitter wind took them in the back of the neck, a small sting of frozen sleet on the skin woke them as from a dream, and they knew their toes to be cold and their legs tired, and their own home distant a weary way.⁶³

The definition of the perfect home is a home that, like the bird-cage, is secluded from the 'stressful world of outside Nature'. But these desires are not reality. While the rural scenery in *The Wind in the Willows* has been friendly, Grahame clearly distinguishes it from the awe-inspiring Nature. Nature, and the demigod Pan as its personification, is the sublime in the book that is pushing through the picturesque, making the picture skew. In the skewing of the picture, Grahame makes use of reflective nostalgia. In doing so, in uncovering the picturesque for what it is – a constructed idyll – he does what Gubar believes is a widely supported stance of golden age authors: at the same time creating an idyll while also believing children to be capable of understanding that construction.⁶⁴

The Skewing of the Picture

Throughout the book there is a hint of an ominous threat that lurks just around the corner of the picturesque facade. The first time this becomes explicit is when Mole is invited to row down the river with Rat. Unfamiliar to the River Bank, Mole asks about the bordering woodland. Rat explains that it is the Wild Wood but that 'We don't go there very much, we river-bankers'. All kinds of scum is hiding in the woodland and Rat advises him not to visit Badger in his Wild Wood home without him to guide him. When Mole is persistent and asks what is beyond the Wild Wood, Rat irritably answers that beyond that comes the Wide World which is something that should not matter to either of them: 'I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if you've got any sense at all. Don't ever refer to it again, please!'⁶⁵ Mole takes Rat's advice and the Wide World is never brought up again by him, but the ominous Wild Wood and the enthralling River keep Mole spellbound.

⁶² Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, 17.

⁶³ Ibid., 88-89.

⁶⁴ See also chapter one, page 16 and Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*, 32.

⁶⁵ Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, 17.

The first time that the sublime really pushes through the picturesque is in the third chapter 'The Wild Wood' in which Mole disregards Rat's warning to not enter the Wild Wood or at least not without him. Grahame describes how Mole gets lost and how at first there was nothing to alarm him, but then 'the faces began'.⁶⁶ The wood becomes darker, eyes appear from behind trees and in a threatening way Grahame recounts how first 'whistling' and then the 'pattering' began.⁶⁷ Eventually the whole wood seems to be running, hunting and chasing him until he knew at last 'in all its fullness, that dread thing which other little dwellers in field and hedgerow had encountered here, and known as their darkest moment – that thing, which the Rat had vainly tried to shield him from – the Terror of the Wild Wood!'⁶⁸ It is Rat who has to rescue a completely disoriented Mole and lectures him on his stupidity. In the following chapters, 'Mr Badger' and 'Dulce Domum', the two animals find refuge at Badger's and eventually return home safely.

Just as the reader is again at peace with the picturesque, Grahame follows with 'The Piper at the Gates of Dawn'. Compared to the frightening Wild Wood, the adventure at the River does not seem as perilous, but the sublime that Grahame is about to unfold will have a greater impact than the dangers of the wood. When Rat is hearing Pan's music he is immediately 'rapt, transported, trembling' and 'possessed in all his senses by this new divine thing that caught up his helpless soul and swung and dandled it, a powerless but happy infant, in a strong sustaining grasp'.⁶⁹ Mole too then hears the music: 'He saw the tears on his comrade's cheeks, and bowed his head and understood'.⁷⁰ Grahame describes the animals as infants, children, who are completely in Pan's power. When the music briefly stops, they're completely at a loss. The music was so beautiful that it has roused a painful longing in them. As Mole and Rat approach the island in the weir from where Pan plays his flute, Grahame writes that only 'those who were called and chosen' could come before Pan, indicating that not only the reckless Toad who is then already in jail, but also the very mature and adult-like Badger are not 'fit' to meet Pan. Both Rat and Mole have the before-mentioned readiness to welcome a miracle, a wonder, at any hour of the day or night. It is again Rat who is the first to know: 'Here, in this holy place, here if anywhere, surely we shall find Him!'⁷¹ Then the sublime is fully manifested. Both fear and awe take possession of the animals when they see Pan. Although the demigod is not scary in a monstrous way, his presence commands reverence and they even 'bowed their heads and did worship'.⁷² Mole and Rat, the two most childlike of the four main characters, have met Nature himself, the demigod who is both terrible and beautiful: he is sublime. As Pan vanishes he leaves Mole and Rat dumbfound. Grahame continues: 'As they stared blankly, in dumb misery deepening as they slowly realized all they had seen and all they had lost, a capricious little breeze, dancing up from the surface of the water, tossed the aspens, shook the dewy roses, and blew lightly and caressingly in their faces, and with its soft touch came instant oblivion'.⁷³

⁶⁶ Ibid. 53.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 55.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 136.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 137.

⁷¹ Ibid. 138.

⁷² Ibid. 140.

⁷³ Ibid. 140.

In this fragment, Grahame essentially reflects on the use of nostalgia. Before oblivion strikes them, Mole and Rat are miserable because of what they ‘had seen and all they had lost’. The memory of that sublime moment was painful and therefore the demigod grants them ‘the last best gift’ – forgetfulness. They were ready enough to welcome the wonder of Pan, but eventually Mole and Rat had to move on and leave that wondrous state behind. The gift of forgetfulness was granted so that the remembrance of Pan should not haunt them for the rest of their lives. Mole and Rat have forgotten the experience, but they notice that the River Bank is less in richness and colour than they seemed to remember – ‘they wondered where’.⁷⁴

Revisited – Not Returned

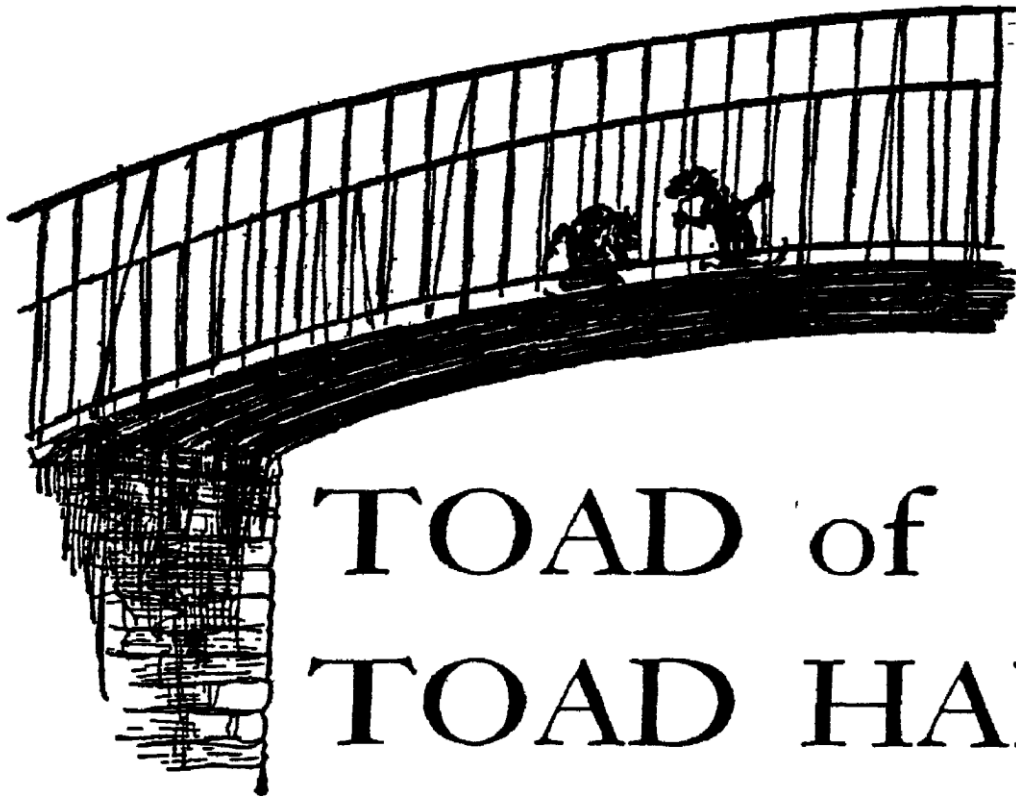
Grahame uses restorative nostalgia in his creating of the picturesque. He evokes an image of a timeless rural Britain in his description of the pastoral and peaceful domesticity, creating a safe and happy place. The need to escape the modern world may not be obvious, especially with the prevalent modern trains and cars, but Toad’s character is evidence that modern life can give cause to the narrow-mindedness and disenchantment that Grahame feared. Grahame flirts with the idea of ‘returning’ to the picturesque past where wonderment still existed, but at the same time he acknowledges that he cannot *really* return to that time. Rat and Mole’s meeting with Pan is Grahame’s vision in a nutshell: the past has a fascinating and enthralling effect upon the characters and if it was up to Rat and Mole, they would have lingered in the mystical ‘pastness’ that Pan’s music created. But it was not up to Rat and Mole: they were under Pan’s spell and in his power. There is no Pan in our world, so in Grahame’s and our own childhood nostalgia we can but do as Rat did in ‘Wayfarer’s All’: facing the temptations we have and choosing what is best. Self-control is the ultimate goal. Toad seems to have been able to reach that phase, the phase his friends reached sooner than he did, and it is Grahame’s message to his readers that they should too.

This message is clearest in the book, but also in letters and diary entries did Grahame express this view. He told Clayton Hamilton that he wanted to ‘recapture and commemorate’ the time when the ‘wonder of the world’ was still common.⁷⁵ He did recapture it by telling and writing his son about Mole, Rat, Badger and Toad and commemorated it by eventually publishing the material for everyone to read. But he also returned home, by adding the additional chapters, making *The Wind in the Willows* no definite return but a noncommittal visit to the past. It is an invitation to see the wonder of the world as Rat did: ‘All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky; and still, as he looked, he lived; and still, as he lived, he *wondered*.’⁷⁶ The ‘Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ chapter does not confirm the cult of the child. Grahame does not want to colonise childhood: it remains the domain of the child. For adults, it is a place to return now and then, a place of inspiration and re-enchantment.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 143.

⁷⁵ Grahame and Grahame (ed.), *First whisper*, 27.

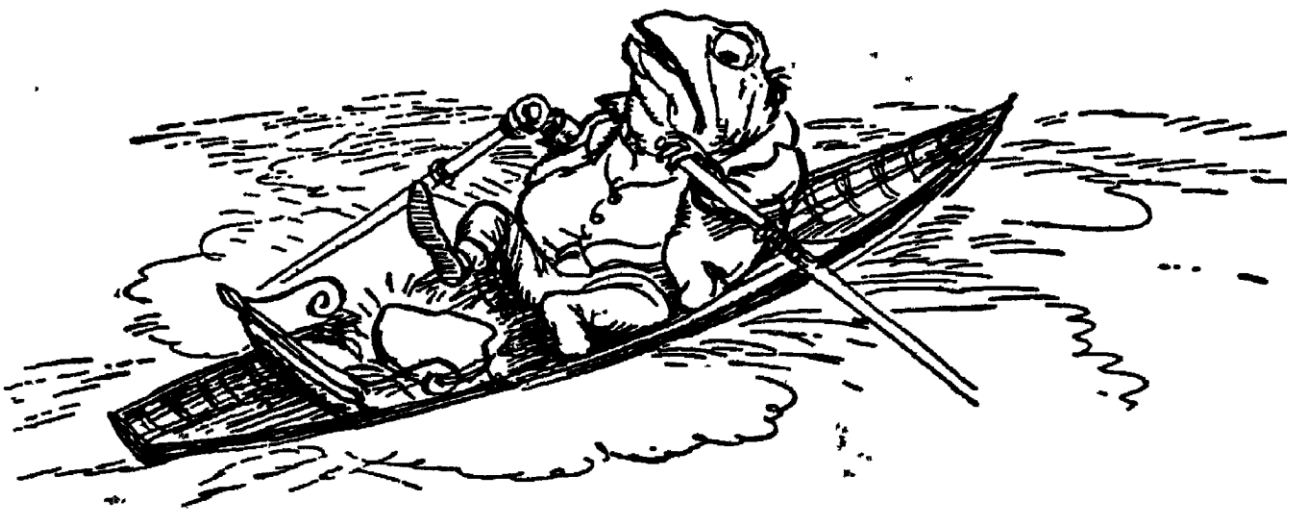
⁷⁶ Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, 139.



TOAD of TOAD HALL

A PLAY FROM KENNETH GRAHAME'S BOOK

by A. A. Milne



Chapter 3

Representations of Childhood

The book is a test of character. We can't criticize it, because it is criticizing us. But I must give you one word of warning. When you sit down to it, don't be so ridiculous as to suppose that you are sitting in Judgment on my taste, or on the art of Kenneth Grahame. You are merely sitting in Judgment on yourself. You may be worthy: I don't know. But it is you who are on trial.⁷⁷

A. A. Milne wrote these words in a 1940 foreword to *The Wind in the Willows*. Grahame's fellow golden age author of *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and the American President Theodore Roosevelt were amongst the book's most ardent admirers. However, the book was not showered with praise upon publication as were Grahame's previous works *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898).⁷⁸ Contrary to those story collections, *The Wind in the Willows* was the first book by Grahame that was written especially for children and this audience switch confused publishers and reviewers alike.⁷⁹ Grahame's earlier work, had been released by The Bodley Head, but the publisher was one of the many houses that turned the manuscript down. It was eventually published by the company Methuen who, despite Grahame's previous success, did not pay him an advance.⁸⁰ The book was off to a rocky start and the cautious way with which the publisher was prepared to publish the book was exemplary for the way the book was received. Critics in general were at a loss how to position the book in Grahame's oeuvre, ranging from reviewers who expressed their doubts about the intended audience to those who did not conceal their disappointment – and even disdain.

Eventually *The Wind in the Willows* became a success, still selling around 80,000 copies a year.⁸¹ In the previous chapter I have explored the ways in which childhood was represented in *The Wind in the Willows*. As such, one could speak of just one man's – the author's – view on the subject. In this last and final chapter I am discussing the following question: How was *The Wind in the Willows* and were Grahame's representations of childhood in particular received by contemporaries and what does that mean for the cult of the child? It will be argued that Grahame's presentation of children as the re-enchanters of the world did not strike

⁷⁷ A. A. Milne in a foreword to *The Wind in the Willows* (New York 1940). As quoted in Michael Steig, 'At the back of *The Wind in the Willows*. An Experiment in Biographical and Autobiographical Interpretation', *Victorian Studies* 24 (1981) 3, 303.

⁷⁸ Jackie C. Horne and Donna R. White, 'Introduction', in: Jackie C. Horne and Donna R. White (eds.), *Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows. A Children's Classic at 100* (Plymouth 2010), xi-xlii, xiv.

⁷⁹ Rosemary Hill, "'Wild Waters Are Upon Us'" (version 13 June 2009), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jun/13/wind-in-the-willows-review> (9 March 2017).

⁸⁰ Alison Flood, 'First edition of *The Wind in the Willows* sells for £32,400' (version 24 March 2010), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/mar/24/wind-in-the-willows-bonhams> (9 March 2017).

⁸¹ Peter Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood. The World of Kenneth Grahame* (London 1993), 160.

a sympathetic note with most critics and that this can be seen as a confirmation of Boym's theory on the different uses of nostalgia. Subsequently, this means that the cult of the child should not be seen as *the* view on childhood, but as one of the many views on childhood.

Confusion and Mixed Reviews

President Roosevelt had loved Grahame's *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days* was one of the first Americans to read *The Wind in the Willows*. Grahame had written Roosevelt in an attached letter that 'its [the book's] qualities, if any, are mostly negative – i.e. – no problems, no sex, no second meaning – it is only an expression of the very simplest joys of life as lived by the simplest being of a class that you are specially familiar with and will not misunderstand.'⁸² Although the president was at first disappointed with the absence of the so familiar and beloved children from Grahame's previous work, he eventually changed his mind. Grahame received a personal letter of the president which read:

for some time I could not accept the mole, the water-rat and the badger as substitutes [for the children in *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*]. (...) Now I have read it and re-read it, and have come to accept the characters as old friends; and I am almost more fond of it than of your previous books.⁸³

Roosevelt even urged Curtis Scribner, a New York based publishing company, to publish the book. Scribner had at first rejected the book, as had so many of his English colleagues, but took the president's advice and released the book in 1910.⁸⁴

Although the president of the United States is not exactly representative of his contemporaries across the pond, his initial disappointment was shared by several British critics when they realised that it was a book for children instead of about them. *The Times Literary Supplement* (from now on *TLS*) was one of the first to voice its disappointment in a review:

The author of *The Golden Age* and of *Dream Days*, the historian of the immortal Harold [the main character of those books], had disappointed us. (...) Beneath the allegory ordinary life is depicted more or less closely, but certainly not very amusingly or searchingly; while as a contribution to natural history the work is negligible. There are neat and fanciful passages; but they do not convince. The puzzle is, for whom is the book intended? Grown up readers will find it monotonous and elusive; children will hope in vain for more fun.⁸⁵

The critic from the weekly *TLS* was not the only one who was confused about the book's intended audience and the fact that it was not a convincing portrayal of nature. Thomas Power O'Connor's *T.P.'s Weekly* took a similar stance, stating that there were various incidents which would not win 'credence from the very best authorities on biology'.⁸⁶

These remarks about the book not being naturally accurate seem strange, because the critics had apparently not so much a problem with the main characters being talking animals, but with the fact that the animals displayed abnormal behaviour for their species. *TLS* found it

⁸² Letter from President Roosevelt to Kenneth Grahame, 17 January 1909. As quoted in Prince. Alison Prince, *Kenneth Grahame. An Innocent in the Wild Wood* (London 1994), 240.

⁸³ As quoted in Prince. *Ibid.*, 239.

⁸⁴ Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 177.

⁸⁵ Anonymous/*TLS*, 'The Wind in the Willows', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 22 October 1908.

⁸⁶ As quoted in Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 157.

hard to believe that Mole would want to whitewash his home at the beginning of the book ('no doubt moles like their abodes to be clean; but whitewashing?') and that Rat used a boat to paddle down the river ('for obviously a water rat is of all animals the one that would never use a boat with which to navigate a stream').⁸⁷ This proved an even greater problem when the two worlds in the book – that of the animal characters and the human villagers – intermingled. Grahame did not agree and he explained to a friend who was schoolmaster: 'It is the special charm of the child's point of view that the dual nature of these characters does not present the slightest difficulty to them. It is only the old fogies who are apt to begin 'Well, but ...' and so on. To the child it is all entirely natural and as it should be.'⁸⁸

Grahame's contemporary Beatrix Potter had by this time published thirteen of her short stories which had all been an immediate success. It is therefore safe to say that the critics' disappointment was not only the result of the 'unnatural' portrayal of the animals because Potter had essentially done the same in her books, but also because there was a discrepancy between the way the story was told and what the critics thought Grahame wanted to achieve. As *TLS* had said, Grahame's language was perhaps too difficult or dull for children, whereas the story was too simple for adults. It had been mentioned in the publishers announcement of the book – which was written by Grahame himself – that the book was 'a book of Youth – and so perhaps chiefly *for* Youth, and those who still keep the spirits of youth alive in them'.⁸⁹ However, most critics were not convinced. Arthur Ransome wrote for the literary journal *The Bookman UK* that *The Wind in the Willows* was clearly an attempt to write for children instead of about them, but that 'the poems in the book are the only things really written for the nursery, and the poems are very bad'.⁹⁰ It should probably be kept in mind that Beatrix Potter's tales had all been short and simple nursery stories. Compared to them, critics thought that *The Wind in the Willows* was off target: it was a children's story in an adult (and to some boring) form. Ransome concluded: 'If we judge the book by its aim, it is a failure, like a speech to Hottentots made in Chinese.'⁹¹

In fact, several critics read the book as an allegory – something Robertson had feared. He had proposed to ask Methuen if they could mention in the preliminary announcement that it the book was not 'a political skit, or an Allegory of the Soul, or a Socialist Programme or a Social Satire? It would save critics a good deal of unnecessary trouble.'⁹² Methuen did not follow Robertson's advice and as a result the book was seen as an allegory, although the *TLS* was still 'at a loss to understand its deeper purposes'.⁹³ Others read the book as a satirical view of the Edwardian middle and upper class. *Punch* remarked that it was 'a sort of irresponsible holiday story in which the chief characters are woodland animals, who are represented as enjoying most of the advantages of civilisation (...) apparently on terms of more or less equality with the human world'.⁹⁴ Arnold Bennett from *The New Age* weekly stated that 'the author may call his chief characters the Rat, the Mole, the Toad, – they are human beings (...). The

⁸⁷ *TLS*, 'The Wind in the Willows', 22 October 1908.

⁸⁸ As quoted by Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 158.

⁸⁹ As quoted by Prince. Prince, *Kenneth Grahame*, 238.

⁹⁰ As quoted by Prince. *Ibid.* 237.

⁹¹ As quoted by Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 158.

⁹² As quoted by Prince. Prince, *Kenneth Grahame*, 233.

⁹³ Anonymous/*TLS*, 'The Wind in the Willows', 22 October 1908.

⁹⁴ Anonymous/*Punch*, 'Our Booking Office', *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 11 November 1908.

book is an urbane exercise in irony at the expense of the English character and of mankind.’⁹⁵ In that, Bennett thought it was successful but at the same time he thought it would therefore not ‘be comprehended by youth’.⁹⁶

Only a few journals published reviews in a more positive tone, praising Grahame’s language as fitting for children. The daily *Manchester Courier* thought it was a ‘charming nature story’ for readers young and old and remarked that since *The Golden Age*

there has come about a deep revival of interest in nature lore. The present story reflects the current influences – especially the love of woods and streams and their little inhabitants (...) Fantastic and almost dream-like as are some of the scenes, the beautiful story will commend itself to all readers, young or old, dowered with the faculty of wonderment, and it will teach them much of that world of field and fold which is at once so near to us and so far from us.⁹⁷

Not only did the *Manchester Courier* acknowledge that the book was suited for children, it had also picked up on the wonderment. *The Scotsman* in turn was convinced that it would not ‘fail to delight a child who has a taste for observing the life of the fields’ and published its review in the juvenile and gift books section.⁹⁸ The *Dundee Courier* praised Grahame for amusing children without writing nonsense or being too serious. The *Dundee* reviewer continued: ‘The adventures are described in a language the children can understand, and the humour with which the stories abound will afford them no end of delight.’⁹⁹

The initial reactions to *The Wind in the Willows* were mixed. To many critics the form and the story were worlds apart – so much even that they suspected a sub text or an allegory because, to speak with TLS, ‘perhaps that is the real inner purpose of the new work – to send readers to its deathless forerunners – to *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*.’¹⁰⁰ In the end, few understood the book as Grahame had intended it: as a book for youth and about the ‘simplest joys of life’ with no second meaning. With youth Grahame meant children, but also everyone else who kept the spirits of youth alive: ‘of life, sunshine, running water, woodlands, dusty roads, winter firesides; free of problems, clean of the clash of sex; of life as it might fairly be supposed to be regarded by some of the wise small things’.¹⁰¹

Second Stage of Reception

The initial reactions were not what would have been expected from a renowned writer as Grahame. Still, the book did not sink into oblivion. In 1909 Grahame received a personal letter from the Prime Minister of Australia Alfred Deakin. Just like Roosevelt, Deakin confessed to being an ardent admirer of *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*, but writes:

(...) after *The Wind in the Willows* I can no longer deny myself the pleasure of congratulating you upon an even higher and still more original achievement – a prose poem perfect within its scope

⁹⁵ Review by Arnold Bennett from 24 October 1908, republished in Arnold Bennett, *Books and Persons. Being Comments On A Past Epoch, 1908-1911* (London 1917).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Anonymous, ‘Charming Nature Story’, *The Manchester Courier*, 8 October 1908.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, ‘Juvenile and Gift Books’, *The Scotsman*, 15 October 1908.

⁹⁹ Anonymous, ‘The Wind in the Willows’, *Dundee Courier*, 24 October 1908.

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous/TLS, ‘The Wind in the Willows’, 22 October 1908.

¹⁰¹ As quoted in Prince. Prince, *Kenneth Grahame*, 238.

and style and sentiment, rising to its climax in the vision of Pan – a piece of imaginative insight to which it would be hard to find a parallel anywhere. Certainly one would only look for it among the rarest flowers of literature in that vein.¹⁰²

What is perhaps most interesting is that Deakin writes that he is not the only admirer of the book. Deakin writes that his letter is also ‘an expression of gratitude and admiration from some of the many Australians who find in your book a delicate and delicious insight into nature and human nature, enriched and inspired by that ‘natural magic’ which touches the deepest chords of poetry and of the soul with the simplest and most artless sincerity.’¹⁰³ It must have given Grahame satisfaction that the reason for Deakin’s admiration – contrary to the early reviews – was spot on. Deakin had taken the story as Grahame wrote it: without sub plot, but with the ‘natural magic’, the wonderment which Grahame had been so anxious to recapture. In an enthusiastic reply, Grahame expresses his gratitude that readers from so far away had enjoyed his story. He added, in a warm and affectionate way, that he was sure that the Australians’ favourable reception of the story would make the animal characters ‘feel adopted and at home among relations; and I hope they will stay’.¹⁰⁴

At the other end of the world Methuen reprinted *The Wind in the Willows* four times during the six months after its initial publication, with three additional printings by 1912.¹⁰⁵ It did not do much for further commissions. Apparently the story he had written with *The Wind in the Willows* and potential future stories that he wanted to write along the same line were no best sellers.¹⁰⁶ Over the next ten years, Grahame would publish no new work. Editions of the book came down a little. Whereas in the first four years after its initial publication seven additional printings were issued, in the next eighteen years only thirty new reprints were necessary.¹⁰⁷ The book went from two prints per year to an average of 1,6 reprints per year. This slight decline in interest in the book is at the same time negated and illustrated by a letter of Curtis Brown, Grahame’s agent, to the author. In 1921 Brown asked him to give his consent to abridgements of the book for use in schools. Grahame refused, writing: ‘I can’t abridge satisfactorily without loss of quality and that’s the long and short of it. I know that School Committees will only have books on their own terms, more or less, but that’s not my fault.’¹⁰⁸ On the one hand it is significant that there was apparently a demand for these abridged versions – signalling that Grahame had at least also in Britain reached an audience despite the negative reviews upon publication. On the other hand it is clear that despite Grahame’s own steadfast conviction that the book was written and suitable for children, few agreed.

Restorative Nostalgia Recognised

Full recognition and understanding of his work only came as late as the early 1930s, with the dramatisation of the book by A. A. Milne and the illustrations of Ernest Shepard. Milne and Shepard were well known for respectively writing and illustrating *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926)

¹⁰² As quoted in Prince. Prince, *Kenneth Grahame*, 244-245.

¹⁰³ As quoted in Prince. Ibid., 245.

¹⁰⁴ As quoted in Prince. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Horne and White, Introduction, xxi.

¹⁰⁶ Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 187.

¹⁰⁷ Horne and White, Introduction, xxi.

¹⁰⁸ As quoted in Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 206.

and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). Shepard had, thirty years after their appearance, also illustrated *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*. Like them, *The Wind in the Willows* was initially published without illustrations (the frontispiece excluded) and although Shepard was not the first, nor the last to illustrate the book, his version is still the most well-known.¹⁰⁹ Shepard's illustrated edition came out in 1931 and was the 38th edition of the book. Only twenty years later it was time for the 100th edition of *The Wind in the Willows*. Sixty two editions were published in just twenty years, thus creating a peak in printing with an average of three prints per year between 1931-1951. Shepard's drawings for the Pooh stories had made him a celebrated artist and his fame contributed considerably towards rising sales of *The Wind in the Willows*. Methuen very cleverly published a very limited print run of 200 copies signed by both Grahame and Shepard first in 1931, before publishing with the trade edition later that same year. Both Methuen and Scribner returned to Shepard in 1959 and again in 1970 for additional colour plates, proving that Shepard's drawings, more than any other illustrator, left their mark on *The Wind in the Willows*.

It is striking that almost all of Shepard's drawings focus on moments of restorative nostalgia: picnics, the animals sitting in front of a fire, cosy homes and merriment. There are only a handful of illustrations that refer to fragments in the text where Grahame uses reflective nostalgia, such as the Mole's frightening adventure in the Wild Wood or when he and Rat meet Pan. But taking into account that even now *The Wind in the Willows* is still strongly associated with Shepard's illustrations while it also conjures up a 'peaceful, unthreatening way of life', it could be said that those few pictures did not clarify Grahame's nuanced view on childhood and nostalgia and instead put restorative nostalgia in the forefront.¹¹⁰ Moreover, by the time Shepard's illustrations appeared for the first time, we are well into the reign of George V, leaving the Edwardian period but also the golden age of children's literature as defined by Humphrey Carpenter behind us.

The dramatisation of the book by Milne probably had a more radical effect on the contemporary reception of *The Wind in the Willows*. Grahame's agent had tried to interest theatres in adapting the story into a play, but the idea had been turned down because the story had been 'too whimsical' and the characters impossible to represent in 'believable costumes'.¹¹¹ Although Grahame had detested the idea of an abridged version of his book, he had always hoped to see the story staged in theatres. When Milne was finally contracted to write the play, he wrote to Grahame that 'it should be a children's play with a little incidental music'.¹¹² Milne's play was titled *Toad at Toad Hall* and premiered in December 1929 in London. As the title suggests, Milne centred the adaptation around the character of Toad, bringing his adventures to the foreground and thus focussing primarily on amusement. Milne stated:

Of course I have left out all the best parts of the book; and for that, if he has any knowledge of the theater, Mr. Grahame will thank me. (...) we are not going to add any fresh thrill to the thrill which the loveliness of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* has already given its readers. Whether there is, indeed, any way of putting these animals on the stage must be left to managers, professional and amateur, to find out. But it seemed clear to me that Rat and Toad, Mole and Badger could only face the

¹⁰⁹ Hares-Stryker, *The Illustrators*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Hunt, 'What on Earth is *The Wind in the Willows*?' (version 18 August 2010).

¹¹¹ As quoted in Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 212.

¹¹² As quoted in Green. *Ibid.*

footlights with hope of success if they were content to amuse their audiences. There are both beauty and comedy in the book, but the beauty must be left to blossom there, for I, anyhow, shall not attempt to transplant it.¹¹³

Milne, a great admirer of the book, deemed certain parts of the book not adaptable. More specifically, he thought the ‘beautiful’ part of the book was unfit for the stage, whereas the ‘comical’ part featuring the adventurous and capricious Mr. Toad and to a much lesser extend the other three characters, was the only way to stage the book. It is hard to discern whether the focus on the comical aspects were also the result of this intention to make the play a true children’s play.

Unfortunately, no explicit verdict of the play by Grahame has survived, but Methuen and Scribner did issue a limited edition of 200 copies of the adapted screen play of *Toad of Toad Hall* signed by both Grahame and Milne. That does seem to denote that Grahame was pleased with the play, perhaps primarily because Milne had understood that it was a story for children without room for adult sub texts. Moreover, the play certainly left room for other emotions than comic relief. Milne’s son Christopher wrote in his memoir that he remembered his parents being big fans of *The Wind in the Willows* and reading it aloud to him multiple times. He writes:

This book is, in a way, two separate books spliced into one. There are, on the one hand, those chapters concerned with the adventures of Toad; and on the other hand there are those chapters that explore human emotions – the emotions of fear, nostalgia, awe, wanderlust. My mother was drawn to the second group, of which ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ was her favourite, read to me again and again with always, towards the end, the catch in the voice and the long pause to find her handkerchief and blow her nose. My father, on his side, was so captivated by the first group that he turned these chapters into the children’s play, *Toad of Toad Hall*. In this play one emotion only is allowed to creep in: nostalgia. And for as long as I knew him this was the only emotion that he seemed to delight in both feeling and showing.¹¹⁴

Nostalgia finds its way, but it is primarily restorative nostalgia, the nostalgic form that is so much intertwined with the comedic parts of the book. The other form of nostalgia that Christopher Milne describes, the nostalgia that links with fear and awe: reflective nostalgia, did not find its way into the play. Just like Shepard’s illustrations Milne’s play caused a revaluation of *The Wind in the Willows* but both resulted in more attention for Grahame’s restorative nostalgia than his reflective nostalgia, misconstruing Grahame’s layered view on childhood.

Ironically, the journal *Punch* that had reviewed the book in a negative way so many years before, now attacked Milne for losing the ‘enchantment’ of *The Wind in the Willows*. *Punch* wrote: ‘perhaps [Milne] has had his eye too exclusively fixed upon the children and averted from the less important grown-ups. (...) Mr Milne has jettisoned, perhaps perforce or for policy’s sake, all that makes the enchantment of *The Wind in the Willows* for the mature mind.’¹¹⁵ While *Punch* finally seems to have noticed Grahame’s attempt to re-enchantment the world in the book, he misinterprets the author’s other important aim: to write for youth.

¹¹³ A. A. Milne, *Toad of Toad Hall. A Play from Kenneth Grahame’s Book* (New York 1929/1957) ix-x.

¹¹⁴ Christopher Milne, *The Enchanted Places* (New York 1974) 145-146. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁵ As quoted in Green. Green, *Beyond the Wild Wood*, 212-213.

For Youth

Grahame had never written *The Wind in the Willows* for the mature mind. On the contrary: it was a book of and for youth. It was not only for those who were still young of age but also for those young of heart – for those who still knew how to wonder. Adherents of the cult of the child have theorised that *The Wind in the Willows* had never been written exclusively for children. They have been right only in the narrow sense: Grahame also wrote for adult readers like Roosevelt, Deakin and Milne who did still appreciate the wonders that he had created. But they were wrong in the sense that Grahame wanted to write an allegory or a sub text that was only visible – or rather perceivable – to the adult reader. He also did not want to ‘colonise’ childhood to carry across a repressive message towards child readers. If there was a message at all, it was the idea that the ability to wonder is one of the most valuable human qualities. Grahame’s book is an outstanding example of the changing perceptive of childhood, but at the same time an account of the book’s reception is proof that Grahame’s contemporaries did not fully understand this yet.

The Re-Enchanters of the World

Conclusion

In England, we may choose from any of a dozen different centuries to live in; and who would select the twentieth century when he might live more simply in the spacious times of great Elizabeth?¹¹⁶

The present study's main aim was to offer a contribution to the childhood and nostalgia debate in the field of the golden age of children's literature. The case study, *The Wind in the Willows*, was used to analyse the views on childhood of golden age author Kenneth Grahame in order to offer additional modifications to the cult of the child. Marah Gubar's study had already offered new insights, pleading for a more nuanced modern view of Victorian and Edwardian golden age authors and their image of children and childhood. The case of *The Wind in the Willows* put her standpoint to the test. It also offered an additional challenge because unlike other golden age children's literature, the main characters were animal instead of child-like characters. While Gubar substantiated her study with children's books from varying genres, ranging from the magical *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter and Wendy* to the adventurous *Treasure Island* and realistic *The Railway Children*, an animal story perspective was still lacking. The following main question was the result: how does an analysis of the representation of childhood in *The Wind in the Willows* and its reception history assess the cult of the child? The underlying aim was twofold: showing that the cult of the child was in need of differentiations and moving past the emphasis on biographical research and combine literary research methods with historiographical methods.

The first chapter mapped the theories and studies that had led to the cult of the child and explored the new perspectives of Gubar's most recent study. From the very first to refer to the nostalgia of golden age literature, Roger Green but especially Humphrey Carpenter, the idea was developed that this nostalgia was not for the child but for the adult author. This oppressive power structure was called the hidden adult by Perry Nodelman and further developed by Jacqueline Rose. She would stress the impossibility of children's fiction, stating that the adult author uses an idealised child character and childhood to fulfil his own needs. Children's fiction therefore never can be about or for the child, because it is essentially about and for the adult. Gubar has called this the colonisation paradigm and has cast doubts on this cult of the child and Rose's views in specific, stating that Victorian and Edwardian authors had a more diverse view on childhood. Svetlana Boym's theory was subsequently introduced because her theory on the uses of nostalgia in literature offers a method for analysing *The Wind in the Willows*.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth Grahame as quoted by Clayton Hamilton. Grahame and Grahame (ed.), *First Whisper*, 26.

The second chapter analysed the use of restorative and reflective nostalgia in *The Wind and the Willows*. It was discovered that Grahame made use of both forms of nostalgia, but that reflective nostalgia ultimately predominated because it was the only way to bring across his message of re-enchantment. Grahame was disappointed in the disenchantment of the world, mainly the effect of the industrialisation. All of his work can be seen as an attempt to re-enchant the world. Grahame saw children as the ones who still possessed the ability to wonder – they and some adults who had not lost that ability. Children, or more generally: youth, were the re-enchanters of the world. An analysis of *The Wind in the Willows* therefore counters the cult of the child, because neither did Grahame want to use childhood to please only himself and other adults, nor did he try anything by force. Quite the contrary, because his use of reflective nostalgia culminates in the uncovering of the idyll.

The final chapter analysed the book's reception history from publication until the 1930s. It is very clear from the reception by the press and some notable public figures that Grahame's re-enchantment message in *The Wind in the Willows* was not understood. Critics were confused about Grahame's change of audience and thought it not suitable for either children nor adults. It is ironical that while an analysis of *The Wind in the Willows* takes the edge of Rose's argument, the reception of the book with the press actually confirms it on a different level. Critics were almost all alike in their disappointment and conviction that there simply must be an adult sub text – an hidden adult. But there was no message other than that children were, that youth was, the re-enchanters of the world. And that message was not hidden nor forced – but very few saw it.

Returning to the main question, it can be stated that from an analysis of the representation of childhood in *The Wind in the Willows* and its reception history it follows that the cult of the child is indeed in need of differentiations. It is too rigid and leaves no room for the diversity within golden age children's literature and the individual books from that period. As such, the case of *The Wind in the Willows* illustrates Svetlana Boym's theory on nostalgia beautifully. She has argued that nostalgia in the modern sense (as *mal du siècle*) is a historical emotion, meaning that it is no longer just a personal emotion but a shared feeling throughout society, a symptom of the modern age. With the development of nostalgia from *maladie du pays* to *mal du siècle*, longing for a place changed to yearning for a different time: childhood. But whereas the cult of the child takes this shift in longing for something that is inherently retrospective and oppressive, Svetlana Boym has argued that it is not. It can be prospective as well and this is what she calls reflective nostalgia. An analysis of *The Wind in the Willows* shows that one way of using nostalgia does not rule out the other. Grahame made use of both restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia but the latter predominated. His message was more prospective than retrospective because he tried to offer an solution to the disenchantment of the world. Children were the natural re-enchanters of the world, but literature could be that for those that had outgrown childhood.

We cannot wholly discard the cult on the child, because the reception history of *The Wind in the Willows* shows that several critics were convinced that there was and perhaps even should be an adult sub text. However, we should adapt the cult of the child and view it as part of Boym's overarching theory on nostalgia, because it is essentially what Boym has described as restorative nostalgia. In this way the cult of the child can be useful in the broader context of research on the Edwardian age and views on childhood.

Summary

The study's main aim is to offer a contribution to the childhood and nostalgia debate in the field of the golden age of children's literature. This period in British children's fiction ranges over several decades, from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1920s. From the 1980s and 1990s the prevailing view in studies on this golden age of children's literature has been that books from this period idealise childhood in order to meet the author's need to escape the modern time and its disappointments. In this view it is believed that the Victorians and Edwardians have adopted the Romantic idea of the innocent child and tried to coerce the child readers into conforming to that nostalgic ideal. This is not a view posed by one scholar, but is best described as an entity of theories and is called the 'cult of the child'. It determines the debate about the views on childhood in the Victorian and Edwardian period and leaves little room for differentiations.

This present study is arguing that this approach is too rigid and is instead proposing a broader approach in which there is room for the cult of the child, but in a more balanced way. Using Svetlana Boym's theory on the different uses of nostalgia, this study claims that the cult of the child approach could be seen as one of the two forms of nostalgia that Boym describes. The case of *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), a children's book from the golden age, is used to support this argument. Analysing both the representations of childhood in the book itself, and the way these representations were received upon publication, it is demonstrated that the cult's approach towards childhood is certainly visible in both, but that it is not the sole approach. With this argument, the study hopes to contribute to future studies on children's literature from the golden age and, on a more general level, research on Edwardian views on childhood.

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Appendix I

The Wind in the Willows is a story about four main characters: Mole, Rat, Toad and Badger and their life at the River Bank and surrounding places. Minor characters include other River Bankers like Otter and his son Portly, other Woodlanders like the Squirrels, Rabbits, Weasels and Stoats and human inhabitants of surrounding villages. The book can be roughly divided in two parts and two chapters that are strikingly different.

The first part, being the first six chapters, focuses on the friendship between Mole and Rat and relates how they met and how Rat introduces his newfound friend to Mr Toad and Mr Badger. Toad is from noble birth, living in a castle-like home, and is described as reckless and fickle. Badger is described as somewhat grumpy but wise and Rat as steady and cultured, while Mole is looking up to all three of them. They experience minor adventures, most notably in chapter 2 ('The Open Road') when Mole and Rat travel the countryside with Toad in his yellow caravan and in chapter 3 to 5 ('The Wild Wood', 'Mr Badger' and 'Dulce Domum') when Mole enters the Wild Wood in search of the mysterious Badger and has to be rescued by Rat and Badger.

The second part, roughly the last six chapters, mainly focus on Mr Toad's time in prison, his escape and his attempt to reconquer his ancestral home that has been taken by the 'evil' Weasels and Stoats while he was incarcerated. Chapters 8 ('Toad's Adventures') and 10 ('The Further Adventures of Toad') are all about him and do hardly mention the other characters. The only two exceptions to this rule are chapters 7 ('The Piper at the Gates of Dawn') and chapter 9 ('Wayfarers All'). These chapters focus on Mole and Rat and are essentially two very short stories within the larger story of *The Wind in the Willows*.

Appendix II

Frontispiece from the first edition of *The Wind in the Willows* by Graham Robertson (London, 1908). From Robert Hemmings, 'A Taste of Nostalgia: Children's Books from the Golden Age-Carroll, Grahame, and Milne', *Children's Literature* 35 (2007), 56.

