Prikazi Reviews
Retellings of the *Faerie Queene*


*The Faerie Queene as Children’s Literature. Victorian and Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* is one of many books written by Velma Bourgeois Richmond, Professor Emerita of English at Holy Names University in Oakland, California. In comparison to her previous works, such as *Chaucer as Children’s Literature: Retellings from the Victorian and Edwardian Eras* (2004), *Shakespeare as Children’s Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (2008) and *Chivalric Stories as Children’s Literature* (2014), this study is much narrower in scope but serves as an extension of literary history. The book focuses on adaptations of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, a 16th-century English epic poem, created for children in Victorian and Edwardian England, as well as on American adaptations from the same period.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter, “Contexts and Criticism”, considers the world in which Spenser lived. The author offers explanations of the political, cultural, social and religious context of the era in which *The Faerie Queene* was created. Spenser wanted to transform classic Catholic medieval romance into something more suited to Protestantism, which was quite difficult due to the religious happenings in England at that time. Within this chapter, however, Richmond is not consistent when naming the time periods of Spenser, often switching between them.

The next two chapters – “Victorian Beginnings” and “Edwardian Extravagance” – offer examples of adaptations of *The Faerie Queene* for both adults and children. Richmond discusses the difficulty of making such adaptations since the original is too complex for adults to read, which makes it even more challenging to adapt for children. In “Victorian Beginnings” the author examines the poem as a Protestant statement and offers the titles of a few adaptations made in that period. However, she does not explain why those particular adaptations were chosen. In the third and longest chapter of the book, “Edwardian Extravagance”, the author explores the immense number of adaptations of *The Faerie Queene* published in the fifteen years before World War I. Richmond focuses on the illustrations made for literary adaptations such as those of A.G. Walker for Mary Macleod’s *Stories from the Faerie Queene* (1897) or the illustrations of Frank C. Papé.

In the fourth chapter, “American Difference”, Richmond provides an overview of the adaptations of *The Faerie Queene* made in the US, where the poem was less favoured than in Britain. Americans read Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* instead, and were less familiar with Spenser’s works. Even when Americans talked about *The Faerie Queene* it was in comparison to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which was more accessible and therefore preferred reading. On the rare occasion *The Faerie Queene* found its way into a home library collection, it was perceived merely as a work representing medieval romance.

Richmond uses the rest of the book – chapters 5 (“Schoolbooks”) and 6 (“Literary Histories”) – to discuss how *The Faerie Queene* was introduced and promoted as a
canonical work in British schools. She briefly mentions how American schoolbooks tended to overlook Spenser’s work. The epilogue mentions adaptations of *The Faerie Queene* made during the last fifty years. One of them, *The Questing Knights of the Faerie Queene* by Geraldine McCaughrean (2004), uses the characters of Britomart Britomart, a female knight, and Talus, a man of iron, to provide insight into gender. Richmond suggests that the latest adaptations of the poem give reason to believe that *The Faerie Queene* still remains a significant part of literary history.

In her well-researched book, Richmond provides an informative look into Victorian and Edwardian adaptations of *The Faerie Queene*. She contextualises Spenser’s work and offers examples of adaptations made in both England and the United States. The book is well structured and provides the reader with all the necessary information in an accessible way. Especially interesting are the author’s observations on the adaptations of *The Faerie Queene* made in the last 50 years. The first two chapters are the most informative as they introduce the social, religious, historical and political context in which Spenser wrote. As such, they will be useful for anyone who wants to find out more about chivalric romance.

Kristina Zirdum

**Child Rule and the Paradoxes of Children’s Literature**


In their elegant introduction to the recently published volume *Child Autonomy and Child Governance in Children’s Literature: Where Children Rule*, editors Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark explain why the concept of child rule in children’s literature is such a fruitful subject of study. The reason is far from simple and concerns the deeply paradoxical nature of children’s literature much debated by scholars in the field for over thirty years. Kelen and Sundmark are not the first to note that although children rarely rule their own everyday lives, stories written for and about them frequently portray them as empowered and in charge. Yet, inspired by Paul Hazard’s idea of “The Republic of Childhood” (1944), they have found a fresh way to approach the contradictory impulse at the heart of children’s literature, which is to contain childhood while simultaneously escaping it. As they put it, childhood as metaphor and social construction is “a state of unbecoming: to be a child is to be in the process of no longer being a child” (8) and, thus, children’s literature is infused by conflicting struggles to both liberate and control the child.

In addition to the introduction, the volume comprises fourteen essays more or less obviously connected to the theme of child rule. At best, this inclusive principle results in a plethora of voices and perspectives, including many delightful surprises for the reader. At worst, it leaves the reader slightly confused as to the guiding principle behind the volume as a whole. Clearly, the volume would have benefited from slightly stricter editing. For example, whereas the title states that children’s literature is at the heart of the study, many of the essays explore a variety of materials, such as comic strips, TV series, film, and religious imagery. Moreover, essay authors who write about the same texts (e.g. Carroll’s *Alice*...
books) or use the same theoretical approaches could have been encouraged to enter – at least to some extent – into dialogue with each other. These measures could have helped tie all the individual pieces together into a more self-evident whole.

Nevertheless, the volume still offers compelling reading for those interested in how children have been perceived and portrayed as powerful and autonomous agents in culture and literature. Some of the articles do this by looking back in time and reminding us of how notions of the child and childhood have kept fuelling and changing our views on children and their literature. Mavis Reimer and Charlie Peters, for example, return to the highly influential writings of the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke in order to investigate how his views on children intertwine with his theory of government. They conclude that many of the themes dominating Locke’s philosophical writings are found in his version of Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Eagle”, which shows that Locke imagined a competent child reader “capable both of close observation and of abstract thought” (28).

Emer O’Sullivan also takes a historical point of view. She traces the once so popular discourse of internationalism behind French scholar Paul Hazard’s utopian visions about children and children’s literature. Whereas Hazard’s ideas about children’s books as a utopian realm that can transcend all borders seem far too simple and essentialist today, O’Sullivan elaborates on where they originate and why his optimistic vision remained so popular for such a long time.

The concept of child rule is very evidently at the centre of Björn Sundmark’s article in which he compares a wide selection of stories about shipwrecked children finding refuge on desert islands. The aim of the article is to find out if and how these narratives conform to a child Robinsonade trope, as well as what kind of child rule they envision. In another intriguing essay, Sundmark studies a mixed selection of horror narratives (not necessarily aimed at a child audience) in which children hold the power and reign in terror. Both articles well illustrate how conflicting notions of child rule co-exist and reflect adult hopes as well as anxieties associated with children and childhood.

With her article on twentieth-century fantasy literature and girls’ empowerment through magic, Clare Bradford adds a much-welcome gender-conscious piece to the volume. Bradford studies three English-language fantasy series in which tropes of magic comment on girl protagonists’ agency and independence in the real world with varying results.

Despite its harsh subject matter, Karin Nykvist’s chapter on contemporary young adult “sick-lit” is delightful reading. Nykvist argues that the 19th-century sentimental trope of the dying child has returned in the shape of terminally ill teenagers in contemporary YA fiction. Moreover, the teenage characters’ illnesses make them exceptional, and paradoxically increase their power and agency. Coming-of-age, self-discovery, and finding autonomy are at the heart of these novels, according to Nykvist, although the young protagonists never enter adulthood.

Despite its somewhat misleading title, Zoe Jaques’ imaginative and thought-provoking article explores children’s texts by Lewis Carroll and Maurice Sendak from a post-humanist point of view, revealing a deep-set unease in the depiction of child-human and animal rule. Jaques shows that both Carroll’s Alice and Sendak’s Max are human children crowned and allowed to rule over animals and other species, yet they simultaneously critique the boundaries and dominance of human rule.
Shaping a collection of essays into a self-contained unity is by no means an easy task. The selected articles, commented on above, illustrate how – paradoxically – a generous and inclusive approach to the subject matter of child autonomy and child governance is, in fact, one of the volume’s best features. Apart from the texts singled out above, readers can also delve into enlightening discussions of the ambiguous religious imagery of the Christ child (Davis), a carnivalesque Polish novel in which an adult is temporarily transformed into a child king (Czernow), play as a child-ruled space (Kelen), child rule in a contemporary comic strip and a popular TV series for children (Ommundsen), how picturebooks allow and encourage agency among child readers (Yokota), and the importance of playtime (Chengcheng & Malilang).

Maria Lassén-Seger

A Scandinavian View on Children’s Media in Retrospect


This book gives a nuanced and detailed account of the sometimes heated public and academic debates on children’s literature, media, and culture in Scandinavia in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s. Drawing on a voluminous archive of newspaper editorials, transnational conference proceedings, academic articles, and books, Jensen elucidates not only the immediate issues under debate, but also how they were informed by contemporary social anxieties and by shifting understandings of children’s needs. This involves contemporary understandings of childhood, as well as ideas about parental authority, the role of experts, and the question of the purpose of children’s media.

This approach has the signal advantage that it makes decades-old debates intelligible and thereby avoids the pitfall of seeing only incomprehensible moral panic. For example, in Scandinavia in the 1950s, there was, as in the USA and elsewhere in Europe, a debate about the appropriateness of comics for children, although the terms of this controversy were particularly Scandinavian. Superhero comics such as Superman, Batman, and the Phantom were popular with children, but educational experts regarded them with suspicion. These comics were seen as too capitalist and were thought to undermine democratic values; they diverted children from higher quality reading such as classic children’s books.

Sixty years later, the comics in question may look rather innocuous, but Jensen’s analysis helps us to see why many people were troubled by them. With World War II still fresh in people’s memories, comics that celebrated superpowered vigilantes who acted with apparent contempt for democratic principles and due process looked very dubious. Putting myself in their shoes, I find it hard to dismiss their anxiety that these comics might encourage children to adopt anti-democratic attitudes, even if there was a large dose of paternalism in the belief that parents needed expert advice to choose appropriate reading matter for their children. As the most popular comics were American imports, there was also concern that native Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian cultural traditions might be drowned out. Anyone who has walked past a Swedish multiplex in recent years, where American blockbusters
often outnumber Scandinavian productions 13 or 14 to 1, would hesitate to dismiss this concern.

This links to another theme of these debates, the purpose of children’s books or, with the advent of television, children’s media. In the 1950s, literature enjoyed a much higher status than comics, and classic children’s books were seen to transmit Scandinavian cultural traditions and thus assist in children’s enculturation as good democratic citizens. The 1960s raised a radical challenge to this model of children’s culture and the implicit value it placed on authority and tradition. Inspired by Marxism and the revolutionary fervour of 1968, a new generation of academics, together with some children’s writers, argued that the favoured children’s classics of the 1950s were reactionary in that they sought to transmit rather than challenge tradition. The works of Tove Jansson and Astrid Lindgren, for example, with their use of fantasy, induced a false sense of reality in children. Children were to be seen as citizens with their own agency who needed accurate knowledge of the contemporary world. They should be empowered to challenge the reactionary culture and politics of the adult world. This led to a shift away from fantasy and towards social realism in children’s books that lasted through the 1970s. The 1960s also saw the emergence of a broader “children’s culture”. Film, and especially television, began to dominate children’s leisure.

The 1980s saw a return to the idea of childhood as a time of vulnerability, with children requiring protection from a wicked world. The growing domination of home video with easily accessible horror films and pornography caused increasing concern, not least because children’s viewing was slipping out of adult control. But whereas in the 1950s pedagogical experts regarded parents with some suspicion in enabling children’s bad choice of reading matter, in the 1980s parents came to be seen as the guardians of children’s well-being. In part, this was a practical matter: who else could ensure that children would not watch inappropriate material in the privacy of their own homes when nobody was there to supervise them? Living now in the age of smart phones, this feels very familiar.

Although the arguments over children’s media mutated and evolved over this time, there are also consistent themes and ongoing questions that are contested anew in each period. These include children as agents able to make their own choices versus children as vulnerable innocents in need of protection. There were also varying ideas about who was to protect children: a cadre of experts, psychologists, and librarians, or their parents? It is also fascinating to see how debates over children mirror broader social anxieties and the way those engaged in the debates project their own needs onto children. While the 1960s’ radicals had a point when it came to challenging tradition and the assumption that tradition is automatically good, they projected their own needs and fears onto children no less than anybody else, seeing them as instinctive revolutionaries who, given the chance, would overthrow the state.

This book is most welcome. It makes available to the English-speaking world – which is often a bit self-obsessed, culturally-speaking – a clear, meticulous and nuanced account of recognisable debates motivated by all-too-recognisable anxieties, but informed by different historical experiences and cultural assumptions.

Theo Malekin
An Inexhaustible Source of Creativity and Imagination


Through its various aspects, such as developing literacy, informing or encouraging learners’ imagination, literature has been an omnipresent concept in education as well as in everyday life. As education paradigms are in constant change, teachers face many challenges in their search for innovative approaches to help their students achieve the educational aims of the 21st century. Renowned American experts on children’s literature and teaching, Miriam G. Martinez, Junko Yokota and Charles Temple have made a valuable contribution to this topic by compiling and sharing many theoretical and practical ideas under the title *Thinking and Learning Through Children’s Literature*. Published in 2017 by Rowman & Littlefield, the book addresses many aspects of teaching literature to children, and includes both the theory and practical application.

Martinez, Yokota and Temple have found an efficient way to reach everyone who is in search of facts about children’s literature and ideas for its use in school practice. Their use of language and their decision to address the reader in the second person helps give the impression of a pleasant and supportive teacher-to-teacher exchange of ideas. Still, its scholarly and theoretical aspect is extensive and soundly supported by many references to other works and research. Throughout the book’s five chapters, the authors present a well-structured set of topics which range from explaining specific reading processes and basic genre categorisations, to describing practical solutions for motivating and involving children in literature or integrating it in teaching across the curriculum.

Reading is a deep and complex process, and understanding this process can be a challenging, but also an interesting journey. The first chapter starts by describing the goals of 21st-century reading, such as making personal connections to texts, developing deep understanding and critical thinking, recognising craft and structure, and creating intertextual links. The authors point out the importance of meaningfulness in encountering literature by describing the process of literary meaning-making. In all these analyses, they focus on the Reader Response theory and its different developmental, social, cultural and textual aspects. Each chapter ends with a list of recommended works for young readers (accompanied by short plot summaries and indicators of age suitability), references and resources, as well as a section entitled “Want to know more?”, which includes activities and discussion ideas for practitioners.

The extensive and lucid description of the reading process is followed by an overview of the main categories of children’s literature: fiction, nonfiction and poetry. In the second chapter, entitled “How Literature Works”, the authors describe various literary genres, emphasising the characteristics which determine their functions and readers’ responses, such as plot structure or visual elements. Each genre is illustrated with examples from children’s literature, mostly focusing on American works. The chapter also includes well-structured charts with key terms which are clearly and concisely explained, and short descriptions of selected literary works. In the conclusion, the authors state that this chapter should serve as a foundation for selecting books for students, as well as for planning teaching units.
One of the most useful aspects of *Thinking and Learning Through Children’s Literature* is its abundance of examples, both practical and literary. Throughout the book, there are specific sections in every chapter which function as practical guidelines for teaching. The sections entitled “Don’t Miss…” include important works of children’s literature, while “Technology Tips”, “Try This”, and “Reaching All Students” suggest possible digital materials or other teaching and communication ideas. The sections entitled “What Does the Expert Say?” include interesting interviews with other authors or teachers, while “What Do You Think?” presents practical questions for readers’ own critical consideration. After chapter two, there is a special section which provides a comprehensive description of the picturebook *Freedom in Congo Square* by C.B. Weatherford and R.G. Christie, as well as a detailed discussion of the historical context it describes, and a consideration of its visual and textual elements.

In their work, Martinez, Yokota and Temple highlight the importance of a literature-rich school context, and of teachers setting good examples. The following two chapters are an extensive source of practical ideas about working with literature in the classroom. The third chapter, “Inviting Children in to Literature”, suggests how to create an everyday school environment which promotes reading. Here, the reader can discover ideas for organising a classroom library, learn about the importance of reading aloud or storytelling, and the criteria for selecting classroom-appropriate books. The following chapter, “Let’s Talk About Literature”, includes guidelines for deeper discussions and for promoting an understanding of literary works among students. It also refers to the second chapter by further explaining the ideas for exploring the main features of literature, such as settings, characters, plots, themes and different points of view. In this chapter, the authors point out the importance and possibilities of literary response, for instance through dramatization, writing or discussion. The included ideas, goals and desirable outcomes are based on the Common Core Standards, the current educational standard in the United States.

Modern approaches to teaching advocate a holistic perspective, which is also reflected in the integration of a diverse educational content. Literature holds great potential for such strategies and methods, both through correlation with other subjects or taken as a focus in language teaching. The last chapter, “Literary and Content Units”, deals with the role of literature in the general curriculum. International readers may find the authors’ claim that the literature curriculum has been neglected in American education interesting, especially when the book makes it clear how rich the American children’s literature market is. In response to this situation, the authors highlight the importance of a well-organised teaching unit dedicated to literature, offering advice on planning, developing different types of literary units, and various activities. In addition, they share ideas and tips for determining goals, selecting appropriate books and creating efficiently structured content-based units.

A prominent trait of this book is its strong educational and cultural rootedness within the American context. Firstly, the reader can observe the high degree of autonomy of the American education system, seen in the amount of free choice teachers have. Most of the literary examples are those of American authors and may therefore be unavailable or even unknown to readers from other countries. Besides, the American cultural context is very heterogeneous, which is reflected in the many practical ideas and literary topics which are discussed. All of this could present an obstacle for the international reader, but, on the other
hand, it can be perceived as an opportunity for learning about a different educational system and drawing comparisons in order to generate new and effective teaching solutions.

Exploring *Thinking and Learning Through Children’s Literature* can show how teaching literature to children is a multi-layered process, rich in challenges and creative potential. The variety of ideas, advice and resources, supported with a clear, positive and motivating expression, make the book accessible and understandable to both practitioners in need of new knowledge and students and researchers of children’s literature. While they do suggest many practical ideas, Martinez, Yokota and Temple believe that using this book should only be a starting point in exploring possibilities for raising lifelong readers. Teaching literature to children, as the title itself says, should be a never-ending process of both thinking and learning.

*Katarina Kralj*

Dnevnik kao književna vrsta


Objavljanjem znanstvenih radova o djelima koja su namijenjena djeci i mladima pokazuje se da takva književnost itekako otvara prostor za nova književnoteorijska proučavanja. Samim time, dječja književnost i književnost za mlade otkriva svoje vrijednosti.

Dragica Dragun autorica je koja je u svojoj knjizi *Dnevnička proza u hrvatskoj književnosti za djecu i mlade* u središte svojega znanstvenoga rada stavila upravo djela koja se tiču dječje i adolescentske publike. U „Uvodnoj bilješci“ autorica se prisjeća zgodu s putovanja na kojemu je kupila dnevnik. Iako nije vodila bilješke, dnevnik ju je zainteresirao za čitanje autobiografske proze što je prvo rezultiralo doktorskom disertacijom o dnevničkoj prozi, a naposljetku i objavljivanjem knjige.


U drugoj cjelini naslova „Dnevnička proza za djecu i mlade“ Dragun definira korpus od 22 naslova namijenjenih djeci i mladima koji će poslužiti za analiziranje dnevničkoga diskursa. Djela obuhvaćaju vremenski raspon od 1938. do 2015. godine čiji niz započinje djelom Zore Ruklić *Iz dnevnika jedne djevojčice*. Prije samih analiza i interpretacija dnevničkih tekstova, autorica iznosi svoja opažanja o pojavu dnevničke sintagme u naslovima djela. Naime, konstatira da se u dnevničkoj prozi za djecu i mlade dnevnička sintagma javlja u samome naslovu ili podnaslovu, a ponekad je izostavljena što potkrijepljuje
primjerima. Proza je analizirana kronološki s obzirom na godine prvih izdanja, a fokus je
stavljen na tekstove objavljene nakon 2000. godine. Kako pojašnjava, uzrok toga jest sve
veća pojavnost dnevničkih tekstova u suvremenome vremenu, kao i porast zanimanja za
njihovim teorijskim i analitičkim proučavanjem.

U posljednjoj cjelini naslova „O modelima dnevničke proze za djecu i mlade“ Dragun
sažeto predstavlja zaključke dobivene analitičkim razmatranjima djela usustavljajući
svojevrsne modele dnevničke proze. Pritom izdvaja tipove kronologijske organizacije
dnevničkoga diskursa, osvrće se na tematsku razinu djela, karakterizaciju dnevničkih
subjekata, odnos autor/pripovjedač/lik, metatekstualne dnevničke dijelove te interakciju
diskursnih obilježja dnevnika i fikcionalnih žanrova.

Znanstveni rad Dragice Dragun predstavljen u knjizi Dnevnička proza u hrvatskoj
književnosti za djecu i mlade zasigurno predstavlja vrijedan doprinos kako u kontekstu
znanosti o književnosti uopće, tako i u kontekstu proučavanja dječje književnosti. Ipak,
primjetna je nedostatnost autoričine slobode u konstruiranju vlastitih pristupa što je iskazano
kroz gotovo posvemašnje oslanjanje na već postojeću teoriju o autobiografskom diskursu.
No, objedinjavanje referentne literature u teorijskim dijelovima knjige, kao i analitička
promišljanja dnevničke proze pružaju dobar oslonac za neka buduća istraživanja, ali i bolje
razumijevanje kompleksnosti autobiografske proze.

Kristina Slunjski