CHILDREN’S LITERATURE / – Peter Hunt

INTRODUCTION

Children’s Literature refers to marginalized books and childhood (both books and period of life – “a state we grow away from” – CULTURALLY marginalized phenomenon)

– It is not the “property” of any group or discipline, but it is enough attractive and interesting to students of literature, education, history, psychology, art, popular culture, and media.

- IT’S BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS between disciplines and types of readers

- IT IS ONE OF THE LIVELIEST and most original of the assets and the site of the crudest commercial exploitation. Children’s books do not exist in the vacuum – they HAVE REAL READERS AND VISIBLE, CONSEQUENTIOAL USES.

- Children’s book are complex and their study infinitely varies (“But it’s only a children’s book”, “Children won’t see that in it”, “You are making it more difficult than it should be”) Children’s Literature is important and yet it is not.

- The prevailing attitude – it is that Children’s Literature is worth reading, discussing and thinking about FOR ADULTS

- We should recognize the problematic nature of words:

- LITERATURE – audience, reading skill, needs

- CHILDREN / CHILDHOOD

HISTORY (IDEOLOGY) POLITICS

- Children’s books are a part of THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURES OF THE WORLD (ideologically constructed history)

- Constructions of Children’s Literature bring:

a) theAnglo-centric view point

b)the male view point

c)the feminist, childist approach not to be written

- At the beginning 18th century there were the first steps to ensure to children’s books to appear (publishers Mary Cooper and John Newbery). – English books dominate until today – eg. in France half of the published books were translated from English.

- The earliest book were based on traditional material – overfly they DIDACTIC. – Children’s literature in its modern form is a 19th phenomenon.

- Censorship of values was present all the time.

Reading Children’s Literature

- The study of Children’s Literature involves the audience – the child, the reader and the circumstance of reading.

- Text is context; and Storytelling is very important.

Integral part of studying Children’s Literature is how a story is communicated – by the spoken or the written word

- by picture of by symbol

- by circumstances of communicator

- the possible effect.

THE USES OF CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

- They may be pleasant but they have to be useful / good for readers.

ESSENTIALS

Children’s literature and Children’s Literature Criticism define themselves as existing because of and for “children” and it is these CHILDREN who receive the position of – and therefore source of - conflict for children, author, and critics.

Historic construction – Children’s Literature – Cultural Studies

19th century Maria Edgeworth, - Kipling’s Mowgli, - Dickon in *Secret Garden*

Romantic reevaluation of childhood can be seen in Worthvorth’s child of nature,

(Fred Ingles) CULTURE is “an ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves”.

- Our historically changing identity is formed from the NARRATIVE tradition of which we are part.

The Impossibility of Innocence – Ideology, Politics and Children’s Literature

- Children’s texts are not simple, innocent, but rather they are at the crossroads of all other courses.

It belongs to: moral purpose and didactics, ideology representation of gender/ Minority groups

NARRATOR

Wolfgang Iser – Story readers

The construction of the reader (IMPLIED READER)

1980’s – children as character innocent and faraway from of sexuality or politics

1990’s – complex reader

READERS, TEXT AND CONTEXT – Reader – Response Criticism

How readers understand text and how we can elicit and interpret individual response

1. Who is the implied child reader inscribed in the text?

2. How do actual child readers respond during the process of reading?

From Sex-role Stereotyping to Subjectivity Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism teaches readers to see and hear stories of women and children in ways not understand before.

14. Bibliotherapy – Can Stories Steal?

(reader response is – a form of psycho-therapy)

- Literature saves lives!

JACK ZIPES

The more we invest in children, the more we destroy their future.

Childhood – wide marketplace

Children’s Literature does not exists?

“Children” do not exist

CHILDREN; CHILDHOOD – social construct.

There is no literature – it is imaginary.

It’s hard for a children’s book to be a book in canon…

Good Children’s Literature – produced by adults, criteria by adults

For us, stories are marketable commodities and are to be used the market the interest of big corporations or to promote ourselves.