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“No Frigate Like a Book” —幼児期における詩との出会い—

ケネス・O・アンダースン

“No Frigate Like a Book”—Discovering Poetry in Childhood—

Kenneth O. ANDERSON

これはRobert Louis Stevenson, Walter de la Mare, Lord Houghton, Ludwig BemelmansそしてDr. Seussによって書かれた、子供達に想像力の駆使を促す日常逃避のような、子供のための詩の本の魅力を検討した論文であり、大人をも引き付けるこれらの本に潜在する意味についても論じるものである。

There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away
Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of Prancing Poetry -
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll -
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the human Soul!

Emily Dickinson, c. 1873

I have often wondered when it was that a page of prancing poetry first drew my attention and bade me mount for a journey to other worlds. I know it was in childhood, for I remember reading poems by Robert Louis Stevenson and Walter de la Mare, among others, at a very early age. There were also, of course, the rhymes of Ludwig Bemelmans and Dr. Seuss, which continue to capture so many.

The rhymes and meters of poems entrance the ear; children love Mother Goose rhymes, and if they are lucky this love leads them to other poems. But it is also the idea of escape that appeals: Many children who are not very happy at either home or school find that reading poetry offers an immediate re-

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lease, a sudden lift of the spirits into worlds far more attractive than the ones they are forced to inhabit most of their waking hours. The rhythms of poetry work like an incantation, putting a spell on readers which often lasts after the poem has been read, and which lingers in the mind.

Donald Justice’s poem “Houses” (Peck, ed., 1976) expresses well the sense of oppressiveness that for many has been the essence of family life as they grow up and away from it:

Time and the weather wear away
The houses that our fathers built.
Their ghostly furniture remains:
All the sad sofas we have stained
With tears of boredom and of guilt,
The fraying mottoes, the stopped clocks...
And still sometimes these tired shapes
Taunt the damp parlors of the heart.
What Sunday prisons they recall!
And what miraculous escapes!

Poetry offers miraculous escapes to children. In this essay I propose to look at a few of the poems which helped me escape in childhood (and even now) and examine a few of the ways in which they accomplish that.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Many of the poems in Stevenson’s seminal *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (Stevenson, 1885/1952) deal with escape. Stevenson, of course, being an invalid as a child, was often literally trapped at home, as he shows in his poem “Bed in Summer.” But his persona in the poems, even when bedridden, still manages to escape through the use of his imagination: through playing with his toys, as in “The Land of Counterpane” and “Block City,” through reading books (“Picture-Books in Winter” and “The Land of Story Books”), and in dreams (“The Land of Nod,” “My Bed is a Boat”). When he is able to go out, he still wonders what lies beyond his horizons: foreign lands and fairy land (“Foreign Lands”), where his paper boats will come ashore (“Where Go the Boats?”), foreign ports (“Pirate Story”), and so on.

One of my favorite of these poems is “Travel.” This poem certainly lit a fire in me as a child to travel the world and experience its multifarious wonders. The poem begins in a formal way and is incantatory:

I should like to rise and go

Where the golden apples grow...

The image of golden apples is attractive to a child, tantalizing, even though he or she may not be aware of all the allusions that may come to them later as adult readers: the fruit of the Garden of Eden, the apples of gold in pictures of silver of Proverbs 25:11, the golden apples of the garden of the Hesperides, the “golden apples of the sun” in Yeats’ “The Song of Wandering Aengus,” and so on. The mellifluous rhythm also appeals: the trochaic tetrameter with its catalectic lines, the assonance (i in “like” and “rise,” o in “go,” “golden” and “grow”). There is also the condensation of language, as in “parrot islands,” the allusion to Robinson Crusoe (“Lonely Crusoes building boats”), an allusion many children will be aware of or will appreciate when they find out what it means. In fact, coming back to the poem as an adult, one becomes increasingly aware and appreciative of how great the poem is: able to speak vividly to both children and adults, inexhaustible in its riches (as all good poems are). It is able to give even a child a sense of the passing of time, and the pathos of that, as the child of the poem imagines a deserted city in the desert where “All its children, sweep and prince,/[have] Grown to manhood ages since”; and where, when he has grown up and is able to travel to such a city himself, he will “...in a corner find the toys/ Of the old Egyptian boys.” A sense of loss is there, as well as the excitement of finding a connection to people like oneself, though long vanished. This sense of loss may be, to the child reader, partly or wholly unconscious; but it is there. Poems such as “Travel” prepare children both for the excitements and pleasures that the future holds and also for the sadnesses that it will bring. They do not try to hide the world from children, but hold it out to them and help them face it with courage.

Another poem in *Garden* which makes one aware of the vanished past and the sense of loss such awareness brings is the last poem in the book, “To Any Reader.” Stevenson tells the reader that he may see “through the windows of this book” the child that was Stevenson himself, playing in a garden of the past, and that this child

... does not hear; he will not look,
Nor yet be lured out of his book.
For long ago, the truth to say,
He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
That lingers in the garden there.

Through such simple words, Stevenson conveys to the child truths s/he needs to know and must eventually face head on in a way that the child can handle them. The words are sad, but also calm and matter-of-fact; their poetry is a solace, and teaches us that memories can be saved and the past com-

memorated through art.

Walter de la Mare; *Come Hither*

W.H.Auden highly commended Walter de la Mare's poems for children:

As a revelation of the wonders of the English Language, de la Mare's poems for children are unrivaled...their rhythms are as subtle as they are varied. Like all good poems, of course, they do more than train the ear, they also teach sensory attention and courage...de la Mare's description of birds, beasts, and natural phenomena are always sharp and accurate, and he never prettifies experience or attempts to conceal from the young that terror and nightmare are as essential characteristics of human existence as love and sweet dreams. (Auden,1973)

De la Mare himself wrote in an introduction to a collection of his poetry for children that a good poem read in childhood may, when one is older,

take to itself a life-givingness, a music and a depth of meaning that one never perceived in it at all when one read it as a child. And some poems go on delicately changing all that they share with us whenever they are read over again, just as the flowers in a garden, with their light and shadow, their shapes, and the rain or dew or sunshine on them, change with every hour of a summer day.

(De la Mare, *Collected Rhymes and Verses*, 1944/1970)

I know that, as a child, the sounds of the words and the images they employed evoked in me emotional responses that I wasn't always consciously able to understand: a feeling of lightheartedness, for example, or, conversely, of sadness. If I returned again and again to de la Mare's poems as a child it was because I wished recreate those emotions in myself: They were an essential part of my flight to another world. And I feel the same emotions when I read these poems today – emotions broader and deeper, perhaps, than the ones I felt as a child, but sprung from those: “the Child is father of the Man.”

I wish there were time and space enough to discuss every poem of de la Mare's, but that not being the case I am forced to limit myself to a very few. There are poems which express the desire for far-away places: “Araby,” “Arabia,” “Tartary,” and so on; ones that celebrate the calm and quiet pleasures of just being still, watching the natural world, woolgathering (such as “Summer Evening,” “The Little Green Orchard”); the eery (“Jim Jay,” “John Mouldy,” “The Listeners,” etc.); and many other varieties of poems. I will briefly comment on three.

“Bunches of Grapes” is a poem in which three children – Timothy, Elaine, and Jane – express their preferences in food, flowers and transportation. Children love to eat and to talk about food (as do many adults), and about their likes and dislikes. Reading this poem encourages a child to both imagine

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the choices in the poem and then compare them to his or her own; it also leads the child to go beyond the poem and think about other choices. What also appeals to me as an adult reader is reflecting how the choices Timothy, Elaine and Jane make reflect their personalities. This poem inspires cheerfulness and an appreciation of the goodness of common things. It is deceptively simple; one only has to try to write a similar poem to begin to realize how much skill and artistry are embedded in the poem, as beauty is embedded in, and inseparable from, a flower.

Another poem, “Nicholas Nye,” is tuned to the deep-seated human desire to be able to break down the walls of human isolation to share our thoughts with animals. Very small children, in fact, seem to believe they can communicate with their pets or toy animals. The narrator of “Nicholas Nye” recalls childhood hours he spent in an orchard with Nicholas Nye, a donkey. Although he does not claim to have actually been able to converse with Nicholas Nye, he does say that “over the grass would seem to pass...something much better than words between me/And Nicholas Nye.” There is a mutual bond of empathy between them, so that Nicholas Nye would “seem to be smiling at me” or, at other times, to “sometimes stoop and sigh,/And turn his head, as if he said,/ ‘Poor Nicholas Nye!’” Yet, in the end, the narrator must return to his home at twilight and leave Nicholas Nye in his, where “in the moonlight, dark as dew,/Asking not wherefore nor why,/Would brood like a ghost, and as still as a post,/Old Nicholas Nye.” In the end each is alone, although one difference between humans and animals seems to be that the animal does not question his place in the scheme of things, nor why it must be so.

A third poem, “The Song of the Mad Prince,” would seem to be referring, on one level, to Hamlet and Ophelia. I didn’t realize that as a child, but it didn’t detract from my appreciation of the poem in the slightest, nor need it for any reader. The title of the poem tells us that its narrator is the mad prince. For once I will quote de la Mare in full, to give an idea of the haunting beauty and strangeness of his poetry:

Who said ‘Peacock Pie’?
The Old King to the sparrow:
Who said ‘Crops are ripe’?
Rust to the harrow:
Who said, ‘Where sleeps she now?’
Where rests she now her head,
Bathed in eve’s loveliness’ –
That’s what I said.

Who said, ‘Ay, mum’s the word’;

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Sexton to willow:

Who said, 'Green dusk for dreams,

Moss for a pillow'?

Who said, 'All Time's delight

Hath she for narrow bed;

Life's troubled bubble broken'? -

That's what I said.

De la Mare mentions peacock pie in another poem, “The Three Beggars,” and in fact published a collection of poems for children titled *Peacock Pie* in 1913 (De la Mare, 1944/1970), but I doubt if these instances are relevant to “The Song of the Mad Prince”. De la Mare lets us hear the mad prince's song without explanation; it is up to us to find meaning and meanings in it. Is “the old King to the sparrow” an oblique reference to the Mother Goose pie of four-and-twenty blackbirds set before a king - or does it mean something else? Why would the King say such a phrase to a sparrow? What rust says to the harrow seems a bit easier to interpret: The harrow isn't being used and the crops are going to waste - but why? Why is the harvest being neglected? The lines that the mad prince himself claims could possibly refer to Ophelia, who drowned herself in sorrow at Hamlet's rejection (and thus increased the madness of Hamlet - the mad prince - by adding remorse for Ophelia's?). The sexton could be the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, fated to bury not only Yorick, but Ophelia and Hamlet as well.

But this is only speculation, and in fact to tie the poem too closely to *Hamlet* detracts from its beauty. It does not matter who the mad prince “really” is; the mystery of his madness, his sadness, is the mystery of any of us, to ourselves and to other human beings, turning our sadness and our wonder into poetry in order to be able to bear them. The carefully constructed beauty of the poem, its haunting images, both console us and please us with their beauty.

De la Mare was also responsible for putting together one of the most pleasing anthologies of poetry ever published, *Come Hither* (De la Mare, 1923/1973). He introduced it with a story about a boy named Simon looking for a place called East Dene; a woman named Miss Taroone who lives in a house called Thrae but also speaks of a family mansion called Sure Vine; and her relative Mr. Nahum. As Auden says (Auden, 1973), the thrust of the story is that human beings

...want a poem to be a beautiful object, a verbal Garden of Eden which, by its formal perfection, keeps alive in us the hope that there exists a state of joy without evil or suffering which it can and should be our destiny to attain. At the same time, we look to a poem for some kind of illumination about our present wandering condition, since, without self-insight and knowledge of the world, we must err blindly with little chance of realizing our hope. We expect a poem to tell us some home

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truth, however minor, and, as we know, most home truths are neither pretty or pleasant.

I first read this anthology in childhood and later, as an adult, bought my own copy. One of the pleasures of re-reading its pages was to rediscover, with renewed awareness and appreciation, some of the beautiful Mother Goose rhymes that had been read to me when I was a child and that first instilled in me a desire for poetry. One of these was “Boys and Girls, come out to play.” The desire to escape one’s bed at night and seek adventure outside is a childhood desire which often finds voice in poetry (see, for example, Stevenson’s “Escape at Bedtime” and De la Mare’s “No Bed”). Poems which deal with this desire also help children to see the night as friendly and unthreatening rather than fearful and nightmarish.

Another such Mother Goose rhyme was “I had a little nut tree”:

I had a little nut tree,
Nothing would it bear,
But a silver nutmeg,
And a golden pear.
The King of Spain’s daughter
Came to visit me,
And all because of
My little nut tree.
I skipped over water
I danced over sea,
And all the birds in the air
Could not catch me.

I still think this is one of the most beautiful poems ever written. Not only did its beautiful images appeal to me as a child, it also allowed me to identify with the speaker of the poem (unconsciously, no doubt) and feel that some day I, too, would own something precious and magical; would be visited by a beautiful princess; would be graceful and excel at something; would be freer than the birds to wander wherever I wanted.

In addition, de la Mare’s anthology introduced me to the lines that Edith Sitwell appended to the original poem. She must have been entranced by the poem as well, and wanted to try her hand at matching its beautiful lines with her own. But she changed the note of elation in the original to one of melancholy, as the narrator of the poem falls in love with the King of China’s daughter but finds his love unrequited. And this struck a responsive chord in me too, as I grew older and came to realize that dreams would not always be achieved easily, if at all.

Come Hither is full of haunting poems, many by poets who would be all but forgotten if it were not for this anthology: “Small Fountains,” by Lascelles Abercrombie; “Boats at Night,” by Edward Shanks (which in thought, if not expression, is very like Huckleberry Finn’s musings on the beauty of the Mississippi River at night); “Ecstasy” and “Romance,” by Walter J. Turner (the latter similar in spirit to de la Mare’s “Arabia”); “The Old Ships,” by James Elroy Flecker; “Flannan Isle” and “The Parrots,” by Wilfrid Gibson; “The Moon-Child,” by Fiona Macleod (William Sharp); “Time, You Old Gipsy Man,” by Ralph Hodgson; “The Deserted House,” by Mary Coleridge; “Birthright” and “Deer” by John Drinkwater (“Moonlit Apples” is another favorite poem of mine by Drinkwater which somehow escaped this anthology). There are, of course, well-known poems and authors included as well; and the whole adds up to a treasure which someone who cares about poetry will refer to again and again.

“A Child's Song”

There is a poem I wish to include here which I loved as a child but was never able to find in any anthology in print nor anywhere on the Internet. I finally secured a copy by ordering an out-of-print collection which included it: *The Poetical Works of Lord Houghton* (Houghton, 1876). Although you can find the first stanza of the poem, “A Child’s Song,” in *Bartlett’s Quotations*, the whole poem has regrettably disappeared from view by all but the most determined seekers. Yet it is a poem I am glad to have found and do not wish to be lost. Here it is:

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving?

Over the sea.

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, whom are you loving?

All that love me.

Are you not tired with rolling, and never

Resting to sleep?

Why look so pale, and so sad, as forever

Wishing to weep?

Ask me not this, little child, if you love me;

You are too bold;

I must obey my dear Father above me,

And do as I’m told.

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Lady Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving?

Over the sea.

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, whom are you loving?

All that love me.

I felt the sadness of this poem as a child, but was also consoled by it. I have always felt sad when I have looked at the moon – sad and happy at the same time – but did not understand why as a child. (Even now I am far from understanding completely my emotional responses to the moon.) This poem reassured me when I was very young that other people felt the same way. It was all right to feel sad; it was a natural feeling, and wasn't going to kill you. The poem also made me realize that I wasn't the only one who didn't understand why the moon had existed for so long, and would continue to exist long after I was gone. And the poem gave me the comfort of feeling (as all humans desire to feel) that my love for the moon and other things of this world was not unrequited; that they, somehow, also felt something for me.

The poem also jibed with what I was taught as a child to be a Christian view of life (and which I still believe): that all human beings, to one extent or another, share the fate of St. Peter as it was told to him by Christ:

In all truth I tell you,
when you were young
you put on your own belt
and walked where you liked;
but when you grow old
you will stretch out your hands,
and somebody else will put a belt round you
and take you where you would rather not go.

(John 21:18, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1985)

Thus the Lady Moon must do as her fate demands; and I realized as a child that I would not ever be totally free to do anything I pleased. This was and is a hard lesson to learn, but a necessary one. It is important to test one's limits, but also to realize that there are limits; to strive for freedom, but not be disheartened by failure. Like the poem, which circles back to its beginning, one finds recurrent patterns in life, ever widening circles of experience, knowledge and understanding that retain their beauty and mystery even as they ripple outward. A feeling of being not entirely free may be an unhappy one; but the other side of the coin is that one feels connected to something greater than one-

self, a part of all things; and this feeling of union with the universe is comforting.

Madeline

Ludwig Bemelman's *Madeline* books have survived both a terrible movie version of them (*Madeline*, 1998), taped versions of the books with mediocre songs, and inferior additions to the series by Bemelmans' grandson, John Bemelmans Marciano. (However, Marciano did write a wonderful book about his grandfather, *Bemelmans: The Life and Art of Madeline's Creator*, published in 1999, for which a *Madeline* fan must be grateful.) Bemelmans' brilliant artistry and color, his brisk and poetic storytelling have ensured that the *Madeline* books will be perennially popular with both children and adult readers.

Bemelmans himself wrote about how he first came to create *Madeline* in an essay first published in *The New Yorker* and now available in the delightful *Tell Them It Was Wonderful: Selected Writings of Ludwig Bemelmans* (Bemelmans, 1985/1987), which includes an introduction by his widow, Madeleine. In the essay, “The Isle of God (or *Madeline's* Origin)”, Bemelmans tells how he based *Madeline* on a little girl he saw in a hospital where he was being treated for an accident, on an island where he was vacationing with his family in the Bay of Biscay, off the west coast of France. He decided *Madeline* should live in Paris, and the first book, *Madeline*, was published in 1939. Bemelmans continues,

It took me about ten years to think of the next one, which was *Madeline's Rescue*. One day, after that was finished and in print, I stood and looked down at the Seine opposite Notre Dame. Some little boys were pointing at something floating in the river. One of them shouted: “Ah, there comes the wooden leg of my grandfather.” I looked at the object that was approaching and discovered that in my book I had the Seine flowing in the wrong direction. (Bemelmans, 1985/1987, p.166)

No matter. It still won the Caldecott Medal in 1954. It also, like all the books in the *Madeline* series, offered enchanting visions of Paris that sparked in me, as I'm sure it did in its other child readers, an ardent desire to some day see the wonders of Paris for myself.

But the most appealing thing about the *Madeline* books, of course, is their main character, *Madeline*. Bemelmans said that “his creation was a combination of his mother, wife, and daughter, but certainly it was also part Bemelmans himself—the smallest in class, the one always in trouble” (Marciano, 1999). Being the smallest is part of *Madeline's* appeal to children. Being small themselves, they are often picked on and ordered about by people bigger than they are. It is gratifying for them to see someone like themselves cause trouble and get away with it (*Madeline* shares this ability to come

out on top with the kinds of characters Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton often played).

I will look briefly at *Madeline* (1939/1986), which received a Caldecott Honor. As with the other *Madeline* books, it is written in irregular iambic meter. The lines are simple but vivid, moving along at a brisk pace:

In an old house in Paris
that was covered with vines
lived twelve little girls
in two straight lines...
They left the house
at half past nine
in two straight lines
in rain or shine –
the smallest one
was Madeline.

The “old house in Paris” is a boarding house where Madeline and the other little girls are sent for a Catholic education by Miss Clavel, a nun. The story in *Madeline* is very simple: Madeline comes down with appendicitis and has to be taken to a hospital to have her appendix taken out. Miss Clavel and the other girls come to visit Madeline in the hospital to offer their condolences, only to find that she is not suffering at all. She’s been given a lot of toys, candy and a dollhouse from her father, and she proudly displays to them the scar left by her operation. As a result, all the other little girls cry, “Boohoo,/ we want to have our appendix out, too!” Madeline’s bravery and good fortune appeal to children, for Madeline demonstrates to them how even adversity may be a blessing in disguise.

Even though *Madeline* is a story in which all the characters (except for the doctor who operates on Madeline) are female, it appeals to both girls and boys. The fact that Madeline is as fearless as any boy, eager to face new experiences, and can stand up to authority figures (“She was not afraid of mice –/ she loved winter, snow, and ice./ To the tiger in the zoo/ Madeline just said, ‘Pooh-pooh,’/ and nobody knew so well/ how to frighten Miss Clavel”), makes her a role model for both sexes. Madeline even faces down a boy who is cruel to animals in *Madeline and the Bad Hat* (1956), succeeding in getting him to change his ways, after which they become the best of friends. Madeline’s example is especially notable for the times in which the books were written, when both men and women had a lot less freedom of choice and were expected to conform to certain stereotypes. Like all good children’s books (especially *Mary Poppins*, *Winnie-the Pooh*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and the *Jungle Books*, the Disney films of which are travesties), the *Madeline* books will survive mistreatment and continue to in-

spire generations of future readers.

Dr. Seuss

The Dr. Seuss books of Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss was his pen name) have as one of their main themes, in common with other books discussed in this article, the triumph of individual imagination over the banality of everyday life. They are quite a bit different in tone however: brash, colorful to the point of being garish, rambunctious. They are the charming side of the Innocent Abroad, amiable, good-humored, loquacious but not boring. Virtually all of them are written with the same rollicking rhythm, loose amphibrachic tetrameter with the final unaccented syllable of the meter omitted (catalexis). For example, from *McElligot's Pool* (Seuss, 1947/1997):

One doesn't catch *this* kind of fish as a rule,
But the chances are fine in McElligot's Pool!

Dr. Seuss' books are also well-known for their inventive names – for example, the place-names Zombama-Tant, Motta-fa-Potta-fa-Pell, the Desert of Zind, Yerka, Tobsk, Gwark, and names of creatures such as the Flustard, the Joats, the Thwerll, the Chuggs, the Bippo-no-Bungus and the Fizza-ma-Wizza-ma-Dill, from *If I Ran the Zoo* (Seuss, 1950/1997), to cite a few examples from just one of his books. Sometimes known words are used for the sheer pleasure of how they sound – e.g., gasket, seer-sucker, and so on. As a matter of fact, as far as I can tell Dr. Seuss invented a word which is now well-known but of which the origin, consult whichever dictionary you please, is said to be unknown: the word “nerd,” which is the name of a fierce and grouchy-looking animal (Dr. Seuss' illustrations are as celebrated as his words) in *If I Ran the Zoo*. There are not many authors who can claim to have coined a word which has become a part of everyday language – even though the present meaning of “nerd” is a far cry from the meaning which Dr. Seuss assigned to it.

Dr. Seuss was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1984 “for his contribution over nearly half a century to the education and enjoyment of America's children and their parents” (Spiegelman, 1999). Art Spiegelman (himself a Pulitzer Prize winner for his book *Maus*, which he both wrote and illustrated), mentions this in an article celebrating Dr. Seuss' satirical political cartoons of the 1940s. He also notes that the headgear of Dr. Seuss' creation, The Cat in the Hat, “is actually an emblem in countless [of Dr. Seuss'] political cartoons – Uncle Sam's red-and-white striped top hat! The Cat in the Hat *is* America!” (Spiegelman, 1999) For me, this was and is one of the appeals of the Dr. Seuss books: their quintessential Americanness. Yet this does not stop them from being popular with readers in many other countries as well. Imagination has no boundaries.

In book after book a young protagonist lets his imagination soar, imagining all sorts of strange sights in far-off lands. In Dr. Seuss' first book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (Seuss, 1937/1991), a young boy named Marco changes, in his imagination, the prosaic reality of the street he lives on, Mulberry Street, to a parade of wonders – but has his fantasies quashed by his no-nonsense Dad when he gets home. However, in books which came after (e.g., *McElligot's Pool*, *If I Ran the Zoo*) the fantasizing boy is unfazed by his critics and continues to imagine alternative worlds with great satisfaction. In many books parents and other authority figures disappear altogether, as in *The Cat in the Hat*, in which a girl and her brother have to deal with the overwhelming Cat in the Hat on their own. In other books, such as *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* (Seuss, 1949/1997), the protagonist is the feckless hero of traditional fairy stories who triumphs over his enemies and becomes the favored son of the kingdom. There are also animal fables such as *Horton Hears a Who!* (Seuss, 1954/1997), wherein the put-upon animal protagonist, through persistence and determination, overcomes the indifference, irritation, or downright hostility of other creatures, rights a wrong, and is rewarded for it.

In later books, Dr. Seuss attempted to target specific wrongs: e.g., the dangers of pollution, in *The Lorax* (1971), and the threat of the arms race in *The Butter Battle Book* (1984). I read these books when I was an adult, and felt that the earlier books I had read in childhood were more satisfying. Ann Hulbert, in her review of the 1995 biography of Dr. Seuss, *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel* by Judith and Neil Morgan, pinpoints why (Hulbert, 1995):

...In the second half of his career, the fun in his little books became more and more self-consciously 'educational' and the messages in his books were increasingly righteous and 'relevant'. Dr. Seuss, at the pinnacle of wealth and fame, was overtly anxious to establish his stature as a 'serious' artist. The sermonizing note...seems aggressively earnest. Compare it with the somewhat wry delivery in his earlier books of what was in essence the same underlying moral: that others merit our imaginative sympathy.

Adult readers can explore the tensions in Dr. Seuss' life and what lay behind his creative output in the biography; such issues need not concern his younger readers. His books, both early and late, will continue to entertain and inspire children. There will be time enough for them, as they grow up, to become aware of the struggle behind the books, and to appreciate them all the more because of that.

“My Mind to Me a Kingdom is”

Poetry, whether in childhood or adulthood, helps one escape awhile the pressures of everyday life,

its unhappinesses and irritations. It renews hope and perspective: One sees once more what lies beyond the horizon. A book takes one on a far journey and, moreover, ignites imagination and creativity. The journey begun in a book continues in the mind. The “long and winding road” is paved with the books we know.

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