

A Genre of Animal Hanky Panky?

Animal representations, anthropomorphism and interspecies relations in The Little Golden Books.

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Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Wednesday 8 November 2017 at 10.00 in Auditorium 215, Humanistvillan, Frescativägen 24.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the visual and verbal representations of animals in a selection of commercial picture books for a young readership of preschool children. The picture books selected are part of the Little Golden Book series. The first twelve books in this series were published in the United States in 1942 and are still in print today, while new books are continually being published. Because these popular picture books have had a broad readership from their inception and the books in the series have a uniform aesthetics, a comparative analysis provides insight into mainstream human-animal relationships.

Children's literature is never innocent, and fraught with power imbalances. Animals become political beings, not only in the sense that they convey a didactic message, but in the sense that each animal representation carries a host of ideas and assumptions about human-animal relations with it. Using a theoretical framework that is grounded in Human Animal Studies (HAS), and more specifically literary animal studies, this dissertation analyzes the representation of human-animal interactions and relationships in different contexts.

Before the advent of HAS, anthropocentric, humanist interpretations of animal presence in children's literature used to be prevalent. Commercial picture books in particular could benefit from readings that investigate animal presence without immediately resorting to humanist interpretations. One way of doing that is to start by questioning how interspecies difference and hierarchy is constructed in these books, verbally, visually and in the interaction between words and images. Based on this, we can speculate about the consequences this may have for the reader's conceptualization of human-animal relationships. In children's literature speciesism and ageism often intersect, for example when young children are compared with (young) animals or when animals are presented as stand-ins for young children. This dissertation explores the mechanisms behind the representation of species difference in commercial picture books.

The aim of this study is to analyze how commercial picture books like the Little Golden Books harbor a potential to shape young readers' ideas about humanity and animality, species difference and hierarchy and the possibilities of interspecies interactions. The socializing function that is an important component of all children's books makes that these picture books can shape readers' attitudes from an early age. When reading children's books featuring animals, the particular way these animals are represented guides the reader towards an ideology – and in the West, this ideology is predominantly anthropocentric. In Western cultures, children and animals are commonly thought of as natural allies, and as such they are often depicted as opposed to adult culture.

This dissertation identifies the ways in which certain conservative tendencies are activated by these commercial picture books, but also emphasizes that they can be a subversive space where anthropocentrism can be challenged. The case studies developed in this dissertation demonstrate how even so-called 'unsophisticated' picture books contain interesting strains of animal related ideology worthy of in-depth analysis. The visual and verbal dimensions of these picture books show that these stories are embedded in a cultural context that helps give meaning to the animals. A recurring concern is the function of anthropomorphism and the role it plays in how we value the animals in these books. I am particularly interested in how picture books depict various degrees of anthropomorphism, because it has the potential to challenge species boundaries and disrupt the human-animal dichotomy.

Keywords: *Picture book theory, literary animal studies, anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism, Little Golden Books, speciesism, Human Animal Studies.*

Stockholm 2017

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-147503>

ISBN 978-91-7649-962-7
ISBN 978-91-7649-963-4



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ISBN print 978-91-7649-962-7

ISBN PDF 978-91-7649-963-4

Printed in Sweden by Universitetservice US-AB, Stockholm 2017

Distributor: Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University

To Viktor and Evelyn
Fandango and Carlitos

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Acknowledgements

Thanks are in order.

Thanks go to my supervisors, for their invaluable advice, their knowledge, their faith in my work, their patience and their encouragement.

Thanks to my colleagues, who were there to listen, to motivate, to challenge, to cheer me up, to console, to share frustrations and successes.

Thanks to my friends, human and nonhuman, who took me to new places.

Thanks to my family. To those who were there from the beginning. To those who entered the world while I worked on this project and those who left before it was completed.

To all of you who walked this path with me. You know who you are.

To my muse. For everything.

Introduction



Figure 1: *Poes Pinkie* (1953)

One of my earliest memories of reading a book is an image of a black and white kitten playing with a purple ball of wool. Although I have all but forgotten what the story is about, I can still vividly recall the fascinating, colorful illustrations, the liveliness of the little kitten as she explores the house she lives in. The playfulness and curiosity of the young animal, as well as her clumsiness, were irresistible to me, so I read this book over and over again. I didn't realize it at the time, but my favorite picture book was a Little Golden Book: *Poes Pinkie* (1953), the Dutch translation of Kathryn Jackson's *Katie the Kitten* (1949).

This was one of the first six titles that were translated to Dutch in 1953, and it was, apparently, still popular when I was learning to read in the 1980s. As I discovered when I started studying this series, I am not alone in cherishing fond memories of a particular Little Golden Book. In her book *Ik hou zo van... de Gouden Boekjes*, written on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Little Golden Books in The Netherlands, author Joke Linders describes how these unpretentious little books, sparkling with color and imagination, conquered the Dutch children's book market. As they did in their homeland, the United States, the Little Golden Books remained popular with both children and adults, and many of us have a favorite Little Golden Book that inspires nostalgic childhood memories.

These picture books – the American originals celebrate their 75th anniversary in 2017- were so popular that even the most renowned Dutch authors and illustrators were eager to work with them. For example, the translation of *Katie the Kitten* was written by the legendary Dutch children's book author Annie M.G. Schmidt. She gave her own unique twist to the translation, and even though Schmidt's version is much more prosaic than the original, it captures the reader's attention and retains the magic of the original (Linders,

2010). Curiously, Schmidt also changed the gender of the cat: Dutch Pinkie is a little tomcat. From an intercultural perspective, this is very interesting, but I will not dwell on it here. What is important to realize is that the images do not favor one gender; there is nothing about the kitten that makes her conclusively male or female. This is an aspect of fictional animals that has been highlighted by numerous scholars who study the function of animal characters. One of the arguments that are often used is that these animals eliminate the need to specify categories that are significant and hard to disguise when dealing with human characters, such as gender, class or ethnicity.

The charisma of the kitten also demonstrates what the Little Golden Books are famous for: no matter how charming the story, the images are what ultimately establishes their lasting impression. The playful qualities that are so characteristic of the illustrations captivate young imaginations and never let go. The same can be said about the Little Golden Books as material objects: the cardboard covers, the golden spines through which you could feel the staples, the structure and smell of the paper all contributed to the unique Golden Book experience.

It is perhaps a truism that animals are ubiquitous in children's books. Throughout the entire range of children's literature, and children's culture in general, we encounter a great number of animals. Their presence has been studied in an academic context, but until recently, very few of these studies have focused on animal presence in commercial picture books such as the Little Golden Books. As testified by the memories of countless readers, these fictional creatures have the potential to forge lifelong emotional connections with their readers. In spite of their fictionality, and in spite of their presence being occasionally perceived as trivial, these animals matter. And it matters that they are animals.

There exist many academic texts that analyze the function of animals in children's literature. However, the older research tends to focus on the humanity of these characters: they stress the childlike aspects of their appearance and behavior, or how the humanity of their personality endears them to young readers. A well-known book that discusses multiple examples of animal presence in children's literature is Margaret Blount's *Animal Land* (1974). She asks the question why so many children's books are populated by animals and figures that

this kind of story is the type that adults seem to enjoy writing; an animal fantasy is a kind of imaginary launching ground that gives a built in power of insight to narrative – one is halfway there before one has noticed. Secondly, animal stories are the kind that adults enjoy *giving*. They are supposed to be 'improving' in some way, pointing oblique and therefore palatable morals, or helping one's nature study along. (15)

She continues to inquire into the nature of the animals that populate the stories and concludes that:

Apart from the rare, objective nature stories that do the latter, the animals are not really themselves, but disguised people. (15)

In her own childhood experiences with animal stories, she writes, the animals appeared already more human than animal:

I realised, as all children do, that animals and birds were not really like those [fictional] rooks and mice – their lives had been humanised, or ‘improved’, even though what my grandmother was describing was a countrywoman’s accurate comment on animal and bird behaviour. (15)

What is so incredibly fascinating about Blount’s personal account is that, even as a child, she seems to have distanced herself from any form of animistic association with animals that, according to some scholars, is typical for the way most children interpret animal stories.¹ Whether or not adult hindsight has influenced her memories, it is clear to her that animals and humans are two distinctly different categories of beings, and to deny that is worse than childish. To her, ‘[t]he great gulf between human and animal can never, in this world, be crossed.’ (17)

In spite of this divide, Blount remains fascinated by animals in fiction for children, and her work is an attempt to answer the question ‘Why, then, have animals at all when people would do as well?’ (16) Blount acknowledged that the animal question deserves academic attention, and it is this is the kind of research that forms the prelude to current studies into the function of literary animals. Contemporary research broadens that perspective to include the animality of these characters, even if they are humanized to a high degree. What happens when we shift the focus is that we can start to question how children are socialized to think about and interact with animals, imaginary and real.

The advent of the interdisciplinary field of Human Animal Studies (HAS) that occurred over the past few decades has shed a new light on the question of animals in children’s literature. Their presence in children’s literature is not always innocent. They become political beings, not in the sense that they convey a didactic message – which of course, some of them do – but in the sense that each animal representation carries a host of ideas and assumptions about human-animal relations with it. By shifting the focus away from a human-centered towards a more animal-centered perspective, HAS is challenging us to examine these fictional animals from a new perspective. In her article ‘A

¹ See for example Bettelheim, Bruno (1977). *The uses of enchantment: the meaning and importance of fairy tales*. New York: Random House

report on the animal turn' (2010) Kari Weil describes the objectives of HAS as follows:

Like trauma studies, animal studies thus stretches to the limit questions of language, of epistemology, and of ethics that have been raised in various ways by women's studies or postcolonial studies: how to understand and give voice to others or to experiences that seem impervious to our means of understanding; how to attend to difference without appropriating or distorting it; how to hear and acknowledge what it may not be possible to say. (4)

Animals studies sensitizes us to questions about animality and humanity that were not considered before, and in doing so, the field enables the study of fictional animals in children's books from a completely new perspective. It has become possible to ask questions about their presence that were not possible before, which has led to a number of interesting publications over the past couple of years. However, the study of commercial picture books has yet not caught up with this development.

One reason why commercial picture books have not been studied much from an animal-centered perspective could be that they do not thematize or problematize the animal question to the same extent as some other works do. Also, many of these books implicitly subscribe to a humanist way of thinking, in which the animality of the characters tends to disappear in favor of the traits they share with humans. Animal characters can be made invisible by excessively anthropomorphizing them, or by favoring their human-like qualities at the expense of species-specific qualities. On other occasions, the books present animals in such a way that the reader is invited to interpret the animals as mere metaphors for humans or human behavior.

There are, however, compelling arguments to focus on just these types of books. In *Picturing The Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation* (2001), Steve Baker investigates animal imagery in popular culture. Baker insists that '*any effective cultural strategies on behalf of animals must be based on an understanding of contemporary cultural practice*'. (5) (italics in original) He mainly uses images from popular culture to prove his point, and in defense of his choice he argues that this

apparently banal material is not without significance. It will be the contention of this book that much of our understanding of human identity and our thinking about the living animal reflects – and may even be the rather direct result of – the diverse uses to which the concept of the animal is put in popular culture, regardless of how bizarre or banal some of those uses may seem. Any understanding of the animal, and of what the animal means to us, will be informed by and inseparable from our knowledge of its cultural representation. Culture shapes our reading of animals just as much as animals shape our reading of culture. (4)

Baker further criticizes the idea that there is a significant difference in the way animals are represented in texts intended for children and texts for adults. He discusses how Bruno Bettelheim explains the presence of animals in children's culture as a consequence of childhood animism, and finds Bettelheim's line or argument flawed because it

presumes a clear-cut distinction between the value and belief systems of the sophisticated adult, who is ultimately always in the right, and those of the ignorant child – the child who intuitively, which is to say wrongly, holds open the possibility of an identification with the animal and the inanimate'. (123-124)

Baker pays special attention to the role of the visual in shaping our ideas of the animal. He states that the visual, as well as the popular, have been ignored because these areas of the cultural sphere were not appreciated as sources of knowledge:

'The priorities of the modern *episteme*, it seems, result in the overlooking and undervaluing not only of the visual, but also of the symbolic and the popular.'
(21)

This attitude is also reflected in the study of animal presence in children's culture. So in accordance with Baker's argument I would like to argue that it is possible, and desirable, to start taking popular picture books seriously, and read them slightly against the grain. In this way we can try to come closer to the animals and what they signify in the context of the picture book. Commercial picture books in particular could benefit from readings that investigate animal presence without immediately resorting to humanist interpretations. One way of doing that is to start by questioning how interspecies difference and hierarchy is constructed in these books, verbally, visually and in the interaction between words and images. Based on this, we can speculate about what consequences this may have for the reader's conceptualization of human-animal relationships.

The discourse of species is activated in various ways in these books. Species membership often defines the animal character's social environment, even when the animals are anthropomorphized. Many stories center around the social significance of species membership. For example, *The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse* (1954, by Miriam Norton and illustrated by Garth Williams), tells the story of a kitten who is adopted by a mouse family, so that they can benefit from his protection when he matures.

Speciesism, the bias that favors certain animals over other, solely based on species membership, is present in and perpetuated by many commercial

picture books, as I will demonstrate in a number of examples in this dissertation. Cary Wolfe describes how the discourse of species is fundamental to our thinking about difference in other contexts as well:

[t]he effective power of the discourse of species when applied to social others of whatever sort relies, then, on a prior taking for granted of the institution of speciesism—that is, of the ethical acceptability of the systematic “noncriminal putting to death” of animals based solely on their species. (Wolfe, 2003: 7)

In children’s literature speciesism and ageism often intersect, for example when young children are compared with (young) animals or when animals are presented as stand-ins for young children. This dissertation explores the mechanisms behind the representation of species difference in commercial picture books.

The aim of this study is to analyze how commercial picture books like the Little Golden Books harbor a potential to shape young readers’ ideas about humanity and animality, species difference and hierarchy and the possibilities of interspecies interactions. The socializing function that is an important component of all children’s books makes that these picture books can shape readers’ attitudes from an early age. When we read children’s books featuring animals, the particular way these animals are represented guides the reader towards an ideology – and in the West, the dominant ideology is anthropocentric.

Anthropocentrism, the worldview that places homo sapiens firmly in the center of the universe and positions him as the measure of all other animals, postulates a hierarchical relationship in which animals are always inferior to humans. In children’s books, the adult-child hierarchy is complicating the already intricate interspecies hierarchies. Adult humans are situated at the top of the hierarchy, and their (moral) authority is not supposed to be questioned. Not even when there clearly exists a troubling double standard that child readers are expected to accept and live by.

This double standard comes into play when we consider the message that is often sent out to child readers. Animals are often introduced to inculcate empathy and consideration into young readers. At the same time, however, it is made clear that there are limits to how far this empathy should stretch within a ‘healthy’ child-animal relationship. Any deviations from this standard are depicted as either pathological or a sign of immaturity. The cute piglet on the farm is deserving of the child’s compassion and tenderness, but once the living animal is slaughtered and has been transformed to a piece of meat on the dinner table it is inappropriate for that same child to feel empathy. When young readers pick up on these complexities - and they do - how can they not be confused?

Acknowledging the existence and significance of this double standard, and a curiosity as to how it is expressed in popular picture books, is the starting point of this dissertation. What follows is an investigation into how a certain body of picture books, that is united by aesthetics, target audience and a nostalgic appeal, deals with the representation of diverse interspecies interactions and relationships. The unique way in which picture books get meaning through the various interactions of words and images makes them interesting from an animal-centered perspective.

The Little Golden Books

As I mentioned above, the decision to work with a selection of Little Golden Books is based on the possibilities that arise from the specific nature of this series. They are commercial picture books, mass produced and aimed at a broad and diverse readership. The marketing strategy that made the series an instant commercial success was an innovation in the field of picture book publishing, and this formula has guaranteed the series' success until this day. The magnitude of the publishing effort was unheard of for picture books, and the immediate success of the Little Golden books has everything to do with the publisher's bold, innovative publishing and marketing strategies. It was decided that the first books in the series were sold for 25 cents per book, which was significantly cheaper than the average picture book which sold for 2,5 dollars (Linders, 2010: 23). They were printed in large volumes so the cost of the individual books could remain low. In addition, they were sold throughout the year, as opposed to the traditional strategy that focused on the holiday season.

Another novelty was that the books were not exclusively sold through the traditional channels; instead of concentrating on bookstores, the decision to sell them at locations frequented by parents of young children (such as supermarkets and department stores) was a success. Since so much of this is contingent on the books' visibility, their design had to be eye catching and appealing, hence the focus on the illustrations and the distinct cover design. The uniformity of the series made them easy to recognize: the gold spine, the colorful cardboard covers and the uniform format. The number system and the listing of other Little Golden Books on the cover inspired readers to collect all the books. This urge to collect is not limited to young readers: Steve Santi's collectors' catalogues have a similar function for the community of adult collectors.

Because of their commercial nature and the alleged simplicity of the books, they were initially shunned by the gatekeepers of the literary field (librarians, critics, teachers). Yet in spite of receiving little critical or academic

attention, the Little Golden Books have a high cultural impact. They managed to acquire a special place not only within the American picture book tradition, but in American popular culture at large. The first books in this series were published in 1942 in a cluster of twelve, and many of these titles are still in print today, whereas new books are still being published. By now they have attained an almost iconic status in the United States, and there exist an active subculture of collectors and aficionados around these books. One of the reasons these books are so popular with adult collectors is that they evoke a sense of nostalgia (Sinn-Cassidy, 2008).

There is good reason for their popular appeal, and there is equally good reason for academic interest, as the series is more innovative than it has been given credit for. Even if critics tended to highlight the Little Golden Books' lack of literary sophistication, they changed the picture book industry. Not only because of the abovementioned marketing strategies made picture books more readily available to more readers than ever before, but also because of the diversity of the artists and writers, and their intermedial approach. In 1998, Barbara Bader writes the following:

In the course of the last thirty years or so, American picture books have become a mainstay of American life – and items of merchandise – without altogether extinguishing the individual creative voice. They have also ceased to be, in any defining way, American (141).

The Little Golden Books have contributed to the popularity of the picture book in America. And with the international background of their artist and the creative pairings of authors and illustrators, these books were in their own way characteristic for the American picture book in this era. For being commercial and popular, they were also truly cosmopolitan. Especially in the early years, there was a strong European influence among the illustrators. Talented exiled artists who fled wartime Europe found employment with the Artists and Writers Guild where they enriched the American scene with influences from their native countries (see Marcus, 2007 and Linders, 2010). With the help of the Guild, these artists found their way to the American entertainment industry. Swedish artist Gustav Tenggren, for instance, who initially worked for Disney, left the company and started illustrating the Little Golden books. Other famous artists were Russian Feodor Rojankovski and Hungarian Tibor Gergely. With these international artistic influences, the Little Golden Books were pioneers of the American picture book scene.

The Artists and Writers Guild was an artists' collective established in 1935, that offered children's books on demand. George Duplaix, a French, physician, artist and children's book author was the first director of the Guild. His assistant, Lucille Ogle, became an icon because of her personality, boundless energy, expertise and commitment. A collaboration was established between the Guild and Sam Lowe, director of Western printing, a

company that had experience with printing cartoons, comics, playing cards and crossword puzzles.

Then, in 1938, Duplaix contacted publishers Simon and Schuster, who had by then made their fortune selling pocket novels and crossword puzzles that came with a free pencil, to discuss a collaboration. Simon and Schuster were interested, but they insisted on the maximum price of 25 cents per book, which meant a minimum production of at least 100.000 books per title to be commercially viable. Lucille Ogle was charged to find the right illustrators and authors for the job. This, in short, is how the Little Golden Books were born.

In addition to the unique approach that resulted from the collaboration between Western Printing, The Guild and Simon and Schuster, The Little Golden Books can be regarded as pioneers in another area as well. From the start, many of the books were adaptations of existing stories that had proven to be popular. They borrowed characters and story lines from other picture books, novels, films, but also the relatively new medium of television series on a large scale and adapted them to fit the Little Golden Book format and target audience. The popularity of these already famous stories made it easier for parents to choose a book for their children, and for the readers to be motivated to pick up the book. A discussion of intermediality and intertextuality offers valuable insights into some of the defining characteristics of the Little Golden Book aesthetics, also with respect to animal representations. At times, the original work may be too complex or layered to fit neatly into 24 (or in the early years, 48) pages. The places where the original stories are transformed can sometimes indicate the presence of ideological issues, as some of the examples discussed in the case studies will demonstrate.

The focus on mass production inevitably has consequences for the subject matter of the Little Golden Books, since this also demanded that the content needs to appeal to a large audience. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the view on animals – and children - that is mediated in these books will not be too controversial, but instead leans towards the mainstream and generally accepted. A study of the mechanisms, verbal and visual, behind representations of animals and children, helps us get an impression of how our ideas about the place of animals in our lives are shaped in the early stages of our reading careers.

Because of the need to appeal to a wide variety of young readers and, not unimportantly, their parents, it can be expected that the attitudes towards animals that are reflected in these books will not be avant-garde or radical, but mainstream and relatively uncontested. This is further motivated by the social group targeted by the Little Golden Books. Their readership consists mainly of preschool children from a middle class background. To appeal to the experiences of these children, many of the stories that feature human protagonists are set in familiar, everyday environments. The home is often a central setting, as are activities undertaken with the nuclear family at the center. The animals that we find in this setting are often pets, and they are in

most cases depicted realistically – that is: they display species appropriate behavior and are not highly anthropomorphized in any other ways either. When anthropomorphized animals are the main characters of the stories, however, the setting can become more unfamiliar, playful, exotic or fantastic. It is clear that animals engage the imagination of the authors, writers and readers of the Little Golden Books, but it will become clear that the messages that these animals send out can be complex, sometimes conservative, and often contradictory.

The rise of the American middle class is a significant factor in the success of the Little Golden Books. The importance of education and literacy for this social group, combined with the increase of leisure time for school age middle class children meant that the demand for reading materials increased as well. It was not only the recognition of the concern with education and literacy that emphasized the series' connection with the middle classes. Their content, too, reflected middle class sensitivities and ideology. In relation to the place of animals in the middle class mind, we can observe that the Little Golden Books subscribe to the dominant ideologies of the times. Even though, as we will see later in a number of examples, the boundary between human and animal can on occasion be playfully interrogated, when it comes to core concerns about the proper place and treatment of animals in society, the Little Golden Books tend to respect middle class conventions.

One of the important influences on the depiction of child-animal is related to the middle class vision of moral education. Animals, especially pets, began to play an important role in children's moral education, since their vulnerability and dependence on the child's benevolence inspired empathy. This, in turn, would lead the child to develop empathy for their fellow humans as well. In the words of historian Katherine Grier, the middle class ideal child-animal relationship can be described in terms of the 'domestic ethic of kindness' which originated between 1820 and 1870, and continues to influence the way middle class parents' ideas about the role of non-human animals in child rearing. Grier writes:

Because of its preoccupation with the meaning of family life, the domestic ethic of kindness focused especially on the implications of kind or cruel treatment of animals within that context. Animals in and around the household were the medium for training children into self-consciousness about, and abhorrence of, causing pain to other creatures including, ultimately, other people. (...) Socializing children to be kind to animals thus became an important task of middle-class parenting. Pet keeping, an activity long interpreted and tolerated as a personal indulgence, was transformed into a morally purposeful act. (1999: 95-96)

Grier describes how pet keeping was supposed to encourage children to extend their sympathy beyond species boundaries, and how kindness was essential to the relationship. According to Grier, pet keeping was defined as a natural extension of the 19th-century domestic ethic of kindness, and as such

it had an important function within children's education to become moral citizens. In light of this ideal, the child-pet relationship became significant as caring for pets taught self-discipline and consideration for other-than-human life (2006: 130). The case studies that focus on pethood will discuss this aspect of pet keeping and how the domestic ethic of kindness is expressed in a number of Little Golden Books. Here, too, categories of age, species and gender intersect.

This growing significance of nonhuman animals in the lives of children has led to an increase in the number of literary texts for children that thematize nonhuman suffering at the hands of children. Anthropomorphism was one of the most effective strategies used by authors to raise sympathy for their nonhuman protagonists. The thought behind this was that when children would learn to adopt a fictional animal's point of view, they would sympathize with the character. This sympathy would then also extend to the real animals in their lives.

This does not mean that anthropomorphism in children's literature is always seen in a positive light. Nowadays, there exists considerable controversy concerning anthropomorphic animal characters. Much of the critique focuses on anthropomorphism in commercial picture books, since it is conceived as trivial and sometimes even harmful to children's development.

Problems with anthropomorphism

The Little Golden Books have a unique aesthetics, which unites the series in spite of the broad range of artistic styles. With their emphasis on colorful images and a general liveliness, they allow for playful experimentation with the animal form. Sometimes this takes the form of carnivalesque situations, which may be the reason why Barbara Bader, in her standard work, *American Picturebooks, from Noah's ark to the beast within* (1976), refers to the series as a 'genre of animal hanky-panky'.

Since popular culture can be thought of as a reservoir for mainstream ideas about the proper place of animals in human societies, I did find examples of how certain animal practices have evolved. The depictions of zoos, for example, include less and less bars and cages, and more 'natural' habitats. Commercial picture books do indeed reflect an evolution in thinking and living with animals. But what is perhaps more interesting than the historical changes that have taken place is the continuity in the representation of child-animal relationships. Not much has changed in this respect since the 1940s. The majority of these relationships that we find in commercial picture books like the Little Golden Books is grounded in a humanist tradition. That is the reason why this dissertation foregrounds how ideology is expressed in the images and the text, and how this informs the reader's conceptualizations

of appropriate interspecies interactions. Because of the dual nature of picture books, text and images can contradict each other, and when this happens, this can indicate underlying cultural tensions. These tensions have real consequences, for real animals and real people.

Increasingly, the concern of how these representations might impact young hearts and minds became the focal point of this study, together with the question of whether we have an obligation to create an awareness of these effects and how we can handle this. What is at stake, after all, when we write, publish, buy and read children's books, is the future. A future in which new generations of human and nonhuman animals coexist and have meaningful interactions. In the first issue of the journal *Humanimalia* (2009), Lynda Birke wonders 'what's in it for the animals?' She states that:

It is one thing to consider animals within wider intellectual concerns, however, but it is sometimes another to respect them for themselves, or for our research inquiries to yield benefits for them. (1)

Even when the study of animals in children's literature is concerned with representations of animals, and not with actual animals, the way these animals are depicted has consequence for real animals and real children. Therefore, there is always an element of moral responsibility present in any discussion on this topic. These books provide models for interactions with animals and therefore I feel that when we read them, either in an academic context or with young readers, we owe it to the animals to take their presence seriously. We also owe it to young readers to make them aware of some of the mechanisms within picture books that create human-animal difference and interspecies hierarchies. Because picture books like *The Little Golden Books* are read at an early age, they have a profound impact on readers' socialization process.

Children's literature is never innocent, and fraught with power imbalances. A number of case studies in this dissertation, in particular those that focus on pets, reveal the intersections of speciesism and ageism. Whereas the domestic ethic of kindness asks that children treat their animals with respect and tenderness, their interactions show that there are many parallels between child rearing and training of pets. In Western cultures, children and animals are commonly thought of as natural allies, and as such they are often depicted as opposed to adult culture. I will go deeper into the origins of this perceived alliance in the first chapter.

The thematically organized case studies in this dissertation outline how the cultural histories of different animals shape their picture book appearance, and how they perpetuate these histories through the medium of the picture book. The case studies developed in this dissertation demonstrate how even so-called 'unsophisticated' picture books contain interesting strains of animal related ideology worthy of in-depth analysis. The visual and verbal

dimensions of these picture books show that these stories are embedded in a cultural context that helps give meaning to the animals.

A recurring concern is the function of anthropomorphism and the role it plays in how we value the animals in these books. I am particularly interested in how picture books depict various degrees of anthropomorphism, because it has the potential to challenge species boundaries and disrupt the human-animal dichotomy. Anthropomorphism, however, is a messy concept. In the sciences it is suspect because it supposedly muddles the objectivity of data collection. In children's literature, the phenomenon can at times be equally problematic. In this introduction chapter, I will briefly highlight some influential perspectives on animal presence in children's books in order to outline why the study of animal representations in picture books needs and deserves a closer look. An initial important observation is that there exists general consensus regarding the socializing function of picture books for young children. With respect to animal representation, this means that the way animals are represented matters, because it has consequences for the readers' socialization into society. Because of this socializing function, there are ethical as well as epistemological considerations involved in the discussion of animals in children's books, in particular when dealing with anthropomorphic ones.

Across various research practices, both anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism can be interpreted differently based on the scientific discipline in question and the intentions of the researchers. If we for the moment focus on how these concepts and their occurrence in children's books are discussed in recent research published in the fields of psychology and education, it is clear that they can be experienced as extremely troubling. The examples below indicate that the researchers share a concern about the possible negative effects of anthropomorphism on children's development and education. These researchers are especially worried about the confusion that may arise when children fail to see the differences between human and nonhuman animals, which then may lead to drawing false conclusions from with regards to real animals.

Sonia Vogl explains this problem in her article 'Animals and anthropomorphism in children's literature' (1982). She starts her text with the following statement:

Animals have long been popular subjects in literature, especially children's literature. However, they have often been treated anthropomorphically, to the dismay of biologists who feel that endowing animals with human emotions and motives presents misleading pictures of such creatures and may lead children to false impressions and expectations of real life animals. (68)

Biologists are worried about what they call 'Bambi syndrome' (68): the misconception that real animals behave like their fictional counterparts. This includes ideas of cuteness and friendliness which, when people approach real

animals, could lead to dangerous situations. Anthropomorphism that denies animals their animality can have detrimental consequences for humans and animals alike. Humans can get injured when they try to approach wild animals. Animals can be captured and sold as pets, even if they are not suited for this kind of life. When we deal with anthropomorphism, we are always performing a balancing act: we need to acknowledge relevant interspecies differences, but should not deny identity where we have reason to assume it exists.

When we lean too much on the difference, we may run the risk of losing sight of the beneficial aspects of anthropomorphism in children's books. This is what occurs in the next examples. According to recent empirical research in psychology, the use of anthropomorphic representations in picture books threatens to impede the children from acquiring factual knowledge about animals. In this context, 'factual knowledge' is to be interpreted as knowledge originating from the domain of the life sciences. In this view, anthropomorphism positions the child reader at a collision course with reality. Consider, for example, this blog written March 2014 on the website of Scientific American, bearing the title 'When Animals Act Like People in Stories, Kids Can't Learn'. The author, Jason G. Goldman asks:

Do children transfer the fantastical abilities of non-human animals in their storybooks to their real life models? If so, then those sorts of stories could seriously impede kids' ability to learn and remember true facts about real animals, or at least the distinguish fact from fiction. That would be especially true for children in urban and suburban areas, who have few opportunities to regularly interact with actual animals, at least compared to their rural counterparts.

Goldman bases his argument on the research of psychologists Patricia A. Ganea et. al. and emphasizes how children who read stories, more specifically: commercial picture stories, involving anthropomorphic animals prevent them from learning 'true facts':

More importantly, it isn't just that the kids failed to learn true facts when exposed to the anthropomorphic stories; those stories actually made it harder for them to learn, teaching them falsehoods rather than facts. They were even more likely to think of animals in human-like terms after reading the books than if they had never seen the books at all!

This implies that children are not able to distinguish fiction from fact when it matters, but also that non-realistic fiction can corrupt young minds. Ganea et. al. conclude that the use of 'realistic' versus 'anthropomorphic' language in fiction affects how children think about real animals. This is a very interesting result that stresses the importance of fiction for forming a worldview:

The results also show that the type of language used in books affects how likely children are to attribute anthropomorphic traits to real animals. Children were more likely to say that real animals feel human emotions or even talk after listening to stories that used anthropomorphic rather than realistic language. There are two ways to explain this effect: either that the anthropomorphic language increases children's tendency to attribute anthropomorphic traits to animals, or that hearing realistic language suppresses their natural inclination to attribute human-like traits to other non-human animals. (Ganea et. al, 2014)

(...)

When children in Study 2 were exposed to books where anthropomorphic images and language were combined they were less likely to apply the facts to photographs of the real animals compared to a book that used only anthropomorphic images. This type of book, which combines both fantastical language and anthropomorphic illustrations of animals, is typical of commercially available books. Our results suggest that this combination may create a story context that is too dissimilar from reality for preschoolers to realize that information important for the real world is being conveyed. As children get older and have more experience with fantastical stories, they may acquire knowledge that information encountered in fantastical books can be relevant to the real world, but the current findings indicate that this is not yet the case for preschool-aged children. This effect is especially true when both the images and language used in the story were fantastical—children learned fewer facts about real animals in this condition. (Ganea et. al, 2014)

The conclusion of the article is that:

Books that do not present animals and their environments accurately from a biological perspective may not only lead to less learning but also influence children to adopt a human-centered view of the natural world. (Ganea et. al, 2014)

This type of learning, which is concerned with factual, biological knowledge depends on the children's ability to see 'animals as animals' and 'humans as humans'. When anthropomorphic animals appear in picture books, they tend to blur the boundaries that are central to a humanist, positivist worldview. Could it be the case that this concern about children being led astray by anthropomorphic depictions of animals hints at a humanist worldview under threat?

A similar concern is voiced in the article 'Humans (really) are animals: picture-book reading influences 5-year-old urban children's construal of the relation between humans and non-human animals' (2014) by Sandra R. Waxman et. al, also in *Frontiers of Psychology*. Here, the authors ask:

What is the relation between humans and non-human animals? From a biological perspective, we view humans as one species among many, but in the fables and films we create for children, we often offer an anthropocentric perspective, imbuing non-human animals with human-like characteristics. What

are the consequences of these distinctly different perspectives on children's reasoning about the natural world?

They, too, point out that there is a connection between animal representations in picture books and the ideas young children forms about animals in the real world. Since picture books have such a profound influence, Waxman et. al. stress that this knowledge also comes with the responsibility to use the 'right' kind of picture books so as not to confuse young readers.

This type of research acknowledges animal representations, and anthropomorphism in particular, as a powerful tool in readers' education. But rather than exclusively focusing on the communication of biological knowledge, it would be much more interesting to also look at the philosophical and moral implications of anthropomorphic representations. Because the conflict that is outlined in these articles, and that is specifically directed at picture books, suffers from the flaw that the acquisition of biological knowledge is fundamentally at odds with anthropomorphic representations of animals. As we will see later in this dissertation, the urge to anthropomorphize may be a natural and evolutionarily beneficial human property that can at times explain animal behaviors better than scientific analyses can.

What is interesting about these claims is not only that commercial picture books with high degrees of anthropomorphism are viewed as especially harmful reading. These articles imply that anthropomorphism is a risk factor in the development of an anthropocentric way of conceptualizing animals. Rather than identifying anthropocentrism as a worldview, permeating every aspect of a culture, these authors seem to interpret anthropocentrism as a stage in a young child's psychological development, where the child sees the human species as the measure of all things. This is then opposed to 'biological knowledge', that portrays animals objectively. The cultural artifact of the picture book can contaminate the child's ability to learn, and anthropomorphic animals stand in the way of acquiring 'factual knowledge'. However:

children's books provide something more than explicit information. They are cultural products that both reflect the orientations of their creators and may also affect the orientations adopted by their viewers. (Waxman et. al 2014)

If this is the case, then it makes a lot of sense to investigate how picture books construct anthropomorphism and how it functions within the literary work. Carolyn Burke and Joby Copenhaver have tried to do just that: explore the functions of anthropomorphism in children's literature. Their article entitled 'Animals as People in Children's Literature' (2004) is another example of an approach that focuses on the didactic aspects of anthropomorphic animal representation, but one which does not condemn anthropomorphism as harshly. Teacher educators Burke and Copenhaver ask the questions: 'Why

do animals with human characteristics populate so many early childhood stories? What purpose do they serve?' (206) They answer these questions based on the function these anthropomorphic animals perform within the child readers' psychological development.

After an exploration of literature's functions - what psychological needs does literature attempt to fulfil? – they look at anthropomorphism and contend that: 'the use of animals has long provided intellectual and psychological distance and allowed us to critically explore that which we would not be comfortable exploring directly' (207). Tracing the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature from religion to adult literature they write that

(o)nce the construct of anthropomorphism had been extended to children's literature, it could be enlisted to instruct on topics and issues of knowledge and social belief. The talking, thinking, acting animals could provide for children what they were already providing for their adult mentors – a buffered engagement with a message of cultural significance. (210)

Burke and Copenhaver emphasize that there is a continuity between children's literature and literature for adult readers with respect to the function of anthropomorphism. For them, anthropomorphism is not a 'childish' feature that is limited to the realm of children's culture. It has, instead, an important function in human civilizations and it performs a similar function in children's literature when:

we deal with issues of deep and lasting cultural significance, letting the animals try out our roles for us. We let them take the risks and absorb the punishments when plans fail or solutions fall through. The intellectual and emotional distance that the animals' role-playing allows children and their mentoring adults grants space in which to become reflexive and critical concerning life problems and life choices. (212)

This is an interesting thought, as it suggests that animals in culture can have a similar function as animals in life: they are, quite literally, guinea pigs on which we test both scientific and moral hypotheses. But in this process, the animal run the risk of disappearing, and when this happens, opportunities to investigate both humanity, animality and the (perceived) boundaries between them are lost. In following this line of argumentation, the authors reduce the animality of these anthropomorphic characters to their function within a humanist body of ideas. When Waxman, Goldman and Ganea identify anthropomorphism as a phenomenon with negative consequences for young minds, they are highlighting the importance of learning to recognize the differences between human and nonhuman animals. Biology provides them with the scientific paradigm to justify this way of thinking, which because of its one-sidedness doesn't do justice to other functions anthropomorphism might have.

Burke and Copenhaver avoid this, but in emphasizing the importance of anthropomorphic animal representations within human culture, they, too, stay within a humanist mindset.

This is not unique to scholars working within an educational context. Even scholars that study the literary or narratological qualities of (anthropomorphic) animal representations have traditionally favored similar explanations. When animal presence is exclusively interpreted in light of the child reader's development as a human being in an exclusively human world, it runs the risk of becoming trivial. When that happens, fictional animals can be reduced to a necessary evil, a stage of indulgence in cuteness on the way to adulthood. It is in this spirit that Joseph and Chava Schwarcz (1991) warn against giving young readers too many animal stories, which I will quote at length since their argument demonstrates quite accurately that Western cultures suffer from a fundamental friction when dealing with issues of humanity and animality:

Another kind of book that should be approached with circumspection is the picture story about animals. Yes, I know that animal stories are adored by most of us. I am aware that they are anchored in myth, in folklore, in the fable, and in the parable. I hasten to add that there exists a large number of significant animal picture stories. More than that, I am convinced that children feel close to animals and love them dearly because of their funny, feathery, and furry presence and their abundant kinetic energy, and also because children have little trouble understanding the relatively simple behavior of animals, and, finally, because children can identify with the vulnerability of small animals. So far, so good. And again, some – even quite a lot – of such books would be fine. But stories having an animal, any kind of animal – wild, domesticated, anthropomorphous, stuffed – as their hero, proliferate. [...] That constitutes an overdose. [...] The problem lies in the fact that animal heroes are actually put before children as likely objects of identification. Animals are lovely and even serious beings, but in most stories featuring them, their actions, reactions, and thoughts are suitably simple. [...] Too many trite cats, dogs, bears, and elephants constitute an exploitation of juvenile susceptibility. (9)

This passage is filled with interesting assertions that deserve our attention. For example: what do the authors mean when they say that 'children feel close to animals'? Do they make a distinction between real and fictional animals? And how is this closeness motivated? Does it end when the child enters adolescence? The authors seem to suggest that animals (again: real or fictional?) behave in a simple manner that is easy to understand for young readers. Then there is the word 'overdose', which connotes not only an excess but also an addiction to something that is ultimately unhealthy. According to the authors, it is better for children to encounter other human characters with complex human (!) mental processes.

This evokes the relatively common assumption that children need to outgrow their association with animals and instead subscribe wholeheartedly to a humanist philosophy that places *Homo Sapiens* at the center of events. The simplicity of animal representations is presented as an argument against the presence of animals. Being somehow considered to be more susceptible than adults, the child is especially at risk when being exposed to such depictions.

It is, however, important not to be too rigid in distinguishing children's literature from literature for adult readers. As Burke and Copenhaver point out, anthropomorphism is not something that is unique to children's culture. There is instead a meaningful continuity between these types of texts. John Rowe Townsend makes a similar point in *Written for Children* (1990), when he writes that animal stories for children originated from stories intended primarily for adults:

In fiction, the humanized or semi-humanized animal has a long tradition behind it. In the great collections of folktales, such as the Anansi stories of Africa and the West Indies, there is often confusion between men and animals – Anansi himself is now one, now the other – and the animals have broadly human attributes which, however, are modified by their animal characteristics. Western folk tales are full of humanized animals. Often in the old tales, there is a loose camaraderie between man and animals – an earthy acceptance perhaps that we and they are not so very different. We can see this assumption of kinship working in a naiver way every day among small children. The animals they see around them are not clearly differentiated from people. (94-95)

Ideas of kinship between humans and animals are not unique to children's literature, and they should not be treated as if they belong to a primitive phase in either humanity's or the child's development. Issues of identity are important and need to be explored – anthropomorphism is one of the ways to do this. Anthropomorphic animals are not always a sign of anthropocentrism; because of their status as hybrids they can also potentially challenge human supremacy.

Townsend also expresses the concern that stories with humanized animals can easily degenerate into sentimentality or simplicity. As an example he describes how some stories choose to classify some animals as good and other as bad, based on traits that humans tend to value or loath (i.e. 'cuteness' vs 'sliminess'). But he appears to see this as a flaw of the authors, and not as an inherent risk of the use of anthropomorphism. The abovementioned examples point to what could possibly be the cardinal concern in many discussions about anthropomorphism in children's culture: the question whether or not it is possible for us to speak truth about animals when these animals appear in an anthropomorphized form.

Issues of species and identity

I have already mentioned how the choice to use anthropomorphic animal characters can be motivated by a desire to obscure certain human categories. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott write in *How Picturebooks Work* (2001):

The depiction of the picturebook protagonist as an animal (or toy or inanimate object) gives the creator the freedom to eliminate or circumvent several important issues that are otherwise essential in our assessment of character: those of age, gender and social status. (92)

In eliminating issues of age, gender and social status, however, species membership itself becomes a category relevant for the protagonist's position on the social ladder. When we have no access to our human categories of difference, species becomes the key indicator of difference, and in many cases this entails hierarchy as well. Because certain species have a higher status within human societies, we cannot claim that these types of animal representations create more egalitarian relationships. We can speculate that species is perhaps more fundamental than age, gender and social status, and difference based on species is easier to accept for those of us who grew up in Western cultures. As we have seen, Cary Wolfe (2003) argues that species difference is fundamental to the construction of all other (inter-human) differences, and as such we cannot really circumvent social hierarchy by using animal characters. The act of narrating already places them so firmly in an anthropocentric context that their species membership tells us more about ourselves than about the animals.

However, Nikolajeva and Scott point out that the most fascinating aspect of the anthropomorphic animals in picture books is how they find a balance between the human and the animal. They state that '(t)he tension between animal and human traits in the creation of animal characters is especially interesting when a delicate balance between the two is portrayed. (93) This balancing act between otherness and identity is a fundamental function of anthropomorphism in picture books. It is important to be aware of the risks of overemphasizing one of these poles. In *Beyond Boundaries; Humans and Animals* (1997) anthropologist Barbara Noske emphasizes the risk that overemphasizing identity and continuity between animals and humans entails a risk of over-humanizing the animal:

Instead of lifting animals up to our level it actually reduces them to humanness: Western individualized humanness. (xiii)

So in our interpretation of anthropomorphism in picture books, we also have to guard against this humanizing tendency. In a sense, anthropomorphized animals symbolize our desire to humanize animal others, to bring them into our sphere of comprehension by diminishing their otherness.

Therefore, it is important that we take into consideration where our ideas about what constitutes humanity and animality come from. In order to understand these often inconspicuous fictional animals, we have to look at the context in which they arise. Noske contends that: 'one can hardly talk about 'human' and 'animal' in abstraction from the sociohistorical context and the cultural notions which humans (and animals too, as we will see) bring to bear on human as well as animal realities. (Noske ix) This also holds true for the animal representations that appear in picture books. Their 'humans' and 'animals' are no abstractions, nor are they always metaphors. The meanings we attribute to them are contingent on the sociohistorical context surrounding the book.

With the advent of Human Animal Studies, we have come to see more and more studies of children's literature that focus on how authors of children's books deal with the animal question. Tess Cosslet's study of animal autobiographies (2006), is an example of this kind of work. And when Roxanne Harde writes about dog stories in her article "'Doncher be too sure of that!": Children, Dogs, and Elisabeth Stuart Phelps's Early Posthumanism', she uses modern posthumanist theories to highlight how Phelps (1844-1911), in her day, employed similar strategies to question practices such as vivisection. Phelps' critique of the suffering of animals in scientific research was in line with her other concerns and areas of activism:

Though both religious and sentimental, her discourse on animals and their role in scientific enterprise brings the same critical attention to questions of species that she previously had to issues of child saving, women's rights and labor reform. (11-12)

We recognize this connection with gender, class and age from Cary Wolfe's speculations on the discourse of species, and this is a recurring strand of thought in the field of Human Animal Studies. For many scholars and activists working in the field, the question of the animal intersects with other social issues. What is so interesting about Harde's article is that she points out that Phelps makes claims of kinship that prefigure those of modern theorists of human-animal relations, in particular Donna Haraway's emphasis on significant otherness. She demonstrates that 'Phelps's work offers a complexity as it negotiates competing impulses toward the posthuman recognition of separate but equal species and the cultural power of human emotions, especially sympathy.' (15) Because they shed new light on the history of animal welfare issues and the significance of the animal question throughout the history of children's literature, studies such as this one are extremely interesting and valuable. They demonstrate that children's literature has long been concerned with the complexity of the animal question, and has responded to it in sophisticated ways.

On the other end of the spectrum we find studies that focus on popular material whose creators are not always politically motivated. Amy Ratelle's

book *Animality and Children's Literature and Film* (2015), is an example of this type of work. My dissertation is more closely affiliated with this category of research. In most of the Little Golden Books that I discuss here, the animal question is not openly addressed. Rather, it hides behind the unsophisticated façade of the commercial merchandise book. But that doesn't mean that they do not formulate an answer to the question. It is in this unconscious (or subconscious) dimension that the picture book format opens up for interesting discussions. Since there are always gaps or inconsistencies in the space between text and image, readers need to fill them with their own inferences.

Human Animal Studies has created opportunities to study these as yet underexposed aspects of the representation of animals in the medium of the picture book. One specific aspect of these books, that I already hinted at in the beginning of this introduction, is the appeal of cute animals. Popular picture books such as the Little Golden Books often entails high levels of cuteness in the illustrations. Cuteness can come in the guise of neoteny, the emphasis on juvenile traits in the appearance and/or behavior of the animal. Kittens and puppies, which are common characters in the Little Golden Books, are often depicted with exaggerated neotenous qualities, for example: extra bulbous heads, large eyes, short limbs.

In his book *Wildlife in the Anthropocene, Conservation after Nature* (2015), Jamie Lorimer gives a convincing explanation for the overwhelming appeal of certain species of animals at the expense of others. Lorimer introduces the concept of nonhuman charisma to 'describe a set of species that have popular appeal' (39). The concept describes 'the features of a particular organism of ecological process that configure its perception and subsequent evaluation' (39). He distinguishes between different kinds of charisma: ecological, corporeal and aesthetic charisma. The latter type is useful in explaining the predominance of certain species in popular picture books for a young readership.

Aesthetic charisma within conservation practices 'describes the visual properties of certain organisms that would normally be described and presented in marketing and advocacy materials.' (46) In its emphasis on visual appeal, aesthetic charisma can be a useful concept to explain why illustrators, but also publishers and buyers of picture books are attracted to books that depict a certain type of animal. This kind of charisma relies on anthropomorphism, as it is based on characteristics that animals share with humans. (47) Lorimer write that 'Popular responses to the aesthetics of organisms appear to be arranged along an axis of anthropomorphism' (46). And: 'aesthetic charisma refers to the distinguishing properties of an organism's visual appearance that trigger affective responses in those humans it encounters (49). A subtype of aesthetic charisma is 'cuddly charisma', which often relies on the neotenous traits of the animals in question. It is this type of charisma that might account for the abundance of certain species of animals in picture books for young children.

The ethical dimension of reading popular picture books

When discussing animals in children's literature, the abovementioned authors all make mention of the consequences of the presence of these creatures in literature for young readers. Not all of them, however, explore the consequences for the reader's developing sense of ethics.

This dissertation intends to analyze the way popular picture books handle issues of animality and humanity, inter- and intra-species difference and identity, with a special focus on the function and effects of anthropomorphism. The use of anthropomorphism inevitably introduces a complex ethical dimension to the reading experience. Reading these books critically means that we have to ask ourselves questions such as: To what extent are animals like us? How does our own animality inform our responses to other animals – fictional and real? How does our empathy for animals in culture affect our behavior towards animals in nature or society?

The relationship between the ethical message which leads to the response of empathy for fictional characters does not always correspond with people's ethically questionable actions. The history of anthropomorphic animals in children's literature has often been linked with promotion of the emergence of the animal welfare movement. In *Talking animals in British children's fiction, 1786-1914* (2006), Tess Cosslett writes that Ann Sewell's classic novel *Black Beauty* is an example of this kind of literature, and that it has in fact led to the improvement of the lives of cart horses.

However, it is not difficult to find more disturbing responses to empathetic fictional characters. In his chapter in *Animal Encounters* (2009) entitled 'Americans do weird things with animals, or, why did the chicken cross the road', Randy Malamud discusses among other things the discrepancy that arises between ethics and actions when people empathize with fictional animals in children's films. The chapter, which discusses the often perverse ways in which animals are exploited in the name of art or entertainment in the United States, starts from a similar assumption as my dissertation, namely, that '(o)ur cultural interactions and representation are ecologically significant: how we treat animals in culture affects how we treat animals in nature'. (73) According to Malamud: 'Every frame becomes a cage, for animals in human cultures'. (83) (*Italics in original*).

It is his perspective on framing animals and the meaning of anthropomorphizing them while framing them in multiple culturally sanctioned ways that can also provide a fruitful starting point for the discussion of popular picture books. One aspect in particular that will return time and again in this dissertation is the adoption of a humanlike posture by fictional animals and the depiction of them wearing human clothes. Malamud's interpretation of real animals being dressed in human clothes is equally significant for our reading of

anthropomorphized animals in picture books: ‘Clothes make the man, they say. Now clothes make the animal, too: or make the animal a man – similar, but lesser, as if they would want to be like us.’ (83)

This argument can easily be extended to the anthropomorphic animal characters in children’s literature, where, admittedly, many weird things happen. And then there is the added complication that the intended audience does not yet qualify as fully human either. Western cultures have throughout history highlighted the young child’s resemblance with animals, sometimes even arguing that they resemble animals more closely than they resemble adult human beings.

So, especially when picture books are aimed at very young readers, clothing becomes more than just a signifier of humanity – it also highlights the controversy surrounding the boundaries of this humanity, even for members of the species *Homo Sapiens*. Nikolajeva describes the significance of the use of clothing in the depiction of anthropomorphic animal characters in Beatrix Potter’s *Peter Rabbit* books as one of the aspects that blurs the boundary between human and animal:

‘Characterization by means of clothes is of great significance in Potter’s work. Besides the notion of clothing an animal as part of the animal/human dichotomy, clothing is also used generally in picturebooks to communicate a great deal of information about the character, including aspects of social status, age, occupation and self-image. In terms of the animal/human spectrum, Potter focuses in several of her tales upon the conflict between human, civilized expectations and animal urges. (95)

Peter struggles with his animal urges, as perhaps, many children do on their path to adulthood. These animal urges are part of the human experience, and many of the animals that we find in the Little Golden Books are performing, if not always conflicts, then at least balancing acts between instinctive urges and the demands of civilization.

But there is more to *Peter Rabbit* than the story of a child struggling with his identity. The rabbit as a species is part of cultural history, and it has been used in many different contexts, in works meant for both adults and children. Boel Westin emphasizes the dual nature of the rabbits in *Peter Rabbit*, as they have both animal and human characteristics. Significantly, no matter how much Beatrix Potter’s rabbit family is humanized, the laws that ultimately govern their lives are the laws of nature, not of human civilization. The relationship between humans and rabbits is that between predator and prey, and the fear of humans is an essential part of the rabbits’ lives. (2016, 68) Rabbits as a species play a prominent role in children’s literature and Westin points out how they in later years have become more and more hybrid creatures, questioning and sometimes challenging the human-animal boundary. (2016, 72) These evolutions occur in other human-animal context

as well, and they are significant because they tell us how perspectives on animality and humanity evolve.

Struggles with ‘animal urges’ can also emerge on other levels of the picture book. In one of the case studies I discuss the act hunting, killing and eating of animals by other (anthropomorphic) animals. Hunting, killing and eating animals may be urges that are present in both humans and animals – it can only really be overcome by humans. And this adds an ethical dimension to these stories. The silent realization that it is our choices that determine which animal gets eaten and which one does not, finds its way into some of the picture books. Anthropomorphism is an excellent tool to push this issue to the extreme.

In *Gaston and Josephine* (1948) by George Duplaix, for example, the protagonists are humanized young pigs who live in a human society. When they are on their way to visit their relatives, they are captured by a human farmer who locks them up with the other pigs, with the intention to eat them. In spite of their protest and the clear distinction between them and the other pigs on the farm, who are not anthropomorphized, the farmer insists on keeping them prisoner. However, they are rescued by a hunting party (!) and the confusion of the farmer is consequently described as a crime. This play with contrasting members of the same species, who are attributed different degrees of anthropomorphism, reveals the power that is inherent in the humanization of certain animals.

As readers we are left with the uncomfortable feeling that empathy is only possible if we have reason to believe that the animal is like us. Whether this is a valid ground for giving animals certain rights is a next step in the debate on anthropomorphism. This dissertation offers some guidelines as to how species difference is constructed in commercial picture books, how it can be identified and conceptualized, and how we can work with these books and the animal question in education.

Returning to Malamud’s warning against the dangers of anthropomorphizing animals by dressing them in human clothing, I would like to highlight one of the main tensions in the discussion of anthropomorphism in picture books. A similar, sometimes misguided claim to humanity is what is at stake in many of the picture books that will be discussed in this dissertation. What is troubling about this is that even though anthropomorphism in fictional works has the potency to create empathy for the fictional animal protagonists, this does not always lead to empathy with their real life counterparts. Malamud praises cartoons like *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *Antz* (1998) for their respectful depiction of animals, their subjectivity and their inner lives. In these two movies, the:

animals are dignified with agency and complex characters. Their narratives are elaborated in a way that at least considers some degree of parity between human consciousness and animal consciousness, human emotion and animal emotion (90).

The problem arises when these films inspire their audiences to purchase animals of the main characters' species. In these cases, there was a heightened demand for live clown fish and ant farms. Even though the message of the two films was quite obvious, and we may assume that the audience subscribed to it, this did nothing to make them reconsider the ethical implications of their choices as consumers. Malamud rightly asks:

How does this cognitive-ethical process work? (...) Does the cultural attention to one token, isolated animal somehow justify, or even demand, the oppression of thousands of others? (91)

Malamud mentions the pressure of consumerism as one of the reasons real animals fall victim to the popularity of their fictional counterparts. This is a valid concern, and that is why reading commercial picture books – or any books, for that matter - should ideally not take place in a vacuum. Therefore, I propose to use critical literacy skills to interrogate the animal presence in these books. It is useful as an academic exercise, but can also be performed together with young readers.

Disposition

My intention with this dissertation is to demonstrate the working of the diverse strategies used in the Little Golden Books to represent human-animal relationships, and to investigate how they are intertwined with wider cultural phenomena. Anthropomorphism naturally receives much attention within this study, since uncritical anthropomorphic representations of animals abound in commercial picture books. As I have argued in this chapter, it is not at all a trite phenomenon, as some authors are apt to suggest. Rather, a careful study of construction and function of anthropomorphism will contribute to a more sophisticated reading of animal presence in commercial picture books.

The first chapter focuses on animals that live within the middle class household. Pets have a special place in the socialization process of the middle class child, and the two case studies on canine and feline characters demonstrate how species and gender set boundaries for child-animal interactions. These case studies also show how pet keeping reiterates adult-child power relations within the family.

The second chapter discusses discourses of domestication, taming and wildness. The first case study in this chapter discusses how the representations of horses center around issues of taming and wildness. These stories

thematize the harnessing of the power of a large animal, which can happen either by means of violence or through gentle compassion. The unique relationship between a child and a horse is gendered: for boys it can be thought of as special friendship, while stories about girls tend to describe this bond in romantic terms. The next case study deals with the issue of animals in the entertainment industry and animals used to promote human causes. It takes up the fictionalization of two real animals: the chimpanzee J. Fred Muggs, who was a television personality and Smokey the Bear, who became a national symbol after being rescued from a forest fire.

The final chapter considers how picture books deal with hunting, killing and eating animals. A particularly interesting situation arises when the ones committing these acts of violence are anthropomorphic animal characters. Their hybridity makes a justification of interspecies violence possible, and makes that the reader refrains from questioning it if is not specifically addressed. The final case study offers some readings of human-animal interactions from a postcolonial perspective. Picture books can set up animals as colonial others and can in some cases mediate cultural imperialism. Further, I suggest that reading these picture books ‘for animals’ will help both adult and young readers to understand how species difference is constructed in popular culture.

Critical reading strategies inspired by postcolonial studies can be used to encourage children to read against the grain and question the validity of conventional practices such as meat eating, disciplining animals, or keeping animals for the purpose of entertainment. In a sense, trapping animals within a narrative is already an act of domestication, and child readers are at risk of being domesticated themselves when they do not actively engage with the books they are offered.

Chapter 1: Pethood and childhood in the context of middle class America



Figure 2: Dr. Penny Patterson interacting with Koko

Koko and The Three Little Kittens

In 1972, Penny Patterson, a graduate student at Stanford University, initiated what came to be the world's longest running research project on interspecies communication. Her aim was to teach Koko, a then one-year-old female gorilla, American Sign Language (ASL) in order to gain insight into the inner life of a non-human primate. The website koko.org states that:

[w]ith Penny's help, Koko has learned to use over 1,000 signs and seems to understand approximately 2,000 spoken English words. Further, Koko understands these signs sufficiently well to adapt them or combine them to express new meanings that she wants to convey.

Appealing to a deep human desire to communicate across and beyond species boundaries, the project is optimistic about the implications of Koko's language skills. It is assumed that teaching Koko ASL will result in giving her the ability to express herself verbally in a fashion resembling inter-human communication. The project and its forum and online community The Gorilla Foundation is not only concerned with teaching gorillas ASL, but also intends to promote sympathy for gorillas in order to motivate people to act on the behalf of the conservation of the species and the promotion of their welfare. The project's objectives according to the website are:

- To continue to provide the best possible care for Koko and Ndume.
- To enhance the Woodside sanctuary and to increase Koko's family
- To create a sanctuary for captive gorillas on Maui
- To continue our interspecies communication project and share our insights with other primate organizations
- To work with empathy-engaging materials to spread the conservation message throughout gorilla habitats in Africa and to change hearts and minds about gorillas, worldwide.
- To develop educational tools (multimedia e-books and apps) to enable others to interpret our work, be inspired by it, and replicate it to help free-living gorillas as well as those living in sanctuaries and zoos. (Koko.org)

The project is concerned with raising empathy for gorillas, and uses their likeness with human primates as a key to achieve this. The apes' ability to successfully learn to understand and use human language is presented as the core of this likeness. This approach raises a host of questions and concerns, both of an epistemological and ethical nature. What is the nature and validity of the knowledge we gain when we communicate across species lines? Is it a good idea to appeal to human likeness as a basis for ethical concern, or are there other criteria that may weigh heavier? In line with Jeremy Bentham's famous assertion that 'The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?' (Bentham, 1789) we can ask ourselves whether projects like this one may ultimately be unable to change the way animals are seen and treated. Since they are built on the primacy of language and likeness with humans, they reinforce a humanist worldview. These and other issues that concern human/animal differences and similarities recur throughout this dissertation.

In the photograph at the beginning of this chapter, Koko is looking at a Little Golden Book: *The Three Little Kittens*, which was originally published in 1942 and illustrated by New York based artist Masha. The image of Koko and her trainer, actively engaging with a children's book also raises questions about age and (moral) status. This photograph encapsulates the principal concerns of this dissertation. This representation of an individual, named gorilla's interaction with a cultural artefact, in this case a picture book, speaks volumes about Western culture's assumptions about the place of (certain kinds of) animals, children's books, and children. The conflation of children and animals is a particularly persistent myth, and in this image it is invoked by the composition of the scene, as well as by the book that is featured.

The photograph shows us Dr. Patterson holding the picture book so that Koko can look at the images. This is a strangely familiar scene: one we recognize from our own childhoods or from our interactions with the children in our lives. An adult human being assuming the role of mediator between the book and the child. Dr. Patterson reads to Koko in a manner similar to how we were read to as children, or how we in our adult lives read to children. The many layers of meaning this image contains highlight the complexity of the representations of the interactions between human and nonhuman animals. It is, for example, tempting to look at this image through a humanist, anthropocentric lens and let our interpretation be guided by human primacy. This means that as we are confronted with the image of Koko the gorilla, we simultaneously see Koko in the role of a human child. And through this association, the image becomes a token of domestic bliss.

On the other hand, interspecies interactions such as this one open up for a view of the human-animal relationship that is not predicated on ideas of opposition or dichotomy, but rather on companionship and affection. Donna Haraway is one of the scholars who are trying to redefine the human-animal relationship in these terms. In her writings she developed the concepts of

companion species, significant otherness, contact zones, and naturecultures, which are useful ideas to understand the animal-child connection, both in real life as in its myriad representations.

This is a powerful image because of the apparent intimacy of the moment. However, in spite of it being an intriguing example of communication and affection that effectively blurs species boundaries, there is something deeply unsettling about the image as well. In the background we can make out a wired fence. This indicates that contact between the two individuals does not actually take place in the safe surroundings of a family home, but in a more regulated setting. This visual cue referring to Koko's state of captivity (or should we call it imprisonment?) indicates that the interspecies relationship is far more complex than the homely atmosphere suggested by the image reveals. When asked whether Koko lives in a cage, the Koko.org website writes:

Koko lives in a sanctuary in Woodside, California. Koko's home is a warm cozy environment that she has known since she first moved up from Stanford University. Koko spends her days either in her living area, which includes a kitchen and where she has her many toys, books, magazines and DVD's or outside in her large outdoor enclosure, which she shares with her companion Ndume. There is an open porch area where Koko receives visits and this area is protected by a mesh sliding door, which allows Koko to decide whether she wishes to invite her guests inside or not! Koko, Penny and Ron spend their afternoons and evenings together here. (koko.org)

Shying away from a straightforward yes or no answer, the organization instead chooses to describe her living situation in terms that closely resemble human conditions, and for good reason. The issue of captivity is a sensitive one when one has just stated that gorillas are in many ways like people. This is one of the major contradictions arising from picture book representations of animals as well, especially when they are highly anthropomorphized, which is often the case in picture books for a young readership. How do we unite the idea that animals are like us with the actual living conditions of the animals in our society? How do we explain to children that, while we ask them to empathize with fictional animals and encourage them to be kind to real animals in their everyday life, we can also eat them, kill them, or treat them cruelly and violently in other contexts?

In considering the representation of Koko, we are also confronted with the complexities surrounding our attitudes towards animals and children on a more general level. For example: it challenges the viewer to ask herself what it is we are observing. Consider, for example, Koko's posture. As a viewer who is not familiar with ASL, I may wonder if she is signing, or shielding her eyes, or doing something different altogether. Is she communicating or refusing to communicate? Is she seeing or not seeing? And what is she, this gorilla who has been introduced to human language, seeing were she to look

at the images in the picture book? How does she imagine herself in relation to the fictional animals in the picture book?

We may even wonder to what extent Koko herself is a fiction, a product of the all too human desire to bring nonhuman animals under our sphere of influence. In spite of her ability to sign, she is the stories we tell about her. Even with the possibility of using certain words and phrases in her communication with her human companions, she is trapped within the human language that is offered to her. Is it wishful thinking to assume that teaching Koko ASL will enable her to successfully communicate? Do we really gain access to the animal lifeworld if the only alternative we offer her is human language, and therefore by necessity a human frame of thought?

Furthermore, imagining Koko as a human child disregards the issue of Koko's actual maturity. Do we even dwell on how old Koko is when this photograph was taken? The conflation of an adult animal with the idea of a human child is a recurring one in children's literature, especially when the animals in question are anthropomorphized. In picture books and illustrations, adult animals are frequently depicted with traits that are typical for juvenile animals (including humans): round shapes, large heads in comparison with the rest of the body, large, round eyes, short, stubby noses... These shapes are said to appeal to the biological urge to care for young ones, that apparently stretches across species boundaries. Cuteness as a basis for sympathy and ethical consideration is tacitly promoted by many picture books.

One starts to suspect that Koko is to be almost as much a fiction as the cats in the picture book she is reading, and she herself disappears in this entanglement. Her ability to sign is not –cannot be - the equivalent of giving her a voice, and it does not always provide us with the answers that we are looking for. Instead we find ourselves staring in a mirror, confronted by a silence that will not yield to humanist visions of the talking animal.

Several of these meaningful silences permeate our discussion of this meeting between two primates and a picture book. Our desire to compensate for Koko's lack of a human voice by providing her with an alternative, which is still predicated on a humanist perception of communication, is an example of one such silence. The space between the images and words, that we necessarily fill up with our own historically and culturally determined interpretations, is another one.

Picture books, too, rely on the reader's interpretative effort to fill in the gaps between image and text. The way in which the Little Golden Books, commercial picture books by nature, invite us to fill out the blanks is one route I will follow throughout this dissertation. Studying these books with an eye for their unique qualities stresses that there is a need for critical reading strategies in order to emphasize our preconceptions regarding not only the commercial background of these and similar books, but also with respect to their importance in an interspecies context. It goes without saying that attitudes towards animals shift over time, and that different sources mediate their own interpretation of the animal-child relationship in unique ways.

Because they follow a well-defined format, the Little Golden Books aesthetics are relatively consistent. Through a combination of image, paratextual elements and the narrative itself, these books further an understanding of animals that is embedded within a middle class, capitalist, American context. Consider, for example, this illustration taken from a Little Golden Book entitled *J. Fred Muggs* (1955) by Irwin Shapiro and illustrated by Edwin Schmidt:



Figure 3: J. Fred Muggs having breakfast

The story of this Golden Book is based on the life of a real chimpanzee, who performed in an American talk show in the 1950s. According to the front matter of the book: '[e]very morning everywhere in the country, people feel better because they have laughed at J. Fred Muggs, the cheerful TV chimpanzee. This Little Golden Book takes you in front of the camera with Muggs.' In addition, the copyright of this Golden Book is owned by J. Fred Muggs Enterprises, not by Simon and Schuster's publishing house.

This book, a fictional account of a day in the life of a highly humanized primate and his juvenile human caretaker reveals the entanglement of ideological content from different areas of life. This book can be read as a blatant attempt at justifying the use of an animal for entertainment purposes. It can be read as a story about interspecies friendship. It is also a story about the role of the media in the lives of young Americans in the 1950s.

The fact that Koko is 'reading' a Golden Book and the fact that she is visually positioned as if she can straightforwardly be equated with a human child, is of critical import to our understanding of the animal, the child and

the book. The book Koko is 'reading' is a Golden Book entitled *The Three Little Kittens*. Based on an English nursery rhyme, this book tells the story of three kittens who 'lost their mittens'. The rhyme has a long tradition, possibly with roots in folklore, but the version as it appears in the Little Golden Book is attributed to American poet Eliza Lee Cabbot Folen (1787-1860). The rhyme goes:

The three little kittens they lost their mittens,
And they began to cry,
Oh, mother dear, we sadly fear
Our mittens we have lost
What? Lost your mittens, you naughty kittens!
Then you shall have no pie.
Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow.
We shall have no pie.
Our mittens we have lost.

The three little kittens they found their mittens,
And they began to smile,
Oh, mother dear, see here, see here,
Our mittens we have found
What? Found your mittens, you good little kittens,
And you shall have some pie.
Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow.
We shall have some pie.
Let us have some pie.

The three little kittens put on their mittens,
And soon ate up the pie;
Oh, mother dear, we greatly fear
Our mittens we have soiled
What? Soiled your mittens, you naughty kittens!
Then they began to sigh,
Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow.
Our mittens we have soiled.
Then they began to sigh.

The three little kittens they washed their mittens,
And hung them out to dry;
Oh! mother dear, look here, look here,
Our mittens we have washed
What? Washed your mittens, you good little kittens,
But I smell a rat close by.
Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow.
We smell a rat close by.

Let's all have some pie.

According to Janet Sinclair Gray, the cats in this nursery rhyme reflect a bourgeois lifestyle, because they wear mittens, eat pie, and are subordinate to their mother in a sense that is typical for the 18th century bourgeois parent-child relationship. In *Race and Time* (2004) she writes how this poem illustrates 'the circumstances under which the Romantic concept of childhood emerged in American literary culture' and how it addresses 'a categorical confusion that Susan Stewart describes as one of the oldest and most prevalent sources of nonsense, the merging of animal and human'. (192) In her interpretation of the poem, Gray emphasizes the importance of class and how this influences the outlook on issues of nature and culture:

Like many of the anonymous poems in Mother Goose, "The Three Little Kittens" may or may not have once had allegorical meaning; if so, it has not been retrieved. The sophistication of "The Three Little Kittens," however, lends plausibility to its having been authored by someone like Follen rather than emerging out of folk origins. The kittens occupying Bo-Peep's place, the place of the child who fears she has lost something, make the poem curiously modern, domestic, and bourgeois. With their mittens and pie, these are not barn cats. The choice of "mittens" as the object they have lost sets up a tactile "rhyme" of fuzziness as well as the auditory rhyme, but it also elegantly represents the Cartesian separation between nature and culture. Sound summons the pie, too, into the poem through the need for a rhyme for "cry"; the orality of speaking summons the orality of eating, the kittens' reward for reuniting with their mittens. But this is not a reunion with nature; the mittens and pie absurdly civilize the kittens, alienating them from cat nature. The poem compensates the human child for this alienation by providing plentiful opportunities to imitate animal sounds (just the sort of nonsense Hale deplored). Further, the smell of the rat resolves the poem's violation of the difference between cats and humans and restores their proper relationship, since cats' killing of rats is a reason why humans value them. Detecting a common enemy also puts a happy ending on a disciplinary cycle that gives a moral twist to the sense of identity practiced in this poem. The maternal authority declares the kittens naughty, silly, naughty, and good. But the domestic manners to which she is socializing them set the children up for failure: kittens must wear mittens to eat pie, but if they get pie on their mittens, they are bad. This absurd disciplinary pattern is not strictly coercive or imposed; penalties are light, and the children reveal their eager dependency on the mother's judgment by reporting regularly to her about their woes and triumphs, probably trying her patience ("You silly kittens!"). And, despite the absurdity of the rules, the children do make progress toward autonomy and mastery—they find and wash their own mittens and, with the rat hunt, begin a serious lesson in adult catlikeness. Socialization is inescapably absurd, the poem seems to say, and alienation strikes at the earliest stages of the subject's development; but the poem offers mastery over the split between subject and object through care of one's possessions and group solidarity against a common other. (Gray: 196-197)

The Golden Book reinforces this message by means of the images. The illustration on the title page shows how the anthropomorphized kittens, a boy and two girls, play outdoors dressed in gender specific human clothes, notably mittens. Their activities - rope skipping, fishing and picking flowers – lead them to take off their mittens and forget about them. When their mother finds out she withholds them their supper as a form of punishment. Later on I will go deeper into the significance of food events within this specific type of parent-child relationship, which is relatively common in children’s books concurrent with a distinctly middle class value system.

The Little Golden Books adaptation of the story translates the bourgeois elements of the 18th century poem to a 20th century American middle class context. The environment in which the narrative is situated is typical for mid 20th century middle class America. One of the visual clues pointing in this direction is the commercial package of ‘soap powder’ used by the kittens to wash their mittens. The living room where the mother cat is working on her embroidery, too, reminds the reader of a middle class home: paintings or photographs of relatives adorn the walls, the mother is seated in an armchair with her children gathered around her. Signs of a middle class childhood as it is depicted in the illustrations include child-sized furniture, the presence of age- and gender-specific toys (the tomcat is playing with a wooden train) and children’s books.

The kittens’ appearance in a Little Golden Book adaptation is in many ways a telling one. The special nature of these picture books and their depiction of their animal inhabitants is deeply anchored in the historical and social context in which they were published, critically received, purchased and collected. The image of Koko reading this Little Golden Book is so striking because it shows us the extent to which Koko’s story and the kittens’ tale are interwoven. The Koko.org website informs us that Koko has a special relationship to cats, according to the researchers who work with her.

From the moment when Koko first adopted a kitten, the world watched, with baited breath, to see the extraordinary sight of this gentle giant displaying incredible sensitivity and care in her interaction with these tiny creatures. Koko has had a succession of kittens over the years, but it was her relationship with “Allball”, her first kitten that raised awareness and empathy worldwide, not only by her display of maternal care, but also by the incredible grief she displayed when she learnt that Allball had been hit by a car. The full range of her experience and emotional reactions is clearly almost identical to that of a similar human experience and serves to underline just how closely we resemble one another. (koko.org)

This excerpt, again, reveals how the idea of identity, similarity and resemblance is posited as a – and perhaps the most – valid foundation for the

reader's empathy with the gorilla. By describing how Koko displays emotions that in their expression resemble human emotions, the reader is invited to develop a theory of mind regarding Koko. So with her strong fondness of cats in mind, we can understand the human motivation behind giving her a picture book with cat protagonist. But what does Koko see when she sees the representations of the cats in the picture book? Can she conceive of the anthropomorphized cats as belonging to the same species as the living creatures she plays with, cares about and has learned to refer to as cats? Does she contribute gorilla traits to them, or is anthropomorphizing a uniquely human activity? Does she have any thoughts about the relation between fiction and reality? What theory of mind do we attribute to an animal like Koko, and in our desire to understand her and her lifeworld, do we really do justice to her ape-nature?

Anthropomorphism and its role in within a middle class society/ideology play a decisive role in the way readers are encouraged to understand these picture book creatures. Anthropomorphized animal characters can be interpreted in a number of ways, some of which lean more towards their animality, some more towards their humanity. It is this negotiation of boundaries that takes place when we think about what it means to be an anthropomorphized fictional animal that becomes the starting point of an ethical inquiry into the nature of these representations.

The Little Golden Books: A Genre of Animal Hanky-Panky?

The relationship between the aesthetics of the Little Golden Books and their ideological content is striking and this clearly has consequences for our understanding of the animals within this context. In this section I will focus mainly on their function within the context of and their meaning in relation to the American middle classes. What determines the specific Golden Book aesthetics is how they are historically, ideologically and commercially situated.

In *Suspended Animation, Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity* (2010), Nathalie op de Beeck studies how American picture books reflected modernity. Even though her study focuses on modernist picture books, her results can help to increase our understanding of the Little Golden Books as well. Op de Beeck emphasizes that in her view, the picture book:

‘[...] has roots in vernacular culture and the avant-garde alike. The picture book’s materiality, narrative structures, and topical content develop in parallel with political movements and reflect different myths of social progress.’
(ix)

Likewise, my animal-centered readings of the Little Golden Books will take this as a starting point. Even though the Little Golden Books attracted accomplished picture book artists, their critical reception has always emphasized their popular, commercial qualities. What is characteristic for the Golden Books as picture books, is that their literary and artistic quality is made subservient to these other criteria. The Little Golden Books were published for a particular audience (middle class children and their parents) at a particular historical moment (1940s onwards) and with a primarily commercial purpose. For these reasons, it is necessary to define the framework within which it is possible to perform a meaningful analysis of animal presence within these books. And this, I will argue, is exactly why they become interesting creatures: not only do they reflect a certain vision on animality, they do so within a specific cultural constellation.

Part of this constellation is their status as mass-market or merchandise books, books that are first and foremost considered a commodity, and only in rare cases can they attain the status of a cultural artifact. In 1972, Selma G. Lanes characterized such books as ‘products in book form’, borrowing from Robert Larsson the definition of a product as something that ‘is intended not to inform or to instruct, or even to amuse, but to sell. If the product is successful, it is a good product. If it fails, it is a bad product.’ (Lanes 113)

The strategy of the publishers who focus on selling merchandise books differs radically from that employed by more traditional publishing houses. Lanes describes how Roberta Miller ‘a former senior editor at Golden Press and creator of that house’s popular block books, defined a mass-market book as “one that will interest 300,000 children, selling out its initial print order in one season and continuing strong for at least two years after that”’. (Lanes 115) Consequently, publishing houses that focus on selling merchandise books do not take the finished manuscript as their starting point; rather, they concentrate on the idea of the market they want to cater to and they tailor their books to fit this market. (Lanes 115)

Other characteristics of the merchandise book are that their content is often predictable: fairy tales, ABC-books, tales of baby animals are all common, as is the practice of ‘repackaging’ both illustrations and text. (115) One Golden Book editor explains the reasoning behind using ready-made illustrations as follows:

“The longer you are in this business, the cheaper you are able to produce. [...] The big cost in using four-color illustration is the making of the color separations necessary for printing.” (118)

In his work *Golden Legacy; How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and became an American Icon Along the Way* (2007) Leonard Marcus foregrounds the publishing history behind the Golden Books. He characterizes the inception and the immediate commercial success of the first twelve books in the series as a distinctly American success story, resulting from a combination of commercial innovation and daring entrepreneurship. His book narrates the history of the Golden Books mainly by focusing on the perspectives of the businessmen and -women who created the series. Marcus situates the beginning of their history in 1907, long before the first Little Golden Books were published, describing the career of a young bookkeeper from Racine, Wisconsin, named Edward H. Wadewitz. This young man was given the opportunity to buy the printing company he worked for. He named the company 'Western Printing' and more or less by chance he got involved in the book business.

Marcus describes how Western Printing started a cooperation with the publishing house Simon and Schuster, which had achieved remarkable success selling cheap crossword puzzle books that came with a free pencil. It was in this meeting of insightful, innovative entrepreneurs that the foundations for the success of the Golden Books were laid. Nothing short of a 'miracle' and an 'American dream come true', according to Dutch author Joke Linders (2010, 18-19).

This ongoing emphasis on the commercial nature – and success - of the Golden Books can be interpreted as the expression of a desire to inscribe them in the myth of the American Dream of progress and unlimited opportunities. Consider for example the phrasing of the blurbs of Marcus' *Golden Legacy*:

The year 1942 was marked by a bold experiment that, even in the thick of World War II would galvanize consumer culture: the launch of twenty-five-cent Little Golden Books. At a time when the literacy rate was not as high as it is now – and privation was felt by nearly all – high-quality books for children would be available at a price that nearly everyone could afford, and sold where ordinary people shopped every day.

The Little Golden Books are described as significant reading for members of a consumer culture. They are positively referred to as Americana, cultivating values such as a firm belief in (technological) progress and optimism in the face of adversity. Against this backdrop, we may wonder what could be implicated by the abovementioned 'quality'. Because as we have seen, and will encounter time and again, the literary quality of the Golden Books was highly disputed by the literary critics and gatekeepers. In his biography *Awakened by the Moon* (1992) Leonard Marcus writes about Margaret Wise Brown, who was an accomplished Little Golden Book author. Here he explains the hostility of the librarians and critics as follows:

The librarians bitterly attacked Golden Books as an ominous intrusion of commercial values and practices into the uniquely important and gentle-spirited realm that they themselves had long labored to hold above crassness. Although these critics correctly understood the potential for mediocrity on a massive scale that a publisher like Golden Books represented, they had closed their minds to the possibility that the new publishing imprint might produce some books of lasting merit.

One reason for their rigid outlook doubtless boiled down to a question of power. The traditional publishers of juveniles relied on public library purchases for as much as half (or even more than half) of their total annual sales; hence the extreme importance of an endorsement of a given book by a librarian like Moore.² But by marketing its lists directly to parents, Simon and Schuster had for all intents and purposes factored the librarians out of the system. From the librarian's standpoint, where culture had flourished anarchy might soon reign. (200)

These dynamics need to be taken into consideration when we encounter critique of the literary 'quality' of the Little Golden Books. Even so, the literary establishment, even if in doubt about the 'literary' quality of the series, could not deny that the series was innovative in its design, the durability of the books, and the quality of their printing and coloring. These are aspects that made them valuable as material objects, products, commodities. The Little Golden Books were books that were designed to be interacted with as objects: they were marketed, printed, sold, presented as gifts, played with, read from by relatives. They were specifically constructed with these activities in mind, foregrounding their materiality. Furthermore, describing the Little Golden Books as an All-American phenomenon both frames them culturally and historically and counters the objections made by literary critics.

In *Minders of Make-Believe* (2008) Marcus describes how French children's book author and artist George Duplaix together with editor Lucille Ogle convinces Simon and Schuster's sales manager to cooperate in publishing the first twelve Little Golden Books:

Nearly everything went as planned. Although many of the more highbrow booksellers chose not to stock the books, which first went on sale in October 1942, department store buyers were willing to take a chance. It soon became clear that, at twenty-five cents, millions of parents would take a chance too – by purchasing Little Golden Books not just one at a time but by the handful. (164)

² Anne Carroll Moore, a librarian who, according to Leonard Marcus, had an outspoken negative opinion of the Golden Books and Margaret Wise Brown in particular. (Awakened by the Moon, 200)

This way of distributing books was inspired by the success of the Pocket Books, which, also classified as popular literature, reached their readers in spite of the gatekeepers' disapproval:

By applying the Pocket Books model of distribution to juvenile publishing, [...] the Little Golden Books bypassed the old review system altogether. (165)

The Golden Book publishers struck the right note with their decision to sell at department stores. In doing so, they exposed the books to an audience that had hitherto not been in the habit of buying books for their children:

The place of purchase was also a factor. Less-educated parents found it less intimidating to select books from racks in stores where they already did their shopping than to venture into the forbidding bluestocking domain of the traditional bookshop or department store book department, assuming they lived in a city large enough to offer either of the latter options. To close the sale with parents who needed the reassurance that purchasing a Little Golden Book was a responsible choice, Lucille Ogle had arranged for the copyright page of every book to bear the endorsement of "Mary Reed, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. (164)

So, even as the gatekeepers eschewed them, the Golden Books found their way to their readers in astounding numbers. The publishers consolidated their initial success by recruiting the best authors and illustrators in the field. Even some of Disney's best animation artists decided to leave their employer and start working for the Golden Books instead. (Marcus, 2008: 166-167)

In spite of this, the critics remained skeptical. The ambivalence surrounding the critical evaluation of the Golden Books seems to stem from the cultural elite's deep-seated suspicion of commercial phenomena. What authors like Lanes find problematic about merchandise books is that the creative process is made secondary to the commercial process, and this may entail the risk that the literary quality is made subservient to other, notably commercial criteria. The reasons people choose to buy merchandise books for their children, according to Lanes, are 'many and often conflicting: a carefully calculated, well-aimed appeal; price; novelty; utility; availability; the buyers' naïveté; good value and unqualified merit all among them'. (Lanes: 113)

The tone of Lanes' description suggests that there existed a certain disdain for these types of books among critics and gatekeepers. However, Lanes rightly points out one important function of these books, and that is that they 'appeal to an audience that would not normally be confronted with 'high' culture'. For example, for marginalized groups of readers, merchandise books may well be a first step on a path towards so-called 'high' culture. The low threshold, both economically and in terms of sophistication, may unlock a world of books and knowledge that would have otherwise remain closed to these groups of readers:

Whatever one may think of the texts, the books' design is often excellent and the illustrations are engaging, tasteful, and on occasion, first-rate. For a child whose only extended exposure to books is through school texts or comics, these merchandise products provide portals to the possibility of reading pleasure. One safe generalization about merchandise books is that they stick close to the common experiences and interests of childhood. No child is ever likely to be intimidated by the subject matter of a merchandise book, and few parents will be stopped by their prices. (126)

The abovementioned description of the mechanisms involved in the creation, publication, and marketing of merchandise books, as well as the ambivalence surrounding their reception highlight the existence of a dominant conception of children's reading. Within this conception, merchandise books are often considered to be a starting point, not an end in themselves. Also, the cultural objectives of 'Literature' are often presented as diametrically opposed to commercial objectives. Furthermore, it speaks of a hierarchy regarding the objectives of reading, in which to inform and instruct takes precedence over amusement. The resulting dichotomy between low and high culture, between 'good' and 'bad' children's books that speaks from such evaluations obviously has (had) an effect on the reception and appreciation of picture books in general, and the Little Golden Books in particular.

For a long time, the visual dimension of children's books was considered to be inferior to the verbal content, or, if not downright inferior, then at least the images were considered to be secondary to the words. This attitude shimmers through in Lanes' own brief discussion of the Golden Books, in which she focuses on their emphasis on the visual dimension of the books, coupling it, unsurprisingly, to their status as merchandise books:

Golden Press, which produces between eighty and a hundred merchandise titles annually, recently acknowledged this prime importance of the eye when it acquired a new corporate logogram, the lower-case letters "g" and "b" in whose centers appear two targetlike dots, peering out at the world like small, round eyes. The motto "Children See a Lot in Golden Books" underscores the calligraphic imagery and makes entirely clear just where the emphasis lies (Lanes 115)

Lanes' observation that the emphasis in the Golden Books lies on the visual rather than the verbal component of the books, entails a radical transformation of the traditional primacy of the word over the image. This in itself is an interesting development and clearly has consequences for the aesthetics of the Golden Books. One straightforward example of this feature is the criteria that the illustrations should be made up in vivid colors; this was emphasized by the publishers and upheld until this day. The innovative decision of Golden Press to overturn the traditional word-image hierarchy in favor of the visual is exactly what makes these books so interesting. In doing so, Golden

Press also reoriented the author-illustrator dynamic. Where we traditionally find an emphasis on the text, resulting from the primacy of the written word over the image, it was precisely the Golden Book publishers' focus on the exterior of the books that led them to emphasize the images, since it was the visual aspect that distinguished these books. This pre-eminence of the image was a novelty within the world of publishing, and shifted the pivot point from the author to the illustrator.

In Barbara Bader's ambitious study *American Picture Book from Noah's Ark to The Beast within* (1979) she describes how being a Golden Book illustrator became a career in itself (Bader 282). In this acclaimed book she provides a historical account as well as an evaluation of the American picturebook. In the acknowledgements Bader describes that her aim with this study is 'to identify all the picture books published; to examine as many as possible; and in certain instances, to learn of the circumstances of their publication.' She stresses how in the early ages of the illustrated children's book in America, the European influence on the American market was substantial:

Why fuss – English prams, English picturebooks, French frocks, French picturebooks: what did it matter as long as children had the best? We were accustomed, in any case, to look abroad for the best literature, the best music, the best art. Not until the close of World War I, a time of national assertiveness, did the cry go up, why can't we have picturebooks like theirs? By then it was too late; the Europeans had so far outdistanced us in color printing that, whatever the will, there was no way, not for another fifteen years. (6)

So, first out of indifference and, perhaps, reverence for foreign artists, and thereafter out of technological belatedness, the American picturebook scene was slow to establish itself and become independent. Bader describes how the artistic picture books by artists such as Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott, and Kate Greenaway had 'immediate and lasting success in the United States' at the expense of domestic artists who were considered to produce work that was artistically flawed and not fit for children (6-7).

One could view The Little Golden Books as an illustration of Bader's statement that the American picture book scene dependent to a high degree on contributions from foreign artists. Certainly in the early years (1940s and 1950s), many of the Golden Book artists had a European background - some of them escaping wartime Europe. Many of them had a considerable reputation in their home countries, for example Frenchman Georges Duplaix, Feodor Rojankovski from Russia and Swedish Gustaf Tenggren. Many of these foreign artists who emigrated to the States organized themselves in the Artists and Writers Guild, a collective that was often entrusted by Western Publishers, who published the early Little Golden Books.

Within the American picture book tradition, the depiction of nature and animals followed the tradition of the 'naturalistic aesthetic, as Bader describes. She establishes how this aesthetic served as the essential criterion to

judge animal representations around the 1900s. The reigning educational elite of the age decreed that the ‘faithful representation of nature’ was essential, and anything else was dismissed as being either ‘primitive’ or ‘degenerate’. W.W. Denslow was one of the artists whose work was considered inferior, for the reason that his ‘figures prance about on the picture plane: there is no space, no ‘atmosphere’. The contour lines are heavy, the interiors absolutely flat: the forms are blatantly unshaded. The coloring is brash, arbitrary – in the sense of just so many inks – and abstracted, suggesting but not copying nature (my italics) and not aiming to it.’ (Bader 8)

Both Barbara Bader and Judy Sinn Cassidy, who wrote a dissertation entitled *Golden Mean: Commercial Culture, Middle-Class Ideals, and the Little Golden Books* (2008) highlight the commercial dimension of the publication of the Little Golden Books when they discuss them within a context of consumer culture. Bader’s introduction to the Golden Books emphasizes their commercial success:

As of 1953, too, nearly 300 million Golden Books had been sold; of the first two hundred titles published, over half had sold more than one million each, a dozen over two million, a favored four over three million; the number of outlets had expanded – and broadened – from the original eight hundred books and department stores to 120,000 points of sale, supermarkets leading in volume (277)

She opposes this remarkable commercial success to criticism raised by professional readers:

[i]t becomes obvious that parents (usually mothers), not children, make the choice; that they are buying the title, or the cover, not the book. Without recourse to reviews, reputations or examination, it can hardly be otherwise. My guess is that people who buy cunning decals to stick on cribs and toy cabinets find *The Poky Little Puppy* adorable and spoonfeed it to their young (a thesis that has the merit, besides, of preserving respect for children’s stricter judgement).

Bader appears to be suspicious of the adult (notably female!) consumer who, instead of relying on the better judgement of professional readers, follows the path paved for her by clever publishers and their marketing departments. The opposition thus created by professional readers and educators not only questions the common consumer’s sense of judgement, but also reinforces the adult-child opposition, this time in favor of the child. In a Romantic spirit, the child’s aesthetic judgement is taken much more seriously than that of the adult who buys the books out of a sentimental response to the cuteness of the characters and the decorative value of the decals that occasionally accompanied them. Consider the implications of Bader’s claim that the parents buy ‘the title, the cover, not the book’. What is it that sets the ‘book’ apart from its constitutive elements such as the title and cover?

In line with what we learned from Lanes' study of merchandise books, Bader seems to view the commercial aspects of these books as a reason to be suspicious of their artistic qualities. This underlines again that the gatekeepers of the literary field determined that the Golden Books were excluded from the realm of 'Literature'. The individual value of the books is rarely discussed. Even though Bader asserts that they 'were like other books, only a better buy', they are not like other books in the sense that they are often described as a collective. The individual character of the separate books seems to be subservient to the series as a whole. The series, in turn, apart from being regarded as children's reading, came to be a means for adult readers to recover something of their own childhood.

The reception of the Little Golden Books is characterized to a large extent by the existence of a community of adult collectors. These people, demographically from the generation of baby-boomers³, responded nostalgically to the Little Golden Books and formed communities of collectors. Judy Sinn Cassidy interprets this phenomenon as an expression of 'postmodern macronostalgia' when she states that:

[o]ne way in which America fills the "gap" with "home and rootedness" is the commercial repackaging of children's books for adult consumers and the "manufacturing" of images from those same children's books as tattoos, t-shirt decals, stickers, collectibles, or tchotchkes. These are the types of items that can draw energy from "individual and cultural memory" or promote a "national past and future." A prime example of the macronostalgia-infused repackaging of children's books is clearly seen in the marketing, collecting, and recycling of today's Little Golden Books.

In many ways, the Little Golden Books are a continuation of a picture book tradition that has its roots in the 1920s and 1930s. The first American picture books, according to Op de Beek:

[...] emerged on the American multimedia front in the nineteenth century as an offshoot of modes of production including newspaper comics, illustrated storybooks, musical notation, holiday cards, paper dolls and decorated nursery rhymes. (2010: 12)

She explains how socioeconomic developments in the United States had a considerable influence on the advent of the picture book as a medium for young readers:

³ According to the 2010 census: 'The Baby Boom includes people born from mid-1946 to 1964. The Baby Boom is distinguished by a dramatic increase in birth rates following World War II, and is one of the largest generations in U.S. history. For more information, see: Hogan, Perez, and Bell, 2008, Who (Really) Are the First Baby Boomers? In Joint Statistical Meetings Proceedings, Social Statistics Section, Alexandria, VA: American Statistical Association, pp. 1009–1016.' Source: <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>

Children went from being nineteenth-century wage earners and shop customers to being twentieth-century consumers, leisure citizens, and not just elementary but secondary school students. (2010: 12)

Following the changed position of the child in society, reading took on a different function as well:

Along with newspaper reading and radio listening, habits of book borrowing and ownership signified quality of life, socioeconomic class, and modern subjectivity for a child who read at home with parents. [...] The picture book addressed childhood at every socioeconomic level, as a didactic national item, as a form of amusement, and as a possible means of sparing the child from physical and emotional harm in the modern sphere. (Op de Beeck, 2010: 13-14)

People's access to picture books changed too: with the development of cheaper production methods picture books started to appeal to a broader demographic. But, as Op de Beeck emphasizes, the medium's origins were still firmly rooted within the middle classes and they therefore tended to promote middle class values and consumerism. (2010: 20-21) This brings us back to the animals represented in the Golden Books. They too, fulfil an ideological function that is predicated on the place of the books within consumer culture. In her book *Animality and Children's Literature and Film* Amy Ratelle (2015) emphasizes the importance of the middle classes for the emergence and increasing appreciation of children's literature and reading. As I briefly described in the introduction, the middle classes played an extraordinary role in the development and distribution of children's literature.

Andrew O'Malley sees a clear connection between middle class ideology and the evolution of children's literature. In his book *The making of the modern child: children's literature and childhood in the late eighteenth century* (2003), he describes how children's literature acquired a function in the process of socializing and civilizing children:

Children's literature became one of the crucial mechanisms for disseminating and consolidating middle-class ideology. For children to participate successfully in the new ideological project of the period, they had to be rendered into subjects whose energies could be controlled and effectively harnessed. The child as a differentiated subject category – an “other” – arises out of the same reformulations of power and ways of knowing that altered the practices and forms of such varying fields as the natural sciences and medicine, and the mechanisms of discipline and punishment. The child as “other” becomes in this period the subject of all these discourses; writers for and about children in the late eighteenth century agreed that reason was the guiding principle of human activity, and that children, by definition and by the very nature of their tabula rasa minds (susceptible to every form of impression) were deficient in this essential and normalizing faculty. (11)

(...)

The child-as-other, as subject in need of reason, then, became the object of study, description, and categorization; in order for the child to be made whole and rational, its otherness must be contained and controlled within various discourses. (12)

This background is clearly visible in many of the Little Golden Books, and it influences the representations of interactions with animals in the series. Later in this chapter I will discuss how the ‘domestic ethic of kindness’, which represented the middle class ideal of harmonious interaction, is reflected in some of the Little Golden Books. Whereas O’Malley is mostly interested in the English middle classes, Barbara Ehrenreich focuses on their American counterparts. In her book *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1990), she defines the ‘professional middle class’, as the social class that ‘can be defined, somewhat abstractly, as all those people whose economic and social status is based on education, rather than on the ownership of capital or property’ (12). It is education that allows for upward mobility, and starting to read early provides middle class children an advantage when they start school.

She claims that the views on childrearing within the middle class evolved from the ideal of a strict upbringing, where discipline and deferred gratification were the core goals, to a more lenient upbringing. This shift towards a more lenient, permissive upbringing occurred in the 1940s. Play, which before was considered to overstimulate the child, was now permitted and even – to a certain degree – encouraged by the experts. (87) According to Ehrenreich, it ‘reflected a profound change in the conditions of middle class life’ (88). She explains how the earlier authoritarian upbringing was a result of economic scarcity, but it was no longer justified in the affluent post-war years. (88) This was also the period when children, even infants, were first described as consumers. This shift in middle class childrearing practices overlapped with the publication of the early Little Golden Books.

Knowledge and expertise are the hallmark of the professional middle class. This shines through in the Little Golden Books, as many of them are instructional, either moral or practical, detailing how certain technologies work, how infrastructure functions, etc. These subjects reflect the middle class interest in the pleasure in learning, as early as possible. The Golden Book publishers met this demand by employing a clever strategy that included offering easy accessibility, affordable prices and a constant stream of new books. They also ensured that the books were endorsed by educational authorities (the reference to Mary Reed, PhD, can be understood in this light)

The Little Golden Books, consciously positioned within a consumer culture, can be considered an example of this type of middle class reading material. The publishers were well aware of the values of their middle class customers. The emphasis on education as a means to further oneself in society, the importance of diligence and a strong work ethic combined with the sense

of moral superiority that was upheld by the middle classes are aesthetically reflected in the Little Golden Books. Both the images and the text impart these values in different ways, sometimes dogmatically so; at other times however, we find evidence of a more subversive, carnivalesque undertone.

The importance of education, animals and anthropomorphism within a middle class context

Within education, especially literacy education, images of animals have always played a significant role. At least since the introduction of the printing press in 1440 made the reproduction of images easier, faster and therefore cheaper, illustrated books became more widespread. The images of animals had a twofold function: first of all, they were considered to be instrumental in engaging the child reader's attention, and were thereby facilitating an otherwise possibly monotonous learning process. The second motivation was that the image would provide the reader with information that could not easily be conveyed in words, and even if this were possible, the words would still lack the power of immediacy that the images so clearly possessed.

Comenius, in his *Pansophia Prodromus* (1639), describes how an image of an elephant, once one has seen it, will remain in one's mind forever, more powerful and vivid than any verbal description could ever be. He insists on the visual image as a mediator of a more vivid and more complete impression than words alone could ever be able to provide. This is especially important in the education of young children who are learning to read. So, in his *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658), which became a key work in the history of education, he again stresses this importance for the intellectual and emotional engagement of the child reader. The work is considered to be one of the first illustrated books for children, and a precursor of the picture book. Adopting an encyclopedic structure, the book covers a number of topics, such as inanimate objects, flora and fauna, religion and human activities.

John Locke also acknowledges the significance of pictures, and illustrations of animals in particular, for the beginning reader's learning process. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) he states that

as soon as [the child] begins to spell, as many pictures of animals should be got to him as can be found, with the printed names to them, which at the same time invite him to read and afford him matter of inquiry and knowledge. (*Some Thoughts*, Section 156)

Locke stressed that the (one-on-one) correspondence between pictures and words both entertain the young mind and add to the reader's knowledge of the world. On a conceptual level, this simple correspondence between the image of an animal and its species name implies that the reader early on learns to categorize the animal world in terms of species difference. And within a Christian world view, this also implies species hierarchy.

Since the early days following the invention of the printing press, the popularity of the image as an aid in the education of, especially, very young children, has persisted. In an educational system that seeks to both instruct and entertain, advocated by Jean Jacques Rousseau, pictures have become almost indispensable. 20th century picture book research builds on this view of the image as an essential part of the story, although different theorists attribute different values to the image in relation to the words. Barbara Bader, for example, stresses the ability of pictures to give voice to thoughts and feelings that are difficult for the young reader to express or comprehend in a verbal mode:

Early on, a child's understanding outstrips his vocabulary. He recognizes things before he can name them but until he can name them he doesn't really know them, hence his satisfaction in pictures of the commonplace – a dog, a cup, a flower – that help him master words and so extend his power. (1976, 2)

Bader addresses two significant issues with respect to the significance of words and images in our relationship with the world at large, and non-human animals in particular. According to Bader, images certainly fulfil an important part in the young child's learning process. Yet in spite of the powerful ability of the image to convey meaning, Bader still considers the word as primary, however, for the time being, unattainable. The image functions then as a placeholder for the more accurate verbal description or expression. 'Real' knowledge, according to Bader, is tied to the word.

Another important aspect she mentions, although without fully acknowledging its implications, is the assumption that words are things to be 'mastered', and they serve to 'extend power'. Viewing language as an instrument for the exercise of power is an example of a humanist perspective that ultimately leads to skewed power relations in society and oppression of certain disempowered groups. Those who are not presently, or will not ever be able to use language in the appropriate way, will always be at a disadvantage compared to those who master it. Animals are one such group.

In *Why Look at Animals* John Berger suggests that animals entered the nursery at the same time as their visibility in society gradually decreased and animals were no longer a self-evident part of the child's everyday life. The first 'lifelike' stuffed animals date from the 19th century (Berger in *The Animal Reader*: 259). Yet, as we have seen, animals have a much longer history

in texts that were (also) intended for children. If we look at literature that features anthropomorphized animals, we find that religious stories and fables are among the first texts where they appear. Both originate from much older oral traditions, and moreover, from an era where literature for children as a separate genre didn't exist. It was people like Martin Luther and John Locke who recommended fables as appropriate reading for children, partly because of their value for the child's moral education, partly because of their entertaining formula, which they thought to be appealing to children and would therefore motivate them. Since then, animals have continuously figured as characters in children's fiction.

In *Talking Animals in British Fiction 1786-1914* Tess Cosslett explains how talking animals became part of children's literature in the mid 18th century. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, this was often connected to animal welfare: creating compassion and understanding for animals that did not have a voice of their own was the intention of these authors. It was part of the project of the Enlightenment to combine knowledge of the natural world with the rational obligation to be compassionate. There was however a lot of violence and cruelty in these stories, which may seem surprising to modern readers, who are accustomed to a more innocent kind of animals stories. (1)

One of the aspects highlighted by Cosslett that is particularly interesting in the context of this book is that there was 'a self-consciousness about allowing the animal protagonists to talk' (1). Authors wanted to make sure that the child readers understood that animals could not, in reality, speak:

Sometimes comedy or metafiction were used to point up the fictionality of the talking animal device, and sometimes the first-person narration of animal to reader was juxtaposed with a story in which the human characters cannot understand the animal, reminding the reader of the true state of affairs. These devices provide complex ways of presenting animals and animal consciousness, by being both anthropomorphic and not anthropomorphic at the same time. (2-3)

Westin argues in her article 'To Tell an "I": Constructions of Self-Identity in Autobiographical Non-Human Fiction for Children' (2005) that 'the rise of the autobiographical novel is synchronized with the rise of the individual. It is centered on images of the self and the mind, exposing the action, morals and inner life of its main character'. (46) This becomes more complicated when the narrator of the story is a nonhuman animal. In this case, we are obviously dealing with fiction, as no nonhuman animal is capable of writing an autobiography on his own. The act of narration anthropomorphizes the fictional animal:

To imagine the self of a mouse, or any other animal, seems to be a matter of catching the animal identity when it comes to anatomical structure and physical habits and desires, while the mind of the animal is humanized of made more or less human. (51)

By humanizing the mind of the animal narrators while keeping their animality intact on physical level, these animal autobiographies create a space for the intimate exploration of nonhuman lives:

The use of an autobiographical manner offers a feeling of intimacy and closeness which is linked to a process of identification, usually as an appeal for compassion and empathy. The formal basis – the telling “I” – implies truthfulness and reliance as someone is experiencing the events related. The construction of the image of the self is crucial as it may be considered a metaphor of the act of creation. The device of the telling “I” suggests that there are possible spaces for exploration of the inner self. It also serves, in the name of science, as a method for mapping creatures, species and inanimate objects and thus offers the readers unexpected voices to identify with through literature. (53)

There were, however, limits to the level of identification. According to Cosslett, the authors of animal autobiographies shared the concern that the child reader understood that the species boundary could only be crossed in a fictional context. The religious context of the time didn't allow for a downright denial of difference, a difference that was bound up with the Christian idea of a hierarchical organization of life. The hierarchy was headed by God and followed by man, woman, child and animal. Cosslett points out that this structure was a common pattern in the 18th and 19th century animal story.

That children and animals are both low in this hierarchy is something that stays a constantly returning feature of animal stories until the 20th century, as we will see in our discussion of the Little Golden Books. Many text featuring animals were animal autobiographies, which are interesting in a study of ideology because: ‘in creating a subjectivity for their animal autobiographers, writers often draw on analogies with human types or classes: children, women, slaves and servants’ (5). For this reason, they can be seen as potentially emancipatory devices, although, as we will, see, they can also support more conservative ideals.

In the animal stories of the 18th and 19th century, many writers' affinities with ideas similar to what later would become known as Darwinism clearly shone through in their texts. They were educating their child readers in a scientific theory and provided them with information about the natural world, in a way that also engaged their empathy. They also, consciously or not, shared a worldview that was scientific and rational. In order to mediate this worldview, they relied on fiction, and very often, on anthropomorphism.

Education for the middle classes was a vehicle that enabled social mobility, it could provide ‘the key to transcending the place in the social hierarchy to which one happened to be born.’ (Ratelle, 7) Using animal representations for educational purposes has a long history, in which visual representations have been prominently present from the inception. As Harriet Ritvo demon-

strates in her article 'Border Trouble' (1995) in which she discusses eighteenth and nineteenth century natural history books, the genre of natural history education for children can be traced back to the Medieval bestiary. Ritvo describes two traditions within the genre: materialistic texts that aim to mediate biological knowledge on the one hand, and moralistic texts that intended to instill an ethic of kindness in the young readers. (76) This moralistic strand of texts built on John Locke's philosophy of education that surmised that children harbor an 'intrinsic fascination' for animals (77-78; see also: Ratelle, 2015). As Ritvo describes, the visual element of these texts 'would allow the child to form a just estimate of the "intrinsic value" of each creature, independent of sentimental considerations such as beauty or amiability' (80)

Aside from knowledge about animals as such, another major function of animal representations in these educational books was the mediation and reinforcement of existing social hierarchies. Ritvo writes how animals were particularly suited for this purpose since:

the similarities between animals and people made it possible to teach children lessons about hierarchy and power that might have been unpleasant, even frightening, if expressed directly. (90)

But this metaphorical dimension began to disintegrate as science progressed and revealed the similarities between human and nonhuman animals:

As zoology brought animals and humans closer together, real animals became inappropriate carriers of moral lessons. Only animals that had been humanized and sentimentalized could be admitted into Victorian nurseries as teachers. (90)

There was a clear distinction, then, between explicitly educational texts (textbooks) and fictional texts for children, where animals remained instrumental in the mediation of morality and social hierarchies. This entanglement of scientific knowledge about animals, the child's moral development and the reinforcement of human social hierarchies is something that is apparent in anthropomorphic animal representations until the present day.

Yet the same focus on educational values led some critics to discard the Little Golden Books as mediocre reading, and therefore as essentially unsuited for serious educational purposes. For some critics, the distinction between entertainment and education weighed heavily towards the educational and resulted in a demand for literary quality. Quality was mainly understood as textual sophistication. For the Golden Books', this means that they are defined by their status as popular, commercial books, rather than high quality 'literature'. In such books, anthropomorphism is a narrative technique that is often used uncritically.

Anthropomorphic depictions of animals in children's books have a long tradition. Initially, overtly anthropomorphic animal representations, such as the ones we encounter in the genre of the animal autobiography, had a well-defined moralistic purpose and functioned as promotional material for the budding animal rights movement. By endowing the suffering animal protagonist with a humanlike voice, the reader was encouraged to develop empathy towards non-human animals. The idea that their suffering resembles human suffering sensitizes the reader for the predicament of the animals they encounter in their daily lives.

Writing about the 18th and 19th century British animal story, Cosslett stresses the importance of truthful information and the contemporary concern for animal welfare. She connects the development of the animal story for children with a migration 'down the hierarchy of literary genres from adults to children, in consequence of an increasing polarization between adults and children'. (1) The hierarchy is a complex one, where the adult genre does not necessarily need to be deemed the most complex one.

Cosslett describes the complexity of the device of anthropomorphism. She explains how it emerged against the background of contemporary scientific developments. In the animal stories of the 18th and 19th century, many writers' affinities with theories of evolution clearly shine through in their texts. They are educating their child readers in a scientific theory and provide them with information about the natural world, in a way that also engages their empathy. They also, consciously or not, share a worldview that is scientific and rational. In order to mediate this worldview, they rely on fiction, and very often, on anthropomorphism.

According to Cosslett, the 18th and 19th century animal stories were consciously part of a 'realistic project' (1). This changed in the course of time, in the sense that the realistic aspect has made room for a somewhat escapist tendency that shades the child from undesired encounters with cruelty and environmental issues:

Animals, even when talking, were allied with science, ethics, and truth. [...] The eighteenth and nineteenth-century children's animal story, then, was not a repetition of the Aesopian fable, but added either an anticruelty message and/or natural historical information to the fabular genre. A connection was always made to the treatment or the understanding of animals in the world outside the book, allowing issues of animal protection, conservation and what was later called ecology to be raised in a child-friendly manner. This is something that has been lost in most present-day versions of the genre. (Cosslett: 1)

But where Cosslett laments the loss of an ethical dimension, Amy Ratelle emphasizes how children's literature maintains this dimension, even when it is not present on the surface. Instead, children's texts can contain a philosophical and/or ethical message through their slippages and inconsistencies:

Within literature, the animal's-eye view compels the human reader into a close emotional bond with the animal as it relates the story of its difficult life. As I will argue, however, there are many slippages and ruptures when using animals in the formation of an exclusively human identity for the child, ones that in fact result in a popular form of literature that, often inadvertently, problematizes notions of species segregation. (10)

The animal rights movement has from its inception had a civilizing function as well as a moral/ethical one. Ratelle explains how animals in children's literature have functioned:

The reliance on animals in children's literature over the past two centuries has become a key means by which the civilizing process that children go through has been mediated by the animal body. Children are asked both implicitly and explicitly to identify with animals, but then to position themselves as distinctly human through the mode of their interactions with both lived animals and those depicted in literature and film. (10)

The animal welfare movement also played a role in the formation of the middle classes. Engaging in the animal rights movement constituted a way for the middle class to distinguish themselves from the upper and lower classes, according to Ratelle:

Members of the middle class, moreover, constituted the majority of people engaged in the early animal-rights movement. The cause allowed them to highlight their restraint and virtue in comparison to the disregard of the upper and lower classes. (10)

In relation to Donna Haraway's concept of 'companion species', Ratelle states that:

In this framework of mutual respect, there arises a particular duty on the part of the middle class to improve labour conditions for both livestock and classes of subordinated humans (e.g. women, minorities, the poor, etc.) Early animal rights advocacy and legislation was focused on improving the lot of livestock and other species aligned with economic or imperialist progress. Much children's literature of the period is similarly intended to evoke sympathy for the laboring animal. (11)

Here we find another link with the Golden Books and the middle classes, and that lies in how the Golden Books highlight ownership. As Ratelle describes, the imperialist ideology of the Victorian era has profoundly influenced the representation of nature and animals in children's books (45), which is particularly obvious in the genre of the boy's adventure story. (See for example my analysis of the depiction of dogs in this chapter and in chapter 2.) Conquest and ownership are key elements of this genre and have also

influenced numerous depictions of animals in the Little Golden Books, especially those with dog protagonists.

Interestingly, the paratextual aspects of the Little Golden Books also reflect their ideological background and message to a certain degree. The paratextual elements already prominently point out that the publishers were well aware of the significance of education for the intended consumers. For example, all the Golden Books make mention of the fact that they have been published under supervision of Mary Reed, PhD.

Another element that appeals to middle class ideology is the emblem facing the title page of each Little Golden Book, that reads: 'this book belongs to...' and invites the reader to write her name inside the book. The reader is encouraged to physically engage with the book, and to symbolically claim it as her property through altering its contents by the act of inscribing herself into the artifact. When physically interacting with the book, the materiality of the object becomes a crucial part of the reading process. The publishers were well aware of this, and emphasized this aspect of the series.

The aesthetics of the Golden Books is therefore profoundly influenced by the series' function within a middle class context. Another instance that brings this to the fore is that the aesthetics lean heavily on advertising artwork. As a conscious part of American consumer culture, the books were designed to be as appealing as possible to as wide a readership as possible. The availability of cheap paper and color printing presses allowed for the use of vivid colors. In relation to the animals in the Little Golden Books, ownership is most obviously addressed in the depictions of pethood, where the idea of ownership is a defining characteristic of a whole category of animals. Although it is possible to identify a degree of commodification of the animals, but this is mostly coupled with a keen awareness of the responsibility the (child) owner has towards the animal.

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is an umbrella term that can refer to a host of phenomena. It can be described as the attribution of human characteristics to non-humans, such as animals, gods, objects, or events. In the natural sciences, the phenomenon often gets negative connotations, since it is seen as inappropriate humanization. For example: Francis Bacon's critique of Aristotle's teleological scientific theory boils down to a rejection of the anthropomorphism of his argumentation: human behavior may be proof of certain goals and objectives entertained by the agent, but lifeless matter can never possess a similar motivation. According to Bacon, this flaw in reasoning undermined the validity of Aristotle's entire theory of natural phenomena. (Mitchell, Thomp-

son and Miles: 51) When biologists or ethologists are accused of anthropomorphizing their subjects, this mostly refers to the attribution of states of mind, thoughts, agency or emotions to animals. This is considered to be unjustified on the basis of the assumption that some qualities are essentially and exclusively human, and if animals do not give expression to these qualities in the same way human beings do, there is no proof of their existence.

Yet anthropomorphism is a useful and effective strategy that is notoriously hard to avoid. In many cases, we are justified to use it, as it helps us understand our surroundings. It may even have evolved because of its value for our survival as a species. Evolutionary continuity is a common and strong argument in favor of its use in sciences that study living organisms, as Darwin already clearly demonstrated. In *The Descent of Man*, he grounds his arguments in the many similarities between animals and humans, in order to strengthen his thesis that man evolved from a lower form of animal.

The traditional answers as to why we anthropomorphize are explained by Stewart Elliott Guthrie as either a desire for comfort (we feel safer when we can explain the world in human terms) or familiarity (our understanding of the world can best be shaped in the form of something we know, namely: ourselves). His own thesis is one that leans on game theory: facing the uncertainty of existence, guessing that something is or will behave human-like may 'be a good bet'. We do not do this consciously, but it is best considered to be a result of natural selection. People who used this strategy have generally had better chances of survival. (In Mitchell, Thompson and Miles: 55-56)

While anthropomorphism in the sciences is often the result of a desire for clarification of otherwise abstract phenomena or behaviors, it can in other contexts serve as a conscious strategy. The animal welfare movement, for instance, has from its inception used anthropomorphism in their propaganda to fuel empathy and create understanding for other species.

When we are talking about anthropomorphism in children's literature, we are of course dealing with representations of animals, rather than real ones. Although this may seem to be a crucial distinction, and may validate a strong focus on the diegetic level of the text, there is a continuity between the real and the fictional that should be taken into account. In her essay on the possibility of a history of animals, 'A Left-handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals' (2002), historian Erica Fudge points out that we are always-already dealing with representations by humans when we are talking about the history of animals. She warns against the danger of excluding the 'real' animal from the debate if we focus too one-sidedly on the status of the animal as representation. She writes: 'a symbolic animal is only a symbol (and therefore to be understood within the study of iconography, poetics) unless it is related to the real'. (In Rothfels: 7)

When discussing children's books, and especially picture books, we will have to work on both levels: the symbolic and the real are intertwined and

therefore equally important in our understanding of the function of the animal within this particular context. The main reason is children's books do not necessarily share the same aesthetic presuppositions as works for adults. The inevitably didactic context of their production ensures that there is a 'real' to be reckoned with, a 'real' whose functions and workings are explained to the child through narrative and illustrations.

We should therefore also avoid equating all cases of anthropomorphism with metaphor, as Pamela J. Asquith explains in 'Why Anthropomorphism is Not Metaphor: Crossing Concepts and Cultures in Animal Behavior Studies'. Although she writes on anthropomorphism in a scientific context, her argument translates well to the interpretation of children's books. Metaphor is 'the understanding and expression of one kind of thing in terms of another', and is different from literal meaning in a number of ways, although it is dependent on the terms' literal meaning to produce the desired effect (In Mitchell: 32). Asquith points to Fisher's distinction between situational and categorical anthropomorphism. The first term indicates a misinterpretation of the motives or meaning of an animal's behavior based on resemblance with similar human behavior (she gives the example of mistaking a chimpanzee's fear grimace for a threat. 'Bared teeth' equals aggression in human physiognomy). Categorical anthropomorphism is concerned with the assertion that animals are capable of expressing e.g. fear or threat. It is mostly categorical anthropomorphism that we encounter in the picture books where animals appear as characters. They are attributed the capability of experiencing some degree of human emotions and cognition.

If there is a cultural sphere where anthropomorphism seems unproblematic, and even desirable, it is most likely children's culture. The connection between children and animals often feels natural to those living in modern day Western cultures. Animals are considered appropriate decorations for nurseries and children's clothes, they make wonderful toys, and are valued as entertainment in circuses and zoos. They also make great teachers, because they give rise to curiosity and encourage children's natural inquisitiveness to find out more about the natural world. It is no wonder that many educational tools feature animal assistants, or that keeping pets is thought to stimulate children's nursing and caring skills. So, from an early age, children learn that animals are their companions and peers.

One of the reasons anthropomorphism is so desirable, from an adult perspective, is that it enables identification on grounds of obvious likenesses. The underlying assumption is that children relate easier to things they recognize, and the human form is often thought to be the most recognizable shape in most children's lives. Depending on how the story is developed, and what role the animals have in relation to the human characters or the reader (are they characters, companions, pets, wildlife, production animals, do they talk, are they dressed...?) the effects can be diverse. It can e.g. evoke empathy,

encouraging the child reader to take into consideration that animals have certain needs that equal their own. This is a strategy often employed by authors who were concerned for animal welfare.

Another argument for anthropomorphism is that it can be simply amusing to see an animal behave like a human being. Educational theories in the tradition of John Locke support this use of animals as entertainment in the service of education. This is by no means innocent, since it ignores the animals' intrinsic value, and as such it reflects cultural values that are, perhaps unintentionally, defending a highly anthropocentric worldview. Which leads us to another possible consequence of the use of anthropomorphism: the naturalization of ideology. This is another way animals can be employed to support a culture's dominant values. Simultaneously, animals can be used in avoidance strategies: issues of age, gender, race and class do not show so easily when characters are animals.

The discussion about animals in children's books often starts from an anthropocentric basis, focusing on the meaning of the animal representation for the development of the child. Such reading strategies focus on the integration of the child into human culture, and the animal becomes something that can be discarded once the goal of socialization has been achieved. John Locke's theory on education, again, is a good example of how animals become symbolic for something in human society. According to Locke, the way a person treats animals is indicative of his treatment of human beings. So it pays off to teach children at a young age to be kind to animals, because this will encourage kindness towards people. (Cosslett 2006: 10) This attitude has become commonplace in children's literature, and it goes so far that it becomes possible to judge a character's moral standing based on their behavior towards animals.

Even scholars who write in the best interest of animals and / or children often find it difficult to relate to fictional animals. Anthropomorphism is sometimes 'explained away' by exclusively pointing to resemblances with humans. Human culture then takes over and erases or absorbs the animal form, makes it its own by denying its specificity. This leads Margo DeMello to write:

Animals are used in children's books in one of two primary ways. They are either stand-ins for humans, representing a number of characteristics that humans have or that the author wants to teach to the reader, or they are animals – bears, foxes, or rabbits. In children's literature, they are far more commonly used as human models, and usually, as substitute children. (DeMello: 329)

These two options are mutually exclusive, so it seems: we are either dealing with a human being in disguise, or with an unproblematic representation of an animal. The tendency to view animals as 'substitute children' is relatively common in the world of literary production and critique. Sarah Ellis, herself

a children's books author and creative writing teacher explains that picture books require:

two essential elements. You need a child character, a child or a child stand-in such as an animal or an inanimate object. And you need a sturdy narrative structure that incorporates desire, difficulty, and problem solving. (148)

The two essential ingredients, according to Ellis, 'the centrality of a human, and the linear plot structure' (148) reveal how deeply engrained this belief in the role of fictional animals as stand-ins for humans actually is. And that is not surprising, since within a humanist frame of thinking, each fictional animal almost by necessity becomes a human. Yet alongside this adult perspective on the animal character in the picture book, Ellis recognizes that

in a child's imagination, everything can be a person – pets, plants, islands, pebbles, fish, leaves, cherry stones, shoes, cutlery, numbers (154)

Ellis' suggestion that personhood, in the eyes of a child, is not exclusive to the human species, leads to some interesting questions. Why does the adult creator of picture books assume that a human should be central to the story, while she acknowledges that in the child reader's mind, everyone can qualify as a person, no matter what species that person belongs to? Is there an essential difference in the way children and adults view fictional characters, and when does this transition take place? This schism becomes visible when we compare picture books, which are mostly written for very young readers, with books for an older audience. Whereas picture books often attribute humanlike qualities to their animal inhabitants, allowing for uncomplicated inter- and intra-species communications, this becomes less and less straightforward when the age of the intended audience increases.

Maria Lassén-Seger leans towards a humanist line of thought when she discusses anthropomorphic characters in picture books, but her analysis also points in the direction of a possible subversive reading of these characters. In her article 'Bland djungelapor, jaguarer och jobbkaniner. Djuriska barn i bilderboken'. According to Lassén-Seger, the medium of children's literature (and the picture book in particular) offers the possibility of a dialogic communication between adults and children. (Andersson & Druker: 115) For example, animal stories in which children transform into animals can reflect family dynamics and psychological questions such as the search for identity and a place in the world. Lassén-Seger stresses that the child, contrary to what is often claimed in analyses of power in children's books, is not always marginalized. The transformation from child to animal is empowering, as the animal form can become an outlet for the child character's imagination, play, or dreams. (Andersson & Druker: 126) I suggest that such transformations are not only empowering, but can also serve to liberate the child from the

constrictions of humanist thinking. The very idea of a smooth transition between species, which takes place without a loss of the core qualities of the character, can be an interesting foundation for a discussion of the value of the concept of species.

In Maria Nikolajeva's analysis of anthropomorphism in picture books featuring hippopotami, she too emphasizes that when animals figure in children's literary they are ascribed human qualities, both in their behavior and in their mental capacities. Although she gives a thorough analysis of the gradations of anthropomorphism that occur in her selection of hippopotamus stories, the focus of her argument is on the use of the animal form for the communication of inter-human interactions.

In this article, Nikolajeva raises an important question: is the specific animal form, the hippopotamus, meaningful in itself, or could the characters equally well have been members of other species? In some cases, the animal form seems to be secondary to the character's function in a human context, and therefore the animal species seems interchangeable. But is that really possible? Doesn't the entire fabric of connotations change when a hippopotamus is replaced by, for instance, a rabbit? I believe it is exactly the specific animal form, and the particular way the author / illustrator decides to depict the animal that matters, and to accept that is matters has far reaching implications.

The abovementioned approaches to the animal question are still anthropocentric in nature, and in this perspective it is justifiable to consider anthropomorphism as metaphor. Recently, however, literary theory has witnessed a turn towards a more bio- or ecocentric interpretation of animals in children's culture. From this perspective, animals have a value that is independent of their use for human development and human culture. When this intrinsic value forms the basis of the relationship between the child and the animals, real or fictional, their significance increases tremendously. As we have seen, there is a tendency to regard anthropomorphized animal characters metaphorically, especially the anthropomorphized body of picture book animals:

The anthropomorphized animal body as a stand-in for the human has become a familiar, even expected trope. The domestic animal's body, for example, is often used to signify human values. (Ratelle 12)

Within the context of the study of the Little Golden Books as middle class reading materials, this also means that these animals are ascribed middle class characteristics. According to Ratelle,

this literature written specifically for middle class children makes use of anthropomorphized animal characters ostensibly to impart middle class values to the young. (6)

Animal representations became vehicles for the teaching of ethics within a framework of Lockean ideas regarding the importance of kindness towards those that were less well off.

But apart from being instrumental in this fashion, these fictional animals fulfil another, more profound function. There seems to be a fundamental paradox embedded deep within Western cultures, that claims that animals and humans are alike in many respects, yet in some crucial areas they are profoundly different. Over the course of history, the nature of this difference has been debated and shifted in accordance with scientific developments. Descartes famously located this difference at the level of language use, and argued that since animals do not use language as we define it, they do not possess reason. Tool use, art and culture are other examples of demarcation criteria that have been used to distinguish animals and human on a fundamental level.

Regardless of the exact nature of this difference, difference in itself causes inequalities which have very real consequences for both human and nonhuman animals. In matters of ethics, for example, the more animals are 'like us', the more deserving they are deemed of ethical consideration. The consequences of Descartes' reasoning have led to a perspective on animals as machines. They are creatures that can feel no pain, but only exhibit physical responses to certain external stimuli, that we as humans then incorrectly interpret as an animal in pain. This view has widely been used to justify vivisection without anesthetics.

This ambivalence towards animals is a recurring theme. In her book *Animal* (2002) Erica Fudge describes this fundamental dilemma as a mixture of the fear and disgust that the animal presents as it challenges human superiority and the deeply felt desire to communicate with these creatures that are so like ourselves in many respects. She refers to Walter Benjamin, who writes that in the 'aversion to animals, the predominant feeling is fear of being recognized by them through contact' (Fudge 7) Representations of animals, according to Fudge, can be thought of as a form of mastery, a response to this fear and disgust animals can present. This 'paradox of like and not like, same and different, that exist in our fascination with animals' (Fudge 7), as well as its resolution through discourses of dominion and stewardship, can be traced in the Little Golden Books and is expressed mainly by the different uses of visual and verbal anthropomorphism.

In the following case study regarding pethood, I will discuss examples of how the representation of pets can dogmatically reinforce existing social hierarchies. Anthropomorphism plays a significant part in the furthering of these hierarchies, as Ratelle rightly points out. However, as she also notes, anthropomorphism can at times offer the reader the possibility to question and reconsider species hierarchies and the humanist discourse that it is grounded in.

Case study 1: Pethood and childhood: canine characters⁴

In this case study, I will highlight how the interplay of words and images emphasizes how categories of species, age and gender intersect to strengthen the dominance of adult humans. Child readers are encouraged to reproduce speciest attitudes and behavior in their interactions with pets. The books further draw parallels between child rearing and the training of dogs, encouraging the readers to think of themselves as pets.

Publisher's Weekly's all-time bestsellers list is headed not by an acclaimed award winning children's book, but by an unassuming picture book entitled *The Poky Little Puppy*. In spite of its humble ambitions, this book raises fundamental questions about the nature of the human-animal relationship, and the pet-child relationship in particular. The reader might, for example, be tempted to ask: why are the puppies attracted by the scent of human desserts? Is it because they are, as traditional perspectives on children's literature tend to claim, 'children in disguise'? To what extent does their anthropomorphic representation invite an equation with human children, and to what end? How is the reader to make sense of the confusion of human and nonhuman animal categories?

One of the challenges of interpreting animal presence in popular picture books is that animal characters are at risk of being read solely metaphorically, as representatives for human beings or human qualities. Amelie Björck argues that animals in contemporary children's literature are predominantly represented in an uncritical fashion: they simply speak, think and feel as if they were humans (6). Such anthropocentric representations and reading strategies obscure their animality. This invisibility of the animal-as-animal in children's books leads to a confusion of categories that promotes the marginalization of both children and animals. In the picture books I will discuss, the dogs are certainly at risk of being interpreted as 'humans in disguise'. In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway warns against this confusion in real-life interspecies interactions, stating that 'to regard a dog as a furry child, even metaphorically, demeans dogs and children- and sets up children to be bitten and dogs to be killed' (37). I argue that we ought to be equally vigilant in our encounters with picture book animals.

Reading picture books with an emphasis on animal presence requires us to (re)consider the specific nature of picture book representation, and how it

⁴ An earlier version of this case study appeared in: Feuerstein, Anna & Nolte-Odhiambo, Carmen (eds.) (2017). *Childhood and pethood in literature and culture: new perspectives on childhood studies and animal studies*. New York: Routledge

affects the book's ideological connotations. For representations of pets in picture books, it is significant to acknowledge this connection to the reality of human-animal interactions, since picture books, especially those that target a young readership, have a socializing and educational function. (Stephens 158)

Picture books teach young children to recognize and implicitly conceptualize the similarities and differences between human and non-human animals. By depicting a limited number of interactions, often set within a confined and clearly delineated context (e.g. the home, the farm, the park), they offer their readers a limited repertoire of possible relationships and interactions with non-human animals. Moreover, the way animals are represented situates young readers in relation to both pets and adult humans, and these relationships are often structured hierarchically.

To illustrate how this mechanism of socialization operates, I will first examine three Little Golden Books from the 1940s and 1950s featuring dog protagonists. In each of these books, the association of dogs and humans is characterized in a different manner, and this has consequences for the ideological position of both the dog and the child. In *My Puppy* (1955), a toddler narrates the story of an ordinary day spent together with his puppy, and in the process he reveals much about the nature of pet ownership, as well as the training and disciplining of both children and dogs. By contrast, *The Poky Little Puppy* (1942) features no human characters at all, yet human presence is ubiquitous and even indispensable for the understanding of the story. *Mister Dog: The Dog who Belonged to Himself* (1952) addresses the legitimacy of ownership by parodying the trope of a boy taking home a stray dog.

The dogs in these books are all to some extent anthropomorphized. They are complex, multi-layered entities that have ideological messages inscribed in their appearance, their behavior, and their interactions with other creatures. Moreover, the cultural history of the dog-human relationship influences the way in which readers are encouraged to interpret dog presence in these picture books. Much of the mediated ideology depends on the activation of the reader's knowledge about the cultural history of dogs, which consists of, among other things, real life interactions, dog training practices and manuals, dog narratives, and representations of dogs in popular media and the arts.

These representations ultimately situate the dogs at the crossroads of animality and humanity, nature and culture, and childhood and adulthood. They interrogate the nature of pethood through subversive word-image dynamics, showing how the form of the picture book contributes to the story's meaning. Each of the books highlight a separate aspect of the child-pet-adult axis, and in doing so each of them emphasizes a different, potentially problematic attitude towards pets and children. What is at stake, in the end, is our moral obligation towards animals and children. Anthropocentric normativity determines not only the degree of anthropomorphization of the animal protagonists, but also the representations of adult and juvenile appearance. When

dogs are paired with children in these Little Golden Books, their behavior and appearance often sharply contrasts with the representations of adult humans. Yet at the same time these books also undermine a simple adult-child opposition. The complexity of these animal representation helps the attentive reader see the paradoxes that permeate Western attitudes towards pets.

The way pets and children are represented in the Little Golden books that I will discuss in this case study is informed by their respective places within the middle class household. In her introduction to *Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture, New Perspectives in Childhood Studies and Animal Studies* (2017) Monica Flegel describes how children and pets were both positioned as dependents.

I argue that childhood and pethood speak to a similar historical conflation with the child, the pet, and the nuclear family home all co-developing in the nineteenth century. [...]

Both children and pets in the nineteenth century ensured that the middle-class home was operating as it should, with the dependent at the center of the family confirming the parents' role as care-takers, providing a model for pet- and childhood that, for better or worse, we have been employing ever since. (xiv)

This relationship is fraught with complexities, apparent contradictions, and gaps. Their dependency on adult humans is what links children and pets, and what makes them equally vulnerable. The Little Golden Books that I discuss in this section display various expressions of the adult need to socialize pets and children in order to make them fit into the middle class household. Readers may be tempted to look at the depictions of the relationships between toddlers and their young pets as sentimental tableaux of family life, but that would constitute a denial of the political dimension that is inherent in these representations. As Flegel writes:

The connection between companion animals and children, then, is far more than simply an occasion for shame or for an immersion into the sentimental: instead, it asks us to question who counts as a being with rights and status, and what it means to be dependent in a world in which dependency is envisioned as always entailing a lesser status. (xvii)

This power imbalance can be expressed on different levels. The Little Golden Books in this case study show scenes where the child and the pet find themselves at the mercy of adults, which often results in situations where the child tries to exercise power over the pet by disciplining the animal or by forcing the pet to behave in a way that is contrary to its own desires or instincts. The young child protagonists have already internalized the idea that they are the ones who should naturally be in charge of the animal, while they themselves are in turn subjected to the rules set by adult humans. So even when these adults are not physically present in the story, their power

is unrelenting. In the same volume, Anna Feuerstein and Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo write:

We argue that the categories of childhood and pethood are co-constituted, as they highlight the ideological structures asserting both adult and human dominance. At the same time, children and pets offer surprising moments of subversion, challenging both the institutional settings in which childhood and pethood are constructed and the larger power structures that keep them in positions of subjection. The ways in which children and pets interact with each other provide productive avenues for exploring not only interspecies kinship relations but also how disenfranchised subjects can negotiate their marginalization, create new affective economies, and engage in unexpected forms of growth. (2)

The kinship between pets and children originates from their position as Others with respect to adult society. This has consequences for their status in society, as well as for their representation in picture books. According to Feuerstein and Nolte-Odhiambo:

The child shares many [...] qualities with the pet, as both are deemed closer to nature and thus to base, primitive instincts than the thoroughly socialized – and hence civilized – adult human. Within these child/adult and pet/human dichotomies, the characteristics that define the “adult” in the former and the “human” in the latter are largely interchangeable and shaped by notions of rationality and responsibility – qualities that both the child and the pet are perceived as lacking. As a consequence, children and pets have limited rights to self-determination, which raises important questions about alterity, agency, and the power of care [...] (5).

A sign of their Otherness in children’s books is that children and pets alike often display behavior that is undesirable and a sign of their status as uncivilized creatures. In the picture books that I discuss in this case study, we will see examples of pets displaying this type of undesirable behavior, which then needs to be corrected by the child. This may be a puppy who digs holes in the garden, or a kitten who looks at a birds’ nest in a way that suggests she wants to kill and devour the baby birds. The child and the pet are both positioned as Other compared to adult humans, but the child is already on the way to becoming human (i.e. adult). This occasionally happens at the expense of the pets, who are instrumental but also instruments in this process.

Caring, responsibility and ownership

In the United States, pet keeping and childhood have been linked from the 19th century onwards mainly because of the positive effects that caring for animals was assumed to have for children's emotional and moral development. Moreover, pet keeping is associated with class. As Katherine Grier explains, the practice has a role to play in the advancement of the middle classes and the position of the child therein, when 'it speaks to evolving ideas about the proper roles of men and women and to the historical characteristics of the modern American middle classes' (8).

The intimate connection between children and animals is seen in the number of books on pet keeping published for a juvenile readership. It was assumed that children had tasks and responsibilities in ensuring the wellbeing of the family pets (Grier 12). For example, in 1953 Golden Press, the company that published the Little Golden Books, printed a handbook entitled *The Golden Book of Wild Animal Pets: How to find and care for animals of the wood, field, and stream* by Roy Pinney, which demonstrates how pet keeping was regarded as a practice that taught children responsibility, compassion and empathy. The book gives instructions on how to capture and care for a wide array of animals, from skunks, raccoons and armadillos to rabbits, frogs, and snakes. Pinney has no moral objections to taking animals from their natural habitat and bringing them into the domestic sphere, as long as the children realize that

[o]wnership of any pet entails responsibility as well as pleasure. [...] To fulfill these responsibilities, you must learn to respect the individual personality of each animal. (12)

Being responsible for their own pets, without too much adult intervention, is a positive learning experience for children, and representations of similar relationships, such as in *My Puppy*, are common to children's literature. Grier describes how pet keeping was supposed to encourage children to extend their sympathy beyond species boundaries, and how kindness was essential to the relationship. According to Grier, pet keeping was defined as a natural extension of the 19th-century domestic ethic of kindness, and as such it had an important function within children's education to become moral citizens. In light of this ideal, the child-pet relationship became significant as caring for pets taught self-discipline and consideration for other-than-human life (Grier 130). In the 19th century American children's books and magazines became increasingly populated by pets and nostalgically represent the idea of the domestic ethic of kindness.

However, pet keeping also inherently involves discourses of power and dominance (Tuan 1-2). This dual nature of pet keeping, coupling discourses of dominance and affection, manifests in many of the Little Golden Books featuring children and their pets. This is no coincidence, since children, too, are often considered inferior to adults in Western cultures, and one of the

strategies reinforcing this marginalization is the emphasis on children's supposedly 'natural' alliance with animals (Ritvo 497).

Moreover, the power structures inherent in the production and distribution of children's books turn these texts into sites of reproduction of dominant ideologies. Animal-centered readings of picture books therefore provide insight into both children's marginalization as well as into the ways in which children are socialized into a tradition of thinking that systematically values humanity over animality and naturalizes human domination of animals.

The domestic ethic of kindness and My Puppy

My Puppy clearly demonstrates how mainstream attitudes towards children's pet keeping can find their way into fictional representations. Moreover, the connection between the child and the pet is established and reinforced on both the visual and the verbal level of the story. From the first spread it is obvious that the puppy enjoys a special status in the human household. The dog is allowed in the child's bedroom when the boy is sleeping, and he sits beside the bed 'thumping and barking' to wake him. The child narrator is introduced by establishing the nature of his relationship to the dog. The narrator's first words, 'My puppy', immediately characterize the relationship as one of ownership and hierarchy. The narrator's second action consists of naming the dog Thumper. According to Erica Fudge, one aspect that sets pets apart from other animals is that they are given individual names (28).

By naming the dog and labeling him as his property, the narrator establishes Thumper's status as a pet, which motivates the boy's further actions. Being a puppy, rather than an adult dog, Thumper is in need of socialization, and in this book, the dog's socialization process is modeled on that of a human child. Thumper follows the boy's daily routines: waking up, getting dressed, eating breakfast, playing, and napping. The book emphasizes the boy's responsibility for the pup's actions: in the absence of adult human characters, it is up to the boy to teach him the expected behavior. The boy does his very best to prove that he has mastered the house rules and, by extension, social norms. He phrases Thumper's behavior in moral terms that also apply to children's behavior:

He knows a lot of tricks. He is a good puppy. Sometimes he is a naughty puppy.

His 'naughtiness' is illustrated by the story as a breaching of the household rules, which in this case means that he isn't allowed to destroy the property of others:

When he digs for bones in Mother's garden, he is a naughty puppy. I must scold him.

The use of the word 'must' can be read as an indication of an external authority that demands obedience. The garden belongs to Mother, therefore the puppy is not allowed to dig there, and the boy knows it is his responsibility to teach his pet the rules. But since the transgression happens as a consequence of his playfulness (characterized as a desirable trait in a dog, and described positively throughout the story), this is only a minor fault. It is just enough to show why the puppy needs socializing and, occasionally, disciplining, but there is never any serious conflict between the boy and his pet.

As the illustration shows, the boy maintains a friendly expression when he 'scolds' his pet, which therefore seems to be more a mimicking of the act of disciplining. Another way of looking at this scene is that it represents an example of good stewardship. In disciplining the puppy, the boy shows that he knows his place in the (humanist, middle class) order of nature, but his benevolent expression also indicates that he doesn't want to be superior to his playmate. The fact that the illustration focuses on the act of disciplining the dog, rather than on the act of mischief committed by him, supports a reading in which the child's response to the dog's play is central.

The perspective the reader is invited to identify with is that of the child, and even though the puppy looks directly at the reader, we are more inclined to follow the boy's gaze, pointing his finger and looking down on him. After the puppy is duly chastised, the right page then shows how the boy gently washes the puppy's paws, and the text reads that 'Thumper washes his face with his little wet paws', after which they continue playing. Their reconciliation indicates that they seem to have found a way to negotiate the boundaries of play and socialization.

Not quite wild, and not quite humanlike either, pets are in a position to straddle the nature-culture divide. This in-between status of existing simultaneously inside and outside of culture is shared by pets and children. But where children are in principle able to close this gap as they age and adopt adult society's ideology, pets will remain in limbo throughout their lives. The hierarchical structure of the relationship between pet and child in *My Puppy* illustrates the effects of this intersection of ageism and speciesism. The child's responsibility to his pet consists partly in being a mediator of the dominant, i.e. adult human, ideology.

Indicative of Thumper's inability to achieve full subject status is his failure to recognize himself in a mirror: 'When I hold Thumper up to the mirror he barks at the puppy he sees there. The puppy in the mirror barks, too.' The narrative suggests that while the dog sees his own reflection, he fails to recognize himself and, therefore, is not aware of his own individuality. But even if the boy is depicted as superior to the pup in some ways, the text and images also indicate a degree of similarity between the two. The story suggests that because of their age, they have similar needs, such as for play and

naps. On the visual plane, hierarchy and identity are established by the protagonists' respective positioning on the page and their mirroring of each other's actions. This being said, it is still mostly the boy who initiates their joint activities, and the pup who mirrors or responds to his actions. The book expresses a tension between authority and care, between responsibility and playfulness, that is a result of the problematic ethical status of pets in Western culture. One of these challenges posed by pets is related to the concept of ownership.

Dogs in American culture find themselves in a precarious position: as family members, they are the focal point of affection, but as property, they are expendable (Armbruster 351). In *My Puppy* issues relating to ownership are central and demonstrate how the status of dogs in American society is embedded in an ideology of capitalism and consumerism. Over the course of the story, the boy continues to alternate between 'my puppy' and 'Thumper' when he refers to the dog, and the text thus emphasizes that he sees the animal simultaneously as his personal property and as an individual. That ownership is described as a natural component of the relationship is not surprising if we take into consideration the target audience for which the books were originally published: young members of the middle classes. To own a pet that is also referred to in terms of family membership fits comfortably within the capitalist middle class ideal of the nuclear family. Pet ownership can be seen as a sign of wealth and upward social mobility, while describing the relationship in terms of love and care stresses the value of the security of the family home. The domesticated animal can be viewed as an extension of the private sphere, while at the same time representing economic progress.

Family life from a dog's point of view: Our Puppy (1948)

Conceptually, *Our Puppy* (1948), written by Elsa Ruth Nast and illustrated by Feodor Rojankovsky is very similar to *My Puppy*. The story narrates a day in the life of a pet puppy, from waking up in the morning, having breakfast with the family, watching them getting dressed, playing outside to his afternoon nap. There is, however, one significant difference between *My Puppy* and *Our Puppy*, and that is that the latter is narrated from the perspective of the puppy himself.

Narrated from a third person perspective, the text centers around the puppy. Active verbs serve to indicate that it is the dog who initiates activities, and he does so because it pleases him. The full text reads:

'Puppy wakes up//
And he stretches and shakes.//
He sniffs around//
and he runs

and takes
a drink of water from his pan,//
and he wakes up his friends,//
young Tom and Ann.//
He watches them wash and dress//
and eat.//
Then they all go
Scampering down the street.//
Puppy runs//
and brings back a thrown-out stick.//
He shows all the children//
His newest trick.//
He sniffs at a beetle,//
he sniffs at a tree.//
He buries a bone,//
he snaps at a bee.//
And then Mother calls
and Pup, Tom and Ann//
all scamper for home just as
fast as they can.//
They eat a big lunch,
and don't leave a scrap.//
Then they all settle down//
for a nice long nap.'

The puppy forms the center of the activities, and is given agency and the right to determine his own actions. The children and the pet engage in play, and much of it takes place on the puppy's initiative. He is given the freedom to explore his direct environment without any human intervention.

When the text mentions how the dog returns the stick, the act of throwing is only mentioned after the fact, when the dog runs to return it. The passive voice when describing the action indicates that it is not the human thrower who stands in the center of events, but the stick and the dog. This is a truly animal-centered story, which also shines through in the way the trick is described. What is left out is highly relevant to our interpretation of the dog's place in the family: the teaching of the trick. Who taught the puppy the trick? Was it the children? Or did he come up with it himself? This uniquely animal-centered perspective is something we do not often encounter in these picture books. It is also fairly sophisticated in that the reader is supposed to make her own inferences.

The story is unique in another sense as well, and that is related to the use, or rather the absence of displays of discipline, dominance and subordination that is often part and parcel of the dog story for young readers. Throughout this story, there is no mention of any disciplining or prohibiting actions from

the children. In this respect it is safe to say that their relationship is indeed based on interspecies friendship and equality.

The illustrations support this perspective by showing the centrality of the dog in several ways. This happens, first of all, by allowing him to occupy the central position on every page. In a number of images, he is looking directly at the reader, which creates a sense of involvement, one that is not based on what the dog means to the human characters in the story, but instead emanates from the animal himself. The dog establishes a relationship with the reader directly, without having a human child character interpreting his actions for him. In this story, the dog has agency, shows initiative and his experiences are the center of the narrative. The collective 'our' of the title also in a sense broadens the dog's lifeworld, since he does not belong to one individual exclusively, but is part of a larger social network that includes both human and nonhuman animals.

The animal (m)other

Interpreting animal presence in picture books means that we have to consider the dual nature of the medium. Traces of anthropocentric ideology can be found on the level of the words and the images, but more significantly, in the tension between these two sign systems. Friction between the ideological messages expressed in words and those depicted in images can indicate tensions in society at large, as *The Poky Little Puppy* illustrates. Below the surface of this story lie a number of contradictions that indirectly point at the frictions within western society concerning the status of pets and children in middle-class households. The absence of people throughout the story is indicative of the interconnectedness of canine and human lives: the idea of the co-existence of dogs and humans is so engrained in Western society that dogs can hardly be thought of in isolation.

In response to John Berger's dismissal of picture book animals as 'human puppets', Leonard Marcus identifies seven groups of animal picture books, and he mentions that 'picture books that represent what might be called animals-in-themselves appear to be the rarest' (135). In another category of books 'the taming of animals runs parallel to the teaching of control over unruly feelings and impulsive behavior' (131). Books that draw an obvious parallel between the taming of wild animals and the socialization of young children bring into view one of the main attractions of using animal characters in children's books, and picture books in particular. They potentially circumvent (some of) the controversial implications that might arise in stories with human protagonists, mainly with respect to the depiction of age, gender, race or class. It is easier to withhold or obscure this kind of information when the character is an animal. Beneath the surface, though, animal characters do mediate power relations, in particular adult-child dynamics. Picture

books thus highlight striking parallels in the socialization process of children and the training of animals.

Several explanations have been offered for the cultural connections that link children and animals on a fundamental level. Some scholars see this as an echo of Rousseau's veneration of the 'natural' child, uncontaminated by society's evils. Siding children with nature, and consequently with animals, has repercussions for ideas on socialization and education, which are described by Eleonor Maccoby in her study of 18th-century teaching practices:

Many contemporary writings compared the training of children to the training of horses, hawks, or dogs. And just as there were disagreements about whether horses ought to be broken or gentled, there were disagreements about the most effective approach to teaching children. (Qtd. in Myers 23)

Underlying theories of education comparing children with animals is the belief that both groups demonstrate a surplus of 'wildness' and a deficit of civilization in relation to adult culture. Children can eventually overcome this condition, while animals are per definition doomed to remain the inferiors of adult humans.

The dog is a particularly interesting animal to study in connection to children's socialization. Canine and human lives are entangled on numerous levels. To begin with, dogs and humans have a long history of cohabitation. It is hard to overestimate the importance of dogs for the human species and for human cultures worldwide. As Susan McHugh states:

Dogs seem unthinkable outside the context of human culture and, what is more, culture as we know it has been inseparable from their presence. (*Dog*, 19-20)

The dog's central position in Western cultures has fed a literary sub-genre of canine fiction. In line with their real life counterparts, the fictional dogs in these narratives have a border-crossing potential, enabling readers to speculate about species boundaries. In *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes. Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (2010) Laura Brown describes the genre's properties as follows:

The dog narrative evokes a random movement through a diverse world – a movement by means of which imaginary animals create the opportunity for human speculation about boundary, diversity and transcendence' (2010: 116)

As Brown suggests, the fictional dogs in these narratives have a border-crossing potential, enabling readers to speculate about species boundaries. The picture book dogs in *The Little Golden Books* fulfill a similar function.

They present child readers with a perspective on their own lifeworld that is simultaneously reassuring and unsettling: reassuring because of the familiarity of the subject matter and the comfort that lies in observing that the same social rules seem to apply to dogs as to children themselves; unsettling because of the strong hierarchical implications and the harsh consequences of disobedience resulting in social ostracism.

Karla Armbruster emphasizes that the prominent position of dogs in Western societies does not unequivocally imply that dogs are always thought of favorably. She points to the paradoxical attitude towards dogs that lies at the core of their relationship with humans. The dog is perceived as an ally in the human project of mastering nature, but his wildness causes anxiety. Therefore, in many dog narratives ‘the dog must do no less than conclusively demonstrate its loyalty to culture over nature, usually to the extreme of placing human interest above self-interest’ (354). Even though dogs are highly valued companions, our appreciation of them has clear limits. Dogs are only valued if they live up to our ideal of what ‘a good dog’ should be: one whose behavior is socially accepted, who is loyal to his human companions and in control of his wildness. In children’s books, this need for socialization is a familiar cause of conflicts between child and adult characters, in which the children are commonly sided with the dog. However, many children’s books harbor a subversive potential that undermines adult human supremacy by valuing both child and animal characters. (Cosslett 481) This ambivalence is present in *The Poky Little Puppy*.

Although this story narrates a day in the life of a litter of pups, their existence is firmly anchored in human society, values and power structures. The story itself is quite simple: in chronological order it tells about five puppies who venture out into the world beyond their back yard. In order to get there, they dig a hole under the fence, but after each ‘escape’, a sign appears explicitly forbidding the digging of any more holes. While exploring, the poky puppy repeatedly wanders off, leaving his siblings to look for him. When they find him, he smells the food waiting for them at home. The siblings immediately return, and their mother punishes them for escaping by sending them to bed without dinner.

Giving and withholding food is an effective strategy for disciplining children, commonly used by parent figures in children’s books to establish their dominance. Food events in children’s books are highly socializing moments, argues Carolyn Daniel (8), and in *The Poky Little Puppy*, food serves as a means of discipline as well as seduction. The thought of the food that is waiting for them lures the puppies back home, back to their mother’s sphere of influence. When food rules are broken in children’s books, this may be an indication of the perpetrator’s moral corruption, but here it invites a subversive interpretation. The poky puppy breaks the rules by eating at the wrong time and by eating excessively. His transgressive eating temporarily undermines the authority of adult society and, because the pet-child association is built upon the same premises, it implicitly also questions the legitimacy of

seeing children as pets. The ambiguity surrounding the mother's identity contributes to this subversive reading: she does not appear in the pictures and therefore the reader cannot determine her species. This fundamental uncertainty emphasizes the extent of the confusion of species, and invites the reader to rethink their preconceived ideas about pets and children.

The cycle of running away and being drawn back to the house is repeated three times, until the siblings decide that they have had enough and close up the hole before the poky puppy gets home: this time he is the one who is punished. The siblings reproduce the mother figure's strategies, thereby demonstrating that they have effectively internalized the norms of adult society. The 'dogness' of the protagonists obscures this, partly because the vocabulary commonly used in dog training tends to follow a command-and-obey structure. The effect of this underlying pattern of language that presupposes adult human supremacy is that it naturalizes this hierarchy. Adult superiority is further established by the narrator, who sides with the adult point of view. For example, he justifies the punishment of the siblings by not once questioning the mother's decision to punish the puppies. Interestingly, this mother figure exists only on the level of the text. Hers is the voice of authority, enforcing the rules written on signs near the fence, distributing praise and punishment.

The setting of the story, suggesting a suburban human home with a fenced yard, also obscures the species and age of the mother figure. The text potentially supports several alternatives. She could be an adult dog, in which case we can interpret her style of upbringing as the extension of her own domestication and her commitment to human authority. The mother figure may also be an adult human, referring to the pups as her children, a relatively common practice among dog owners. The story allows for another option, namely that the mother figure is a human child. A hint in this direction is that the puppies are fed 'human' comfort foods for supper: rice pudding, chocolate custard and strawberry shortcake. Furthermore, both the handwriting and the phrasing of the rules on the signs suggest play. The first sign reads 'Don't ever dig holes under this fence!' and the second one commands 'Don't ever ever dig holes under this fence!' The final sign reads: 'No desserts ever unless puppies never dig holes under this fence again!' The repetitions and superlatives suggest verbal play typically associated with childhood.

The punishment imitates the way adult humans set rules for their children, and reading the mother as a child suggests that she is in this way reproducing her own experiences with being disciplined for breaking the house rules. The ambiguity with respect to the mother figure's identity obscures the status of the dogs: the reader cannot determine with absolute certainty whether they are living independent lives in a dog society that mirrors human society, or are kept as pets in a human society. In either case there is no way around the dominance of adult humans, and this inferiority of young children and pets is naturalized through the use of dog protagonists.

Teaching speciesism in picture books

Ultimately, the discourse of species forms the foundation for the naturalization of other power relationships we encounter in these books. It functions, in this way, as an ‘original hierarchy’ on which the other hierarchies are modeled. In *The Poky Little Puppy* we find a good example of how species hierarchies are mediated visually through the contrasting portrayals of the dogs and the other animals. Looking at the puppies, we notice that they often look back at the reader; their open facial expressions allow the reader to identify with them. When the dogs encounter other animals - a caterpillar, lizard, frog, spider, snake, and grasshopper - these animals are shown instead from the side, which increases emotional distance. The text refers to them as ‘things’. Unlike mammals, and pets in particular, they belong to species that are not commonly endowed with personalities. The puppies, who have agency throughout the narrative, clearly do not view them as fellow creatures with the same degree of agency. ‘Dogness’ is presented as the norm, and in their search for their brother, all other animals are viewed in negative terms as ‘not-the-poky-puppy’. These animals are objectified by the gaze of the dogs, in much the same way as happens when humans look at zoo animals, according to John Berger. The puppies’ gaze reveals how self-evident a hierarchical view of species really is. Therefore, even without explicitly including human characters in the story, human supremacy is built into the narrative.

Although the moral of the story seems restrictive, the final spread presents the poky puppy with the possibility to escape the boundaries of middle class, domestic life. We see him from behind, as he is sitting in front of the fence, looking up at the sign that says: ‘No desserts ever unless puppies never dig holes under this fence again!’ Even though we cannot see his face, the reader is invited to speculate that the puppy may not be stopped by this threat. Perhaps he contemplates giving up his dessert to find freedom on the other side of the fence. For the child reader, who is invited to share the puppy’s perspective, this creates an opportunity to identify with him and consider, if not outright disobedience, then at least the possibility of a life beyond the fence.

Another possible interpretation links this story to the domestic ethic of kindness and views the pups in terms of metaphorical family members, akin to the humans in the family. Their education follows the rules of the family, and therefore it is not strange that the dogs, even though they are of a different species, are asked to follow the family’s laws. Within the domestic sphere, pets fulfill an important role not just as objects of affection, but also because they allow us to rethink what it means to be human. Erica Fudge stresses this point when she links the concept of the pet to the fundamental concept of the home:

Pets, I want to argue, have real functions and imagined ones, and both are vital to any assessment of why we live with them. Indeed, it is by tracing various ways of thinking about the concept of home that we can begin to understand these most fully. In particular we can begin to contemplate who it is that we think we are when we live with animals. (19)

Our interactions with pets are situated in and around the home, as pets are the only animals we voluntarily share this space with. Allowing pets into the home makes its boundaries penetrable, thereby erasing the sharp division of inside and outside. The pet's function as a boundary-breaching creature making the walls of the home permeable can be linked to the emergence of the middle classes, the nuclear family and the domestic ethic of kindness.

The Ugly Dachshund: the importance of breed and performance

The Ugly Dachshund (1966), by Carl Memling and illustrated by Mel Crawford is an adaptation of a Walt Disney motion picture. It tells a story about identity, fitting in and the importance of a dog's breed to the human owners. As the title suggest, this is an Ugly Duckling story with a twist, the protagonist of which is a great Dane who grows up among a litter of Dachshunds. In the previously discussed book species was an important distinguishing trait, determining which animals are worthy of a second look, of empathy and equal treatment. The social hierarchy within the family unit that is constructed in *The Ugly Dachshund* is not based on species, but on breed. This is possible because dog breeds come in wide varieties, with enormous differences in size and appearance.

The characters in this story are portrayed realistically in the images, and the animals display no obvious anthropomorphic traits. This realism that characterizes the images can be explained by the connection to the medium of film, and the aspiration to stay close to the original Disney movie. The human and



Figure 4: *The Ugly Dachshund* (1966)

canine characters closely resemble the actors in the movie. The text, however, ascribes humanlike thoughts and emotions to the dogs, in particular to Brutus, the main character. Brutus, a Great Dane, believes he is a Dachshund, since the other three puppies in his litter are Dachshunds, as is the dog he thinks of as his mother. This assumption not only influences his self-esteem (the text mentions that he feels ugly and clumsy), it also gets him in trouble with the humans in the household.

The Ugly Dachshund contains numerous moments of conflict that show the reader some of the values and expectations people may have with respect to behaviour when they share their house with nonhuman animals. When Brutus copies the behaviour of his litter mates, his larger size causes destruction of human property. This image shows the expression of despair in Mr. Garrison's posture and face when his work is ruined by the playing dogs. The dachshunds however, seem to delight in the chaos caused by their big friend. There is an obvious element of comedy in this, but the reader also realizes that Brutus' confusion may have tragic consequences. The life of a pet in a middle class household is a precarious one, and when the animal misbehaves the threat of eviction – or worse - is always latently present. Because of this, the reader fears that the dog may be misunderstood and as a consequence may have to leave the home.

This story addresses a number of issues, mostly about power relations in pet keeping, but it is also interesting to explore the position of the child reader. What message does the reader receive in terms of acceptable behaviour – is the child invited to identify with the dog or with the human characters? The confusion that Brutus is subject to is complicated by another confusion, and this one is situated on the level of species: it is about the status of pets in the household. Can they be equated with human children or not? And what message does that send to the reader?

An exploration of the intermedial connection with the Disney movie provides a suitable starting point for this discussion. The opening scene in the movie differs from the Little Golden Book. The picture book opens with a scene where three already relatively mature Dachshunds and Brutus, the great Dane, are playfully interacting in the living room. For the viewer it is immediately clear that Brutus belongs to a different breed, and with this assertion as a starting point, the picture book states its theme: the difficulties that arise when one's body does not correspond with one's mental image of oneself.

The movie, on the other hand, starts before the Dachshund pups are born. The opening scene shows how one morning, there is a lot of commotion in the Garrison household, so the viewer expects a major event to occur. What is not revealed to the viewer at this point is that this is the day the couple's Dachshund is about to give birth, and that is the reason behind the excitement. Mr. and Mrs. Garrison drive to the veterinarian's clinic at great speed. When a police officer hails them, they point to Mrs. Garrison's lap, where a bulge in her clothing hides the pregnant dog. She is, however, invisible to the policeman, and he assumes it is Mrs. Garrison who is pregnant. He offers them an escort to the hospital, but once there, the couple ignores him and drives on to the animal clinic. This upsets the police officer, who feels deceived and fines the couple for speeding and a number of other traffic violations. This is an important scene because it establishes the relationship between the dogs and their human companions.

This initial confusion, where the police officer (and possibly the viewer) expects Mrs. Garrison to give birth to a human child, is humorous, but it also lays bare that ideas about pethood can be divergent. From their own point of view, the relationship the Garrisons have with their dogs can be understood in terms of an adult-child relationship. Mrs. Garrison in particular feels an emotional attachment that is similar in nature to that of a mother and her child. The narrative justifies this: since the couple is childless, the viewer is invited to interpret her devotion to her dogs as a surrogate for childcare. But even if one does not want to take the equation that far, it is safe to say that for the Garrisons, their dogs are valuable family members that are on a par with human family members.

This perspective is obviously not shared by the police officer, and that is what turns the scene into a comical event. Both the viewer's and the policeman's expectations are challenged. Therefore, it is implicitly suggested that it is at least a little odd that two humans get this excited over the birth of their pet's puppies. The police officer voices this opinion when he gives Mr. Garrison a number of fines after he discovers that the emergency was not about a human delivery, but about a dog. For him, a possible medical emergency involving a dog is not equal to one involving a human. This initial confusion of species raises the question what the status of a pet in the household should be, and it is a central event in the movie.

The Little Golden Book skips over this line of developments altogether, and instead focuses not on the species confusion, but on the dog's identity issues. The story tells the reader how the Great Dane causes havoc in the human household, not only because of his size but also because of his clumsiness. The confusion that is central in this story does not only lie with the human protagonists, but with the dog himself: according to the text, he thinks he is a Dachshund, but his body does not correspond with that idea, so he keeps causing damage to the people's property: 'Poor Brutus. He thought he was a Dachshund, too, but a very large, clumsy, ugly one.' The humans know that he is not, but appear to be unable to change the dog's perception of himself. They undertake no action to help him to behave in a more suitable way, nor do they seem to have much empathy for his situation. In focusing on the damage and not the causes or possible solutions of the confusion, the narrator reveals that he sides mostly with the adults in his judgement of the dog's behaviour.

Even though the Garrisons realize that 'he is just a puppy', they are worried about the future. Mrs. Garrison wonders: 'What will he do when he gets bigger?'. This indicates that they expect their problems will grow in proportion with Brutus' size – not that he will come to terms with his body. The possibility that he may grow out of his clumsiness as he ages seems to be unthinkable to them. This is alarming for any readers who either have a pet or are occasionally clumsy themselves. If the readers harbour such fears, they soon see them realized. After another destructive episode, the Garrisons feel compelled to remove Brutus from their home and house him in a dog pen in the yard instead. There he proves to be a good guard dog, but this still doesn't redeem him. Even though he arguably is more useful than the Dachshunds, he still doesn't have the same status as the other dogs, whose behaviour is never questioned and whose status as family members is taken for granted. The text insinuates that his skills as a guard dog make for a lucky escape: 'So Brutus stayed on with the Garrisons and the Dachshunds.' It is obvious that the Garrisons and the Dachshunds form a family unit, and that Brutus is considered to be an intruder. In this light, it is not strange that Brutus wants to be and behave like a Dachshund in order to fit in.

At the same time as the narrator explains the situation from an adult perspective, the child reader is encouraged to empathize with Brutus. Throughout the story, the dog tries to behave in a way that he thinks will be appreciated by his owners. In spite of that, he gets blamed for things he did not do on purpose - a situation many young readers will feel familiar with. The punishments he receives are experiences as injustices, which will resonate especially well with young readers.

It is mainly Mrs. Garrison who voices her concerns about Brutus and his struggles with his identity: 'We'll never have any peace until Brutus stops thinking he's a Dachshund'. Although Brutus seems to be convinced he is a Dachshund, other human characters have trouble identifying his species. For

example: ‘Mr. Toyama, when he can to decorate the house for a party, thought something quite different. “Lion! Help! Lion!” he cried.’

Unlike the Dachshunds, Brutus has to prove that he belongs with the family by means of good deeds that make up for his ‘bad’ ones. Once, he saves one of the Dachshund who had fallen into the garbage truck. This endears him to Mrs. Garrison, but not enough to make her actually care about him the way she does about her Dachshunds. Affection is presented as something that needs to be constantly negotiated for some, while it is naturally given to others, and this is a problematic message. In a more positive light, a dilemma like this challenges the reader to reflect on the relationships they have with the animals (and perhaps people?) in their own lives. It can encourage readers to consider if and why they value certain animals more than others, and whether this is justified.

This brings us to another question: the moral responsibility owners have towards their pets. The Little Golden Book does not explain how Brutus became a member of the Garrison household, but in the movie this is a prominent story line. Mr. Garrison is the one who decides to adopt Brutus, and he chooses him exactly because he is a Great Dane. This breed, to him, represents the quintessential dog, exactly because of its stature and majestic appearance. When he visits the vet to pick up the mother Dachshund and her puppies, there is a litter of Great Danes as well. Their mother doesn’t produce enough milk to feed all of them, while the mother Dachshund has too much milk. The vet then suggests that it would be a good solution to add one of the Great Dane pups to the Dachshund family. Faced with the vet’s hardly veiled request to adopt the little guy, Mr. Garrison doesn’t have the heart to refuse. Even if it is anchored in emotions, this is a conscious decision that creates a moral responsibility to care for the pup.

That is why it is surprising that Mrs. Garrison’s opinion of the dog seems to be dominant. Even after he saved one of the Dachshunds from being taken away in a dump truck, she remains distant, which burdens her husband so much that he decides to take action:

‘Mrs. Garrison no longer complained about Brutus, but to her he was nothing more than a sweet, clumsy ox of a dog. This troubled Mr. Garrison so much that then and there he decided to enter Brutus in the Fairview Dog Show’.

(...)

‘And there Brutus - for the first time – saw other Great Danes! How tall and strong they were! How handsome! What a proud, Great-Dane look they had about them! Brutus eyed the other Danes. Suddenly he lifted his head proudly. At last he knew he was a Great Dane!

When Brutus recognizes himself in the other Great Danes, his confusion about his breed is resolved. His self-esteem is restored and with this the Ugly Duckling story has a happy outcome. However, this story is not only about Brutus’

search for identity and belonging. It is also about how humans value their pets, and about taking responsibility for adopting a (large) dog. The situation is still relatively unpredictable, because Brutus' value is largely based on his status. He wins the dog show, and as long as he continues to win, his position in the household is secure. The humans in *The Ugly Dachshund* are mainly concerned with the pedigree of their dogs and with the status that comes with it. Dog shows are one way of establishing hierarchy within the breed. Species is a recurring criterion used to determine identity and difference in picture books for young children, but when living with pets, breed is important too.

Learning to differentiate between creatures is an important skill. The story is presented as a dog's search for identity. In this story, identity is synonymous with breed, although it is debatable whether dogs distinguish between different breeds when they interact with other dogs. For humans, however, breed really is an important distinction. Different breeds developed in the process of domestication. The concept of breed, to a greater extent than that of species, demonstrates how intertwined pets' lives are with ours. Where species developed under the pressure of natural circumstances and events, breeds in domesticated species developed because of human interference and based on human preferences. *The Ugly Dachshund* shows how different people feel attracted to different breeds, and this can ensure that there is a suitable pet for everyone. However, when breed is coupled with a sense of hierarchy, this can become problematic.

Friendship across species boundaries: the story of Mister Dog

The voluntary nature of a friendship that crosses species lines is a recurring theme in many Little Golden Books, such as in *Mister Dog: The Dog Who Belonged to Himself* (1952). This story evokes a cultural myth that Fudge refers to as one of the most prevalent human-pet stories in Western societies: the myth of the lost dog who goes to great lengths to make it back home. In this particular telling of the myth, however, the child is the one who appears to be lost, while the dog is in possession of a home and in a position to offer the child refuge. Anthropomorphized animals especially have the potential to negotiate the human-animal boundary, and this is what happens in *Mister Dog*, where a humanized adult dog meets and 'adopts' an apparently homeless human child. In an inversion of the 'boy brings home stray dog' trope, the dog is presented as a trustworthy, eminent, self-made member of society, who proudly calls himself 'a conservative'.

The history of this picture book is interesting, since it is entwined with the life of the author, Margaret Wise Brown. She was, as Leonard Marcus describes her 'one of the central figures of a period now considered the golden

age of the America picture book, the years spanning the post-Depression thirties and the postwar baby boom forties and fifties'. (1992: 1)

Animals were prominently present in the children's books Brown wrote, and the character of Mister Dog was based on her own dog, a rather ill-tempered Kerry Blue terrier whom she named Crispin's Crispian after Shakespeare's Henry V. She bought the puppy, ignoring her friend's warning that the puppy that caught Margaret's fancy had an 'unusually wild and contrary temperament, even for a Kerry'. (1992: 182) Marcus describes how

Several of Margaret's friends eventually caught a bit of the dog's fury on the trouser leg, and Crispian put her to considerable expense, tearing up upholstery and generating veterinarian's bills for the repair of other dogs he periodically attacked in the street. Crispian was a terror – and this, doubtless, was what Margaret liked about him. He was the wildness of small children, hers at times to rein in, at other times hers only to keep pace with.' (Awakened by the Moon, 182)

Mister Dog occupies a special place in Wise-Brown's oeuvre. The fact that she used her own dog as model for her character signifies that this is a story that is close to her heart. She did soften the character of her fictional dog in the Little Golden Book a little: he chases cats and rabbits, but is very gentle with the little boy he meets. In *Awakened by the Moon*, Marcus describes the book and its importance to the artist as follows:

A small comic masterpiece, *Mister Dog; The Dog Who Belonged to Himself* revealed Margaret at the height of her powers. Her most fully realized tale of self-possession, it was also the work of a creative artist gathering up the tag ends of an immensely productive period of writing in preparation for new things to come.

The winsome tone of the piece is set in the subtitle, which is also, of course, a gloss on Margaret's own rather dauntless dog's name. The fictional Crispian is a more agreeable if no less adventuresome pup who one day meets a similarly self-possessed little boy. Recognizing each other as equals, they decide to live together as friend and friend. In *Wait Till the Moon Is Full* Margaret underscored the gradual nature of the process by which an emerging self becomes ready for an independent life. In *Mister Dog*, she carried her account of the process an important step further, showing that with self-possession comes the possibility of friendship – perhaps even of love – based on mutuality. (263-264)

The illustrator Garth Williams based his rendition of Crispian's house of Margeret's own Cobble Court, an act that underlines the importance of this book as a reflection of certain aspects of Margaret's own life. (1992: 204)

Mister Dog's name is 'Crispin's Crispian, because he belonged to himself'. He is truly a hybrid and his society is one in which a dog is allowed to adopt a human lifestyle. The text continuously stresses that Mister Dog is not like

other dogs, because he does not have an owner to take care of him. Instead ‘he woke himself up’ and ‘took himself for a walk’. The images confirm his status as an emancipated pet: he walks on his hind legs, wears clothes, and speaks human language. Anthropomorphism in picture book animals is often expressed by means of these three particular signs of humanity. In many cases this is not commented upon, but in *Mister Dog*, his hybridity is foregrounded by his ability to switch between a more canine behavioral mode to a more human one. When Crispin’s Crispian goes out he walks on his hind legs with a cane and a straw hat, but a moment later he is running on all fours together with a group of non-humanized dogs, chasing rabbits and cats. No matter how humanized he might be, there remains some room for outbursts of animal behavior.



Figure 5: *Mister Dog*

Mister Dog is not just a humanized dog; he is also a conservative. This word feels out of place in a children’s book and stresses that the narrator is an adult. Such dual address is typical for many Golden Books. Barbara Wall, in *The Narrator’s Voice* (1991) describes dual address as ‘a stance in which the narrator addresses child and adult narratees genuinely in the same voice’. (34) This is the case in Margaret Wise Brown’s dog stories. For child narratees, Mister Dog is a companion, a pet who is also a caretaker. Adult narratees may view him with another kind of sympathy. He is an adorable, gentle conservative, a person who will provide a good, welcoming home for a lost child. He is also the animal who has left part of his animality behind in order to become this parental figure, who has matured into semi-human adulthood.

And, for those who are familiar with Margaret Wise Brown's work, he symbolizes the artist's coming of age.

In addition, while adult readers will understand the political connotations of the term 'conservative', the text explains to the child reader how Mister Dog likes everything at the right time and at the right place, implying that a conservative is organized, prefers a structured lifestyle, and goes to great lengths to achieve this. He is the idealized adult, offering structure and security, and is therefore a fitting role model for a young human boy. When Mister Dog takes him home, he initiates the socialization process and puts the boy on the right track to becoming a well-behaved conservative like himself.

That the boy has no significant others in his life beside Mister Dog is implied by the final image: it shows a portrait of another dog hanging beside Mister Dog's bed, while there is only an empty nail by the boy's bedside. The dog, being a self-made 'man', an adult, is in a position to invite the little boy to live in his house. Again, species is significant: imagine the same story with an adult human male playing the part of Mister Dog. Any unwanted implications are removed now that a dog, man's best friend and protector, is the protagonist. The adult-child power imbalance is mitigated by species difference.

The relationship between the boy and the dog is characterized by a constant balancing between identity and difference, thus interrogating the human-animal divide. Mirror images show boy and dog facing each other, on opposite sides of the table and opposite sides of the bedroom, with the page split dividing the image. In the dinner scene, they are sitting at the table, facing each other while eating their meals. This juxtaposition is also mirrored in the text, which describes their meals in identical words:

And what did Crispin's Crispian do with his dinner? Did he put it in his stomach? Yes, indeed. He chewed it up and swallowed it into his little fat stomach. And what did the little boy do with his dinner? Did he put it in his stomach? Yes, indeed. He chewed it up and swallowed it into his little fat stomach.

As is the case in *My Puppy*, these repetitions create a sense of shared identity between the boy and the dog, yet the distance created by the composition of the illustrations ensures that there is always also a sense of difference.

This difference is mainly grounded in Mister Dog's past as a pet, a history suggested but never put into words. Somehow, he has freed himself from the ties of ownership and now is quite literally 'his own master'. We could read this as propaganda for the American dream, when even a dog can travel up in society to the point where he can 'adopt' a human child. The pinnacle of social mobility is that an animal can rise on the social ladder. However, total independence is not within the dog's reach. We read that he has 'a little bedroom with a bed in it and a place for his leash'. The reader wonders why Mister Dog feels the need to keep a leash in his bedroom when he has no

owner to hold the other end. The text leaves unexplained whether he keeps the leash as a reminder of his acquired independence and the possibility of upward social mobility, or if it suggests his inability to feel completely free of his old bonds to mankind. Mentioning the leash raises the question of the legitimacy of ownership and its necessity for Mister Dog's identity.

Mister Dog plays with the conventions of pethood and raises the question of who domesticates whom in the human-pet relationship. Indeed, the history of Mister Dog can be read as a playful parody of pethood. The protagonist, as the reader finds out early on, is not just any dog. Mister Dog is not satisfied with a life of eternal youth, but is interested in living an adult life. To accomplish this, he needs to seize ownership of his own existence and in doing so, he becomes a dog 'who belongs to himself'. His days consist of the careful imitation of a decidedly human lifestyle, characterized by himself as 'conservative'. The ultimate act of emancipation consists in his 'adoption' of a human boy. This action may also be interpreted as an affirmation of middle class values, where pet ownership can serve as a indication of upward social mobility.

Mister Dog negotiates the possibilities of interspecies friendship by inverting traditional ideas of pethood. The boy in a sense becomes the pet, but the relationship entails the possibility of emancipation for the human child. From a position of safety, the child may develop to become a person who belongs to himself, too. Perhaps we could interpret their friendship as an evolved state of pethood, one that is not defined by dominance but by mutual respect.

So, as we have established, the dogs in these Little Golden Books are complex creatures, who embody the potential to negotiate the human-animal boundary. They acquire this potential due to the entanglements of human and canine lives, both in canine practices and cultural representations. Shifting the focus away from anthropocentric reading strategies can help us make sense of how animal representations serve human ideology, and how they teach child readers to conceptualize the human-animal divide – and on rare occasions, to bridge it. The interplay between words and images reveal the silent presumptions and the ambiguities that characterize the child-pet relationship. Even when no humans are present, the way in which the dogs are depicted takes place within a distinctly anthropocentric cultural framework. Picture book animals show us how ideas about animals and children become entangled.

The narratives governing these picture books rely heavily on presupposed similarities between children and pets, which find expression on the verbal and visual level. We can perceive this alignment in the choice of words, in visual neoteny, in the power dynamics of food distribution and food choices. The core of the human-animal relationship in these books is formed by the discourse of dominance and obedience that lies at the heart of dog-related discourse in Western societies. It rubs off on the child-adult relationship,

making hierarchy and obedience central to this relationship as well. The intricate web of hierarchies that we encounter in these books is ultimately dependent on the discourse of species. Species difference is never specified but always presumed, and it naturalizes the other hierarchies at work in these books. The superiority of the human, the adult, and Western, middle class consumer culture are all established and justified by relying on the underlying discourse of species.

Case study 2: Feline characters, pethood and teaching empathy

In the previous section dogs can be seen as performing socializing functions on several levels. The dogs in this section were male, and so were their human significant others. This is a relatively common phenomenon: dogs in the Little Golden Books are often depicted as male, and so are their owners. Feline characters are more often coded as feminine, either by being female, displaying femininely coded behavior or by being associated with female owners. In this section, I will, for example take a closer look at how the intersection of gender and species can serve as an organizing principle for relationships with feline characters. Here I would also like to address the issue of empathy and the role picture books can play in the formation of cross-species empathy more closely. As we have seen in the case study on canine characters, pet keeping in a middle class milieu is often considered to be an educational experience, teaching young people how to look after the animals in their care. Promoting desirable middle class values such as dependability, kindness and a sense of responsibility, pet keeping can be considered a useful tool in the upbringing of middle class children.

Dogs are especially suited to mediate these values, since their training has long been dominated a relatively straightforward, hierarchical command-and-obey structure. Only in recent years has dog training become more focused on two-way communication. Vicky Hearne and Donna Haraway, both philosophers and dog enthusiasts, argue that in living and training together, the dog should be allowed the opportunity to ‘talk back’ and thereby influence the training and the relationship. (Fudge, 90) When practiced like this, training begins to offer possibilities for cross-species communication that

challenges the clean and simple definition of pet keeping as a relationship based on ownership.

We have seen that ownership and hierarchy were strongly present in the Little Golden Books discussed in the previous case study. To a certain extent, the ideals surrounding the position of the dog in the household, as well as the training of dogs, mirror ideas about raising and educating human children. A strict interpretation of the adult-child hierarchy, in which the adult requires obedience and the child is praised when her behavior shows that she acknowledges and respects adult superiority, is one example of this mechanism. Reversely, we have already observed that adults often speak to their dogs as if they were human children. What is largely absent in such depictions of dog-human interactions is an active, respectful engagement with species difference. The Little Golden Books that we encountered in the previous case study were dominated by examples of how species hierarchy structures the relationships between dogs and humans, even if the humans are not directly involved in the narrative.

Whereas my analysis of canine characters focused on their function as mediators of the ideology surrounding species hierarchy, ownership and anthropocentrism, the aim of the present case study is to zoom in on the function of feline characters in the development and encouragement of cross-species empathy. For in stories with feline protagonists, we can observe a surprisingly different dynamic. In the books I will examine, the acknowledgement of species difference serves the development of an understanding of the cat as a creature whose difference needs to be respected in order for friendship to become possible. In part, the different dynamic in cat stories is motivated by the fact that cats' behavior differs fundamentally from that of dogs. In addition, cats have inherited a cultural significance that contrasts with that of the dog. Both species specific behavior and cultural heritage leave their traces in the picture books I will discuss in this case study.

On a theoretical level, this difference also invites a slightly different reading strategy. I will focus on the way these picture seek to establish a sense of empathy across species boundaries, and this is not limited to the fictional world. Empathy has real consequences for real people and animals, and early reading materials such as the Little Golden Books may have an important role in preparing the reader for real life interactions with cats. In focusing on the connection between reader's reading experiences and their real life engagements with cats, it becomes interesting to ask how a fictional world can inspire or reinforce attitudes towards nonfictional creatures. Here, cognitive criticism may offer some helpful insights. As scholars working in this field emphasize, literature plays an important part in the development of empathetic capabilities of young readers. I will borrow a few ideas from this discipline in order to emphasize how readers are invited to respond to the feline characters in this case study and how this may prepare them for real human-cat encounters.

In her article ‘Navigating Fiction: Cognitive-Affective Engagement with Place in Children’s Literature’, Maria Nikolajeva discusses how fiction can be helpful in the formation and development of empathy. She claims that in order

‘[t]o be able to engage with fictional characters, we need to employ empathy. Empathy is arguably one of the most important skills that makes us human beings, and it helps us to survive as individuals and as a species. Empathy, the ability to understand other people’s feelings, is not an innate skill, but can be learned and trained. The most important aspect of empathy is that it must work independently of our own feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and intentions. We must be able to empathize with someone whose beliefs we don’t share.’ (Nikolajeva, 2016)

According to Nikolajeva, the chasm between fiction and real life is bridged by the existence of mirror neurons, cells in the brain that enable us to think of and experience fictional events as if they were real, while still being fully aware of their fictionality. (Nikolajeva, 2016). If reading about fictional worlds provides an opportunity for young readers to prepare themselves mentally and emotionally for life in the real world, and if the brain links fictional events with real event through mirror neurons, this has far-reaching consequences for the possibilities of interpreting fictional human-animal interactions. Empathetically engaging with fictional animals may then be interpreted as an emotional preparation for real encounters. These interactions provide the reader with a script for real life cross-species interactions.

In the interaction with feline characters in picturebooks, a connection is established with both the real cats in the reader’s environment, as well as other fictional cats they may have encountered. When concentrating on species difference and the bridging of difference through empathetic engagement with the feline characters we can investigate the model that informs the interaction with real cats. In addition, some of the fictional cats themselves promote empathy across species boundaries.

Like their canine counterparts, the cats in the Little Golden Books come in a wide variety, anthropomorphized to different degrees. According to some scholars, the practice and ability to use anthropomorphism in our interactions with animals has a background in human evolution. Stephen Budiansky, a science writer, has written about this theory and explains how its proponents claim that there are evolutionary benefits resulting from the use of anthropomorphism in the interpretation of animal behavior. The assumption is that anthropomorphizing animals is a cognitive strategy that enabled early humans to predict animal behavior, and being able to anticipate an attack, or conversely, being able to predict flight behavior, provided clear advantages to the people who were capable of doing this. Perhaps, in certain situations, people who projected their own motivations onto other animals had an advantage over people who didn’t do this. Natural selection may therefore have

favored those people who possessed this ability and allowed them to pass it on to future generations. (Budiansky, xvi-xviii)

We may postulate that gradually, the ability to anthropomorphize entered the human genepool, and when humans became cultural creatures, it became a natural component of culture as well. For example, our language is riddled with expressions linking people and other animals in anthropomorphic terms. As early human artifact such as the hybrid lion-man from Hohlenstein-Stadel, crafted as early as 30.000 years ago, suggest, humans have been fascinated by the possibility of symbolically merging with other animals. The evolutionary value may partially explain why anthropomorphism is still such a common phenomenon, even within technocratic societies.

There is still considerable resistance to the use of anthropomorphism within the scientific community, but recently more evidence keeps appearing supports the claim of certain researchers that, even within scientific research, anthropomorphism can have certain benefits. Renowned primatologist Frans de Waal is a proponent of describing the behavior of nonhuman animals in anthropomorphic terms, if this is warranted, simply because it often offers the best explanation of animal behavior. In his opinion, traditionally typically human characteristics such as morality have their roots in the animal world. Human morality is simply a more developed version of something that is rudimentary present in many other nonhuman species.

One of the famous examples he uses to illustrate how morality may have evolved is an experiment with capuchin monkeys. These monkeys were asked to perform a task for which they received a reward. Capuchin monkeys, who are capable of assigning value to rewards, were paired with another monkey, and asked to perform a number of tasks, for which they were then rewarded. The experiment showed that, when a monkey felt that his partner received a higher reward for the same task, he responded with anger, either ignoring his own reward or actively refusing it. According to De Waal, this proves that capuchin monkeys possess a primitive sense of fairness, which could very well be one of the earliest signs of a developing morality. (De Waal, 44-49)

So, following the lead of this evolutionary explanation for the existence of anthropomorphism, we can reconfigure this argument and consider its value for our understanding of children's fiction. Then it can be argued that the overwhelming presence of anthropomorphic animals bears witness to the value our culture still places in the ability to understand animals in human terms. Both the ability to imagine what another animal may be experiencing, as well as the subsequent response of experiencing empathy constitute important skills. Not only because it allows human children to eventually extend this empathy to other humans, as a common argument in favor of the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature has it, but because it has a value in itself.

Once a person is able to imagine animal behavior in similar terms as human behavior, it doesn't require a great cognitive or emotional leap to develop empathy for nonhuman animals. So anthropomorphism, in addition to aiding human survival, also enables us to extend our compassion across species boundaries. From this perspective, the use of anthropomorphism in picture books becomes highly valuable, rather than infantile, and deserves closer consideration. For, as I mentioned earlier, these picturebook encounters with cats pave the way for real-life encounters. And although Nikolajeva doesn't explicitly acknowledge it, her cognitive approach to literature and empathy entails significant consequences for the study of animal characters in picture books. As we will see, the representation of cats in this selection of Golden Books relies heavily on the development of cross-species empathy.

The role of the imagination and the engagement with fictional animals for people's actual feelings towards nonhuman animals should not be underestimated. Living in close proximity to another being, as we do with our pets, requires that we from time to time imagine ourselves in their place, or look at ourselves from their point of view. Asking ourselves what it could be that our companion is experiencing will help us to become better at living together. Fiction can help and encourage us to perform this leap of the imagination. By activating our imagination, fiction can help us to develop empathy and compassion for our pets. In *Pets* (2008) Erica Fudge writes that:

[...] for philosopher Nancy E. Snow it is our ability to be compassionate that rests on our imagination. Compassion and sympathy are both what Snow terms "other-regarding" emotions. [...] For her, the key to compassion is identification: our ability to think to ourselves as we watch another being experiencing, say, pain, "that could be me". (Fudge: 66)

Anthropomorphizing our pets, seeing and thinking about them as we do about others of our own species, has at its best a similar 'other-regarding' function. As Fudge argues, anthropomorphizing our animal companions is not a trivial or childish denial of species difference. She writes that:

[p]et ownership, like compassion, requires imagination. To bring an animal into one's home, to live with it as a member of the family, is not simply to ignore difference; it is to engage in an ongoing process of translation. It is to make educated guesses that rely both on empirical observation (watching how an animal responds) and imagination. A thought that begins "If I was a cat..." could be relegated to the realm of "mere" anthropomorphism, but it is also a productive – not to say compassionate – mode of cohabitation. (68)

And consequently:

If pet ownership, like compassion, requires imagination, then clearly literature that focuses on pets might have something particularly important to say. (69)

Fudge's description of how anthropomorphism can be discarded resembles certain arguments used in literary criticism to reduce anthropomorphic animal characters in children's books to metaphors. In this case study, I would like to focus on what happens when we actively focus on the productive side of anthropomorphism, and start reading for signs of anthropomorphism as an enhancing feature for the development of cross-species empathy. Anthropomorphism, interpreted like this, can create a sense of community. *My Little Golden Book About Cats* (1988, by Joanna Ryder, illustrated by Dora Leder) is a fine example of a picture book that highlights the importance of understanding the nature of interspecies difference in order to better understand and care for our pets. Anthropomorphism is used sparsely, but effectively, to encourage compassion and identification.

How to care for cats: My Little Golden Book About Cats

When we compare the dog stories with my selection of cat stories, a first observation is that the role of cats differs on several crucial points from that of the dogs previously discussed. The platitude that a dog has a master whereas a cat has servants partially captures the way in which dogs and cats are depicted in relation to the children in the fictional world of these picture books, which in turn has consequences for the child reader's possibilities to relate to and empathize with the cats. We have seen that the books that feature canine protagonists often incorporate a certain hierarchical structure where the dog mediates a subordinate position in relation to adult human society. A child's task as a pet owner is then to instruct the dog in what kind of behavior is acceptable, and what kind needs to be avoided.

In *My Little Golden Book About Cats*, by contrast, the emphasis lies much more on the need to develop a sense of understanding for the feline nature, which is radically different from our human nature, but can be understood by extending one's sympathy and using one's imagination to envision what it is like to be a cat. Much more than in the dog stories, the cat invites the reader to broaden her horizon by considering different ways of being in the world. Where the dog asks to be accepted and incorporated in human society, the cat asks to be understood on her own terms. This requires a conscious effort on the part of the human (child).

Feline-human friendships are a possibility, but they are - much more than canine-human relationships- predicated on the feline's approval and acceptance of the human as his/her friend. For a child to become a responsible cat owner, this means that certain rules need to be followed, and these are

enforced by the cat. If the person fails to meet the cat's needs, friendship remains beyond the child's grasp.

The books discussed in this case study highlight several aspects of the representation of cats that address the child protagonist's or child reader's empathetic capabilities. One way of doing this is by pointing out, in a factual tone of voice, how to understand, care for and interact with cats that live as pets in human households. The first book I would like to discuss in relation to the depiction of cats as pets is *My Little Golden Book About Cats*. Unlike most of the other Golden Books, this book opens with a textbox containing a description and justification of the narrative form, as well as a reading suggestion:

The illustrations in this book depict a charming story not directly related to the text, which is factual. We think that parents and children will enjoy creating their own stories to follow the illustrations. Read Grandma's letter to begin the story.

It is interesting that the authors/editors considered it necessary to explain that the intentions of the text do not run parallel with the accompanying images. The text wants to provide factual, in other words: objective knowledge about cats and how to care for them. This information, the textbox seems to indicate, is of a different nature than the story that is being told in the images.

Even though the images do not contradict, undermine, or otherwise devalue the meaning of the text, it was deemed necessary to emphasize the dual objectives, insisting on the difference in fact and fiction. In spite of this message to the reader, the 'factual' verbal story and the 'fictional' pictorial one overlap and share a common theme: a cat is not born as a pet, but socialized into becoming one. This socialization does not, as we saw in the dog stories, rely on hierarchy and the assimilation of human values, but on the human capacity to understand how cats are different from us. Both the household and the pet's companions need to be prepared in order to understand the cat and fulfil its needs, rather than the dog, who is expected to live up to human expectations.

Because difference is acknowledged and respected, grandmother's house becomes a contact zone, a meeting place that allows mutually respectful interspecies interactions. In *When Species Meet* (2008) Donna Haraway uses the term contact zone. She cites Mary Pratt, who coined the term:

which she adapted "from its use in linguistics, where the term 'contact language' refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently. . . . I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. . . . It treats the relations . . .

. in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (216)

What Haraway emphasizes when she applies the terms to interspecies relationships is that:

[t]he point is that contact zones are where the action is, and current interactions change interactions to follow. Probabilities alter; topologies morph; development is canalized by the fruits of reciprocal induction. Contact zones change the subject— all the subjects— in surprising ways. (219)

Grandmother's house and the interactions that take place within it can be seen as such a contact zone, a space where subjects are altered through their interactions. This goes especially for the children, who venture into this world dominated by cats as novices, but end up taking two kittens to their own home, creating another space for cohabitation. Where the text focuses on the description of cats as a species, as well as the proper way of interacting with them, the illustrations show the result of a successful cohabitation: the house is clearly dominated by cats, who outnumber humans, but also shape the space they occupy with their bodies and the objects related to them.

It is where the children encounter the kittens, learn about their behavior and imagine what it might be like to be a cat. The illustration below the text-box shows grandma sitting at her kitchen table, writing a letter with one cat on her lap, another asleep on the table, and one attentively observing her from a chair. Yet another cat is entering the house through a cat flap, and is welcomed by a white tailless cat. Grandma's letter reads:

Dear Sue and Dave,
Molly has had four kittens. You can see them on your next visit.
Love,
Grandma.

And indeed, in the corner of the kitchen, next to the stove, is a box with a tabby nursing her kittens. The story that is developed in the illustrations then shows how the grandchildren Sue and Dave interact with the cats in grandma's household. There are at least 6 adult cats in the house, and, as grandma mentions in the letter, four kittens.

The text addresses the reader directly, giving information about the properties, needs and development of kittens. What I would like to focus on here is the way text describes the socialization process of the kittens as they grow up to be pets, and how the text and images characterize the child's responsibility in this process. The text begins with a description of the abilities of young kittens, stating that 'it cannot see or hear. But it can smell its mother, and it may feel her warm, soft body gently move as she purrs and purrs.' As

the kittens begin to develop their hearing and sight, it is ready to be socialized. Here, the text directly addresses the reader:

You may handle a growing kitten carefully for a few minutes every day. The kitten will learn and grow faster. It will learn to like being touched, and it will grow up to be a better pet.

However, the essence of being a cat is not limited to being a pet, the text explains:

Some cats live on their own. They hunt for food in city streets and country meadows. Other cats work keeping farms and shops free of mice and rats. But many cats live with people as pets. A cat can be a playful and loving pet.

When a human child initiates contact with a cat, there are a number of responses that may be expected:

When you meet a cat, wait and let it come to you. It may sniff your fingers. It may rub against you. It may choose you and mark you gently as part of its world.

Gently touch your new friend. Feel its soft fur. Feel its rough tongue tickle your skin. And listen. Listen for the sound that tells you this cat is pleased with your touch. Listen to it purr.

The final page shows the grandchildren on the floor, the girl lying on her belly, drawing, with a red kitten on her shoulder; the boy cradling and hugging his kitten. And the text continues to explain that: ‘When a cat purrs like this, it is feeling friendship.’ This is but one example of the verbal anthropomorphism that permeates the text, and by doing so it steers the reader’s interpretation in an anthropomorphic direction, enabling her to view the cats in near human terms, while simultaneously emphasizing that species difference exists and requires us to use our imagination to interpret cat behavior. So even though this text makes a point of claiming to be factual, it is, of course, much more than a mere collection of facts. The pictures tell a story of a human family where cats play an important role in the relationship between two generations.

My Little Golden Book About Cats also builds on the cats’ history of domestication and co-habitation. Cats were domesticated before 2000 BC, as records from ancient Egypt show. (Rogers: 14) Whereas dogs changed significantly after being domesticated in order to adjust to the demands made by their human companions, the process of domestication had less of an impact on cats. That is because they were first and foremost valued for their innate hunting behavior, keeping barns and houses free of rodents. But one thing they have in common with other domesticated animals is neoteny:

[i]t retains through life juvenile characteristics that its wild ancestors out-grow. Sociability, playfulness, attachment to the original nest, and an affectionate filial attitude towards larger animals, notably humans. Nevertheless, it remains independent and predatory. (Rogers: 14)

It is the cat's independence and fierceness that has fascinated artists and philosophers through the ages, and some pet cats have inspired some of the most profound critique on the human-animal dichotomy. Montaigne's cat made him wonder whether he was as much of a plaything to her as she was to him. And being naked in front of his cat inspired Derrida's lecture about this profound experience of shame and using it as a basis for a reconsideration of the Western human-animal hierarchy. In literature, cats initially served an anthropocentric agenda, according to Rogers who describes how:

Victorian novels reflect the general attitude that cats were valued companions. Pets of any kind seldom appeared and never figured as individuals in earlier novels, but in the nineteenth century dogs and cats were included as part of a realistic picture of domestic life. The personalities of the fictional cats, however, are not so richly detailed as those of the real cats in memoirs; and they function as adjuncts to bring out the characters of humans, whether by accentuating them or by eliciting revealing reactions. (Rogers: 93)

In children's literature, anthropomorphic cats can indeed sometimes embody an anthropocentric agenda. We can discern the remnants of the Victorian tendency to sentimentalize cats in art in some of the Little Golden Book illustrations. As their hunting skills were still valued, it was their domestic aspect that was emphasized. Rogers explains:

Growing affection for cats and the tendency to sentimentalize away their aloofness and potential for fierceness led to identifying them with the Victorian ideal of Home. The cat was still economically important as a rodent catcher, because modern pesticides and building standards had not yet been developed, but most writers preferred to present it as a hearthside spirit rather than as a killer of household pests. It became an embodiment of domestic virtue – a high calling at a time when the pure and harmonious home was idealized as never before. Popular artists constantly included cats in their wholesome domestic scenes to reinforce family values. (97-98)

We can certainly still see traces of this sentimentalism in the depiction of feline family life in some of the Little Golden Books - especially in the illustrations - where playful, wide-eyed, fluffy kittens dominate the fictional landscape. But in the Little Golden Books in this case study, they also become mediators of a message of cross-species empathy and compassion, which is often achieved through the strategic use of anthropomorphism.

The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse (1951, by Miriam Norton, illustrated by Garth Williams) illustrates the dual message that the use of anthropomorphism gives rise to. On the one hand, as we saw in the case of the

dog stories, anthropomorphism invites anthropocentric readings of interspecies relationships. Although the cat does not directly serve as a reflection of the humans in this story, he does subscribe to the human way of interpreting the life of cats and mice as separate. Yet in this case separate does not necessarily imply conflicting. Throughout the story, the possibility of love, caring and friendship across species boundaries is maintained and promoted – a message that is reinforced by the use of anthropomorphism.

Finding one's 'right' place in society: The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse

This book is a meeting of the animal and human world that explores the possibilities of cross-species care and love framed in terms of interspecies adoption and family life. Identity, and in particular species identity, and the role each species plays within a human context, becomes the criterion for the viability of the relationship. There are certain parallels with the story about Mr. Dog, who 'adopted', or at the very least enters a relation of cohabitation with a human boy. As was the case in *Mister Dog*, *The Kitten Who Thought he was a Mouse* approaches this relationship from within a highly anthropomorphized environment.

This Little Golden Book tells the story of a family of mice who find a kitten when they are staying at their summerhouse in the countryside. They 'adopt' him and do not tell him that he belongs to another species and raise him as if he were a mouse, which includes cultivating an intense fear of cats. Initially this does not present any problems. Family life continues as they move back to their winter residence: a human house where they feed of the food in the pantry. This, however, is a dangerous mission, since the humans' pet cat patrols the house. Here Mickey discovers that he is, in fact, not a mouse, and his true identity, as well as the fear of losing his family, frightens him. But after a while he comes to the conclusion that, since he cannot deny his catness, he should live a cat's life. He then leaves the mouse family in order to be adopted once again, but this time by the human family. Here he is not treated as a fellow human, but as a pet, which, the story suggests, benefits everybody. Because it is at this point that Mickey really proves his worth to the Miggs family: he makes sure that they can safely raid the pantry when the other cat is not around.

This story is centered around themes of identity and belonging, the influence of nature vs nurture, interspecies cohabitation. Mickey is adopted and loved by the mice, and he loves them. Yet there is a constant tension because a predator is introduced to the mouse family, and the reader wonders if Mickey is really capable of suppressing his feline nature. Will he develop hunting instincts? Are the mice really safe with him around? And what will happen if he finds out he is a cat? But it also addresses the uncomfortable

question: what is needed to be accepted in spite of difference? The mice adopt him because they foresee that he can be useful to them, so in a way their care is instrumental, and certainly not unconditional.

The use of anthropomorphism is important in this story, since it enables the mice and the cat to live together in a similar fashion: they are united because of their humanized lifestyle. The reader immediately notices that the Miggs family is humanized to a high degree. They are a nuclear family of five: Mother Miggs, Father Miggs, two daughters (who remain nameless) and a son called Lester. When they find the kitten, it is Lester who suggests they take him home, and Father Miggs agrees: 'We can bring him up to be a good mouse. He need never find out he is really a cat. You'll see, he'll be a good thing for this family'. To the Miggs children, the cat soon becomes an equal and they see him as a sibling. The illustration that fills the recto following this decision shows all the 'children' sleeping huddled up. In what follows, the mice educate Mickey so he may learn to behave like a mouse: he learns to fear cats, be careful of mousetraps, and eat proper mouse food.

Then one day, as Mickey meets the human children of the house, they immediately notice that 'it acts like a mouse'. They lure him with a dish of milk, and they gradually tame him. When the boy holds him in front of a mirror, Mickey realizes that he is, in fact, a cat. This scene is followed by Mother Miggs telling Mickey about his adoption, after which he decides 'to be a cat in all ways'. However: 'he can't really forget his upbringing'. This story reflects values of middle class family life, human society, and human ideas about identity. The Miggs family is depicted as a typical white middle class nuclear family with fixed gender roles: father is the one who takes important decisions, mother is knitting and looking after the children (and also: she is the one who has to explain the decisions). Identity appears as something that is biologically determined, and is an either/or matter. There is no way that Mickey (whose name can be read as a pun on the Disney character of Mickey Mouse) can overcome his biology. When he finally discovers what species he belongs to, he decides to live like a cat 'in all ways'. He does this even though he knows that he is able to successfully live a mouse-life. His choice is not motivated, but presented as something matter of fact and natural. The difference, once it is recognized by Mickey, is immediately internalized and acted upon.

So on the one hand, the message seems to be conservative. Once species difference is acknowledged, it suffices as a motivation to profoundly change one's sense of identity, which also leads to a complete shift in behavior. Defining identity first and foremost via the category of species means following an essentialist definition of identity. A consequence of thinking about species as a social structure in such essentialist, dividing terms is that it favors the status quo within a society, and leaves little room for evolution and emancipation. Mickey's decision to live with the human family as their pet may also be read as an act of submission: he gives up the independence he enjoyed as a Miggs family member in order to become the dependent of the

human family. This could mean that he subscribes to the human, middle class pet status that is typically reserved for cats, which would leave him diametrically opposed to the status of the mice as vermin.

But Mickey's behavior undermines this interpretation in two important ways. First there is the question of his diet. Behaving like a cat 'in all ways', would entail the development of hunting instincts and eating meat, something that the kitten never experienced when growing up in the mouse household. Food choices, as we will see again in Chapter 3, are significant events, especially when they concern the eating of meat in an anthropomorphic setting. In her essay *The sexual politics of Meat* Carol J. Adams describes how patriarchal power structures have found their way into the human-animal relation that is manifest in the practice of eating animal meat. She argues that meat eating has traditionally been associated with wealth and the upper classes.

In addition to being a marker of class, meat is often considered to be typically masculine food, and that 'men need meat', while women can thrive perfectly well on a diet of vegetables (Kalof and Fitzgerald: 171-180). Here, the issue of meat eating becomes crucial not only because it addresses class and gender conflicts, but also because it presents a limit case for the nature-nurture question that the story raises. Does one's nature as a predator, defined by the active acknowledgement of species membership, justify hunting one's family members? This question is in part already answered by the use of anthropomorphism: for Mickey, being almost equally anthropomorphized as his mouse family provides enough common ground to exclude predation as a possibility. Because of this, the story manages to circumvent a conservative, biologically deterministic definition of species in favor of a more open, empathetic idea of difference.

However, some of the images partially undermine this since they playfully allude to the predatory nature of the kitten. The text describes how, on an intellectual level, Mickey identifies with the mouse family, but this image suggests that he cannot quite deny his natural inclination to view the mice as food. This image illustrates one of the visits Mickey makes to his former family. By this point, he has already become a member of the human household, and he has grown quite significantly.



Figure 6: *The Miggs family at the dinner table.*

Mickey's size is one of the markers of his new status. Seated at the dinner table he ominously looms over his family members, and his face expresses appetite. It is not completely clear if he is only enjoying his meal. In this way, the image symbolizes the constant threat that his predatory nature presents to the mice, in spite of the kitten's gentle character and his mouse-like upbringing. Another indication of change is the color of his eyes: they were blue when Mickey was younger and living with the mice, but in the image above they have turned yellow/green.

This story reflects the delicate balancing act that is inherent in all interspecies interactions. When species live together, especially when one of them is a predator, they have to negotiate difference. *The Kitten Who Thought He Was A Mouse* describes the journey of the predator in a way that emphasizes the tension between nature and upbringing, and the impossibility of changing one's nature completely. What makes this story so appealing is that it emphasizes that trying to live in someone else's shoes has a lasting effect on one's personality and one's attitude towards others.

For the protagonist in this story, thinking that one is a mouse means, quite literally: imagining and practicing what it is like to live like a member of a different species. Seeing and experiencing life through the lens of someone who is not like you in each respect – although they might resemble you in many others. Even though Mickey eventually surrenders to the pressure that human society places on the cat, he is changed because of his experiences while living as a mouse. He has learned to navigate species difference with grace and compassion, and therefore his decision that his place is among humans as a pet is not entirely to be understood a surrender to an anthropocentric worldview.

When Mickey acknowledges that he cannot forget his upbringing, he is also saying that he will not betray his adoptive family by hunting them or betraying their whereabouts. The question of nature or nurture is decided in favor of nurture, it seems, when Mickey protects the ones he loves in spite of instincts that may tell him otherwise. The mice, who live outside the sphere of direct influence, but in close proximity to humans, depend on people for food in wintertime, and Mickey is not inclined to prevent them from scavenging human waste or occasionally foraging kitchen scraps. Father Miggs was right when he predicted that something good would come out of their deception. Not only for the mice, but also for the cat who has broadened his perspective, for the human family who won a pet and indirectly for the reader as well.

The transgression of species boundaries has implications for the possibility of transgressing other boundaries as well. The message to the reader is that otherness can be thought of as an opportunity. The effect of the anthropomorphic depiction of the animals in this story is that they refuse to acknowledge that species difference excludes the possibilities of loving, caring relationships. We see that there is meaningful contact between members of two different species, and even though they separate and find again their 'proper' place in the world, they have changed on a fundamental level because of their shared experiences. From this point of view, it is no triviality that the mice keep a picture of Mickey in their bedroom, and Mickey himself takes a toy mouse to bed (although, it has to be admitted, it shows some resemblance with the ones that you can buy in pet stores and are intended to simulate hunting behavior – a touch of irony that will probably escape the youngest readers). Being touched by a creature that is different, yet similar in the most important respects, changes us forever.



Figure 7: Mickey and his toy mouse.

My Kitten

My Kitten (1953, written by Patsy Scarry and illustrated by Eloise Wilkins), mirrors the story told in *My Puppy*, but it displays significant differences in the representation of species and gender. *My Kitten* describes a day in the life of a little girl and her pet, a kitten called Fluffy ‘because he is the fluffiest, softest, cuddliest, cutest kitten in the world’. Similar to the boy and his puppy Thumper, this story focuses on the daily routines of the protagonist and her pet, with play being the pivotal activity. Both stories show how the children spend the day performing the same routine activities as the animals, as they wake up together, eat their meals simultaneously and fall asleep tired after a day of play. The mirroring of the animals’ actions by both human protagonists reveals the close connection that is often constructed between human and nonhuman juveniles. This is not an entirely unwarranted comparison, as in nature, as well, young animals of different species are occasionally observed playing together. The depictions of acts of playing in these two picture books emphasize the continuum between the species, rather than their differences. But there are differences in the way they achieve this, based on the gender of the human protagonist and the species of the pet.

To begin, let us compare their names, for they give away much about the expectations placed on the animals: even though both the cat and the dog are male, their names are chosen with different criteria in mind. Whereas the kitten is named after his physical appearance, the puppy’s name is derived from an activity he performs. Even though both pets are male, the way they are described is gendered, and the gendering appears to be based on the gender of their human owners. The name of the dog suggests activity, energy and impatience, which are typical connotations for puppies, especially male ones. The puppy and the boy both initiate play, and are equally involved in the games they perform. Boy and puppy are united in their play, and even when the dog needs to be scolded for his naughty behavior, the relationship is not damaged.

By contrast, the name of the kitten focuses not on the animal’s behavior, but on his appearance. It is suggestive of a quiet, gentle, good-natured character and connotes softness, perhaps passivity. It also evokes the idea of someone petting the animal. However, this is a characterization that is actively undermined by the kitten’s behavior, which is an implicit critique of the desire to objectify pets and subject them to one-sided displays of affection. The kind of games that are being played differ in nature as well, as do the animals’ responses to their young owners’ actions. This is to some extent based on species specific behavior, but it is also partly rooted in the literary conventions that determine how children in picture books interact with animals, based on gender and species. Active, boisterous boys are traditionally

paired with equally energetic dogs. When they learn to channel that energy, is the recurrent message, there is much they can accomplish as a team. For female characters, the expectations are shaped around a different set of values: she has to learn to be attentive to the needs of her pet, and the interaction with her pet often contains an opportunity to nurse the animal back to health or provide care in another way.

The expectation that she is supposed to be attentive to her pet's needs does provide the girl in *My Kitten* with an opportunity to develop interspecies empathy that is not solely grounded in anthropomorphism. The story is critical about the use of overt anthropomorphism in play and suggests that it needs to be applied with great care. By emphasizing this, the narrative takes into consideration that the cat has both species-specific needs as well as unique, individual desires that need to be taken into account for the relationship to function.

The play sequences also capture the essence of the toddlers' socialization process, and they illustrate the expected behavior that both young humans and young pets are encouraged to adopt. The girl's play is clearly gendered, emphasizing the girl's duty of motherly care. But care needs to be appropriate, and when misdirected, it can damage the interspecies relationship. In *My Kitten*, trouble arises when the little girl dresses her kitten up as a doll:

I put Dolly's bonnet on Fluffy's head. We are going for a stroll through the garden. Fluffy likes to ride in my doll carriage.

This scene then suddenly evolves into a conflict situation when Pal, the pet dog, playfully approaches the carriage:

Pal looks inside the carriage to say hello to my Dolly.
Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm! Poor Fluffy runs for the picket fence. He doesn't care for dogs. How funny he looks in his bonnet.

The game disintegrates quickly when Pal realizes that the carriage doesn't contain a toy, but a kitten, who is frightened by him and disrupts the game by jumping out of the carriage and running away. The girl attempts to resolve the chaos which results from the two animals recognizing each other as animals of different species:

If I hold Fluffy and Pal quite close maybe they will touch noses and be friends.

But her attempt to reconcile the two does not have the desired effect, as the next page shows a howling Pal accompanied by the text:

"Oh naughty Fluffy, you musn't bat poor Pal on the nose."

The kitten is upset and the girl realizes that her game has caused the animals discomfort and she acknowledges that she needs to apologize to her pet. The illustrations picture this sense of rejection by showing the girl and the kitten as seen from behind. The girl is standing on the right half of the page, hands behind her back and her head bent. She shows no signs of wanting to follow after the kitten, who is walking towards the upper left corner of the page. No longer wearing the bonnet, the kitten's head is held close to the ground while he holds his tail in the air, in what gives the impression of a defiant, yet sorrowful pose. Against a completely green background, this movement suggests a profound sense of disconnect and loss. When the girl holds out a flower as a peace offering on the right page, the kitten's facial expression still shows signs of anger.

Unlike the picture painted in *My Puppy*, where mischief grew out of the puppy's attitude of active enthusiasm, the kitten never played an active role in the game and his feelings appear to be genuinely hurt. The spread showing how the kitten walks away on the left page, and the attempted reconciliation on the right page, leaves the reader feeling empathy for both characters. The reader is invited to sympathize with both parties, and neither the girl's experience nor the kitten's is given priority over the other. The tragic misunderstanding that is the result of this attempt at multi-species play stems from a failure to acknowledge species difference when this would have been appropriate.

Instead, what the kitten is asked to internalize in order to become a good pet is the suppression of his own species-specific nature, which is asking much more than simply the curbing of his impulsive behavior. Within the household, there is no outlet for the kitten's 'true' nature. Symbolically, this is represented by the play sequence where the kitten is dressed up to resemble a doll. We may call this a form of intradiegetic anthropomorphism, since it is constructed within the fictional world and the act of anthropomorphizing originates with one of the protagonists. This expression of anthropomorphism is criticized by the narrative. The central question this book addresses is what constitutes 'natural' behavior, and how it can or should be dealt with within the context of pethood and the middle class household. Does it need to be punished and sanitized, as was the case in the dog stories, or do human owners have to accept species difference and adjust their own behavior accordingly? *My Kitten* seems to lean more towards the latter response.

We have seen that what started out as a playful scene became a complex, conflictual situation with the introduction of another pet. Let's compare this scene with another scene where the animal gets disciplined by the child because of a perceived act of mischief, and let's compare it, too, with a similar scene in *My Puppy*. When the puppy digs holes in the flower beds, the is scolded by the boy, who, not only scolds him, but also considers this a natural part of the puppy's education. When he refers to how the dog's actions will elicit his mother's anger, he implicitly emphasizes that the adult authority figure is an ominous presence constantly looming over their play session.

In *My Kitten*, adult presence is not invoked to reprimand or punish the wayward pet. Instead, the girl has already internalized the expectations surrounding the creation of a well-adjusted pet, and her choice of play symbolizes that she knows that the natural instincts of the cat will have to be repressed in order for him to fit his life as pet. This becomes clear early on in the story. The conflict with the dog Pal was not the first time the kitten was reprimanded by the girl. That happened earlier, when the girl noticed that he ‘climbs up the tree. He knows there’s a Robin’s nest there.’ Although the text doesn’t mention that the robins may be in danger, and the illustration reveals no evidence of discord between the birds and the kitten, the reader is meant to understand that there is an imminent threat to the birds. This suspicion is confirmed by the girl’s reaction: ‘I clap my hands and call to him: “Come down, Fluffy, you naughty kitten.”’

What is described by the girl as ‘naughty’ behavior is, in fact, a reflection of the fear that the kitten’s natural hunting instinct is beginning to develop. For a cat, the expression of a desire to hunt would be an indication that his development follows a biologically predetermined path. For a cat, playing to be hunting is a normal sign of maturity, preparing the animal for a life as an independent adult when he will have to feed himself. But this kind of play is actively discouraged by the girl, even before the cat displays any such desires. Since the illustration gives the reader no reason to suspect that the kitten is going to harm the birds, this fear is solely based on the girl’s expectations. The reasoning behind her reaction may be that, since cats hunt and eat birds, any contact between a cat and a bird is predicated on a predator-prey relationship and should be discouraged.

Behind this action lies the desire and the assumption that we recognize from *My Little Golden Book of Cats*: that a cat who is groomed to be a pet is, perhaps, another creature altogether. The kitten’s biological instincts need to be curbed and directed into a different direction (where play with a human companion may be considered suitable substitute behavior). That the girl is trying to prevent him from hunting, may be read as a sign that growing up is actively discouraged.

Another aspect related to maturation and socialization is that the discrepancy between what the image really shows and what the girl’s words express speaks volumes about the culture’s sensibilities regarding the exposure of children to predation. Within the middle class household, there is little room for predators. Instead, the family members, human and nonhuman alike, are taught to strive for harmony in their relationships. In order to achieve this, instincts need to be brought under the control of reason and behavior ought to be regulated. Within this context, the display of behavior that risks to foreground the animals’ hunting instincts needs to be corrected. There is a trace of Enlightenment thinking behind the project that the girl in this story undertakes, in the sense that she sees the cat as a creature that can be bettered through education. After the play sequence goes awry, the girl tries to implement what she has learned about harmonious relationships between humans

in an interspecies context. When the kitten responds with violent resistance, she is disappointed and the reader may share her confusion – and perhaps frustration - about the kitten’s resistance to join the girl’s community of equals.

What this story illustrates is that this particular kitten is not supposed to develop into just a ‘cat’, but a cat who is first and foremost a pet, and that is a different creature altogether. His name already suggests that it is mostly his softness that is valued by the girl. When she dresses the kitten in clothes meant for her doll, the cat is expected to transform his natural feline playfulness into a playfulness of a different nature. These requirements don’t completely coincide with his feline predatory nature. The story shows three occasions where the kitten’s feline nature is made subservient to human behavioral norms, and they all have undesired consequences. When his natural instincts are frustrated, the reader is justified to infer that the kitten is rightly offended. She also needs to learn how to interpret interspecies interactions between nonhuman animals, and needs to find out what her role, as a human child, can be in this context. While the girl initially sees herself as the one who is in charge of the kitten’s socialization into the human household, the kitten, through his resistance, proves to be a good teacher.

The interspecies relationships that are depicted in this story are much more complicated than the one in *My Puppy*. Because of this complexity, we cannot straightforwardly interpret the girl’s interference as examples of good stewardship or good husbandry. The relationship between cat and girl is not as clear-cut and carefree as that between the dog and the boy. The nature of the kitten requires more negotiation and sensitivity from the girl. The kitten sets his personal boundaries, and through trial and error the girl has to discover what those boundaries are. Negotiation and reconciliation therefore become essential elements of this story.

Notice that the boy in *My Puppy* felt no need to apologize to his pet. In fact, this The reason behind this may be that the dog’s offense was of a different nature than the kitten’s transgression. The dog’s offense was described as a misstep, but one that is excused by the mischievous nature of the puppy, and once he is duly scolded, there is no need for resentment from either boy or dog. It is presented as a natural part of the socialization process of both boy and puppy, where the boy learns to address disobedience by disciplining the dog, and the dog in turn learns to accept that actions have consequences. Within this hierarchical framework, both of them seem to thrive and their friendship is not compromised by it. This is different for the kitten and the girl, whose relationship is not predicated on discipline and obedience.

Another aspect that complicates the relationship between girl and kitten is the ambivalent portrayal of women and cats in cultural history. Katharine Rogers describes how traditionally, cats in Western cultures have often been associated with women. They appear, for example, as witches’ associates, or serve to symbolize female sexual aggression. Cats were often regarded with

suspicion, a threat to male virility, and so were the women who were associated with them. Rogers writes how male artists have used this association of cats and women to discredit or censure women, while female artists 'may use them to expose the selfish demands that men make on women (127). This hostility towards women by using cats can be expressed explicitly, well into modern times. (138)

On the other end of the spectrum we find the image of the cat as a loving, caring mother, and in Victorian times, the cat family came to represent domestic family values and became an emblem of domestic life (Rogers: 97). Like dogs, they came to symbolize domestic values, but unlike dogs, their values did not necessarily include their obedience and loyalty towards their masters. The presence of cats in – often sentimental - depictions of Victorian family life, was intended to 'reinforce family values' (Rogers: 98). Rogers explains how this has also influenced the depiction and use of cats in Victorian children's books:

Having made the cat into a sweet hearthside spirit and an orderly homemaker, the Victorians set her up as a domestic model for women. Julia Maitland's *Cat and Dog; or Memoirs of Puss and the Captain* (1854) uses the animal to teach children their gender roles. (133)

The gendered representations of cats as the embodiment of domestic virtues continued until at least the late 20th century. In the 1980s,

[c]ards for little girls served to prepare them for the same domestic role. Sweet, pretty, passive kittens accentuate and recommend the same qualities to little girls on valentines and birthday cards. (Rogers, 133)

However, more recently we see that there is a development towards a less gendered depiction of cats, that also extends to popular culture:

Happily, cats, along with women, are beginning to escape from limiting stereotypes on contemporary cards: as women appear in nontraditional roles, cats are shown with men. (133)

In *My Kitten*, we can discern the beginnings of a resistance to this domestic ideal. By emphasizing the complexity of the relationship and the frictions that may occur, it is impossible to reduce the cat to an emblem of domestic life. *My Kitten* acknowledges the importance of mutual affection and commitment.

Celebration of difference in The Shy Little Kitten

The mother cat in *The Shy Little Kitten* (1946, by Cathleen Schurr and Gustaf Tenggren) is an example of the idealization of the female cat as a caring parent. The story mirrors *The Poky Little Puppy* in that it is a tale about exploring the world outside the protected area of the home, it involves encounters with other animals and has a central mother figure. Both stories involve a young animal protagonist who stands out from their siblings. And both picture books contain clear verbal and visual signs of gendering of the characters. The male puppy is characterized as poky, curious and active, while his female feline counterpart is shy, timid and generous. The story is centered around a disobedience: the puppies are well aware of the boundaries that are set for them by their mother and are clearly marked by the fence, and later, the signs that are put up describing the consequences of their mischief. The puppies decide to violate this rule collectively, but the poky puppy stands out because he leaves the collective and ventures out on his own. The poky puppy actively leaves his siblings behind in order to follow his instincts to explore and discover. His siblings then set out to find him to bring him back home, within the safe, protected sphere of their middle class backyard.

The poky puppy is described as boisterous, rebellious, and a trickster who deceives his siblings and mother in order to get the deserts all to himself. These properties are obviously not appreciated and the puppy is duly punished for misbehaving, but he is also forgiven and accepted back into the social sphere as soon as his punishment is over. The reader is meant to sympathize with the puppy, to view the events through his eyes, to celebrate his successes and accept his punishment as a natural consequence of misbehaving. The little dog's enterprising spirit is celebrated and the reader is meant to silently approve of his antics. The final spread, as we know, shows how the poky puppy observes the sign, and the reader can imagine him planning another escape. This possibility indicates that the poky puppy hasn't changed; on a fundamental level, his character remains the same. The dog is not expected to change himself, only his behavior.

The story about the shy kitten has a similar starting point. Here, too, we have a young animal protagonist whose character set her apart from her siblings:

Once there were five bold little roly-poly black and white kittens and one little roly-poly striped kitten who was very, very shy.

But where the poky puppy chooses to leave the collective of the family to explore the world around him, the shy little kitten is expected to go on a journey of discovery, led by their mother:

One day they all sat down and washed their faces and paws. They smoothed their soft fur and stroked their whiskers and followed their mother down the ladder from the hayloft where they lived.

The shy kitten is set apart by her appearance, as well as her character:

The five bold and frisky little kittens rolled over in the grass and kicked up their heels with joy. But the shy little striped kitten just stood off by herself at the very end of the line.

This is why she is the only one to see how the earth is being pushed up by a mole, and as she lingers to talk with him she is left behind by her family. There is no active act of resistance from the kitten's side, but instead this story centers on the primal fear of being abandoned by one's family. The social setting is not the middle class household, but the farm. There is no fence to dig under, but instead, the mother cat takes her children out for a walk, to introduce them to the world outside of their hayloft and the other animals that live in the vicinity.

The contrasting environments in which these stories are set in part account for the different values these books mediate. The poky puppy's home is the middle class, suburban house with the classic white picket fence. Boundaries are clearly delineated, both on a behavioral and a conceptual level. As we have seen, species hierarchy is reinforced visually and verbally. Social interaction between members of different species is not encouraged, and because of the lack of communication, inter-species play does not seem a viable alternative for intra-species play. This is a segregated, stratified society.

The kitten grows up in a rural environment, and her encounters with other animals are characterized by interspecies play and friendship. The illustrations are composed in order to emphasize the equality and reciprocity of the relationships. In the encounter of the kitten and the mole, they are positioned each on their own side of the gutter in a pose that indicates they are not only observing one another, but are also moving towards each other, suggesting they meet in the middle, thereby effectively annulling the segregating power of the gutter. This overcoming of barriers that is symbolized in this image is a red thread that runs through this entire story, and for the kitten the active crossing of boundaries, initiated by the mother when she leads her children down from the protected area of the hay loft, eventually results in personal growth.

There are no language barriers that could get in the way of communication, as the following scene clearly demonstrates:

So the shy little kitten went walking with the chubby mole. Soon they met a speckled frog, sitting near the pond. "My, what big eyes he has!" whispered the shy little kitten. But the frog had sharp ears, too. He chuckled. "My

mouth is much bigger. Look!” And the frog opened his great white cave of a mouth. The mole and the kitten laughed and laughed until their sides ached.

The kitten, assuming that the frog cannot hear and/ or understand her, whispers a comment about his fascinating appearance. The frog’s humorous response shows that he is not offended. Instead, it is an invitation to communicate, which is gladly accepted by the kitten and the mole. The narrator’s choice of words also indicates that the frog belongs to the same category of beings as the kitten and the mole, by referring to their interaction by stating that ‘they met a speckled frog’. Meeting someone implies reciprocity and equality. And when they laugh, they are laughing with the frog, not at him, in what can be interpreted as a celebration of species difference.

This is a story about recognizing difference in order to eventually overcome it. It is also a story about the importance of acceptance in spite of difference. The kitten that stands out because of her stripes and her shyness is offered friendship by a variety of animals. It is precisely her shyness that serves as a catalyzer for the kitten’s meetings. Without difference, this story seems to imply, one misses out on opportunities for friendship; without difference, nothing of significance will happen.

This is also a story about mutual respect, not only between members of different species, but also between adults and children. The role of the animal collective and the mother as an authority figure is significantly different in this story compared to, for example, their role in *The Poky Little Puppy*. In the latter story, the siblings as a collective formed a threat to the disobedient Poky Puppy: they are the ones who are punished in his stead and who finally seek revenge for this injustice. But when the shy little kitten returns from her adventure, she is lovingly welcomed back:

In the middle of the farmyard was the mother cat with her five bold and frisky little black and white kittens. In a flash the mother cat was beside her shy kitten, licking her all over with a warm, red tongue.

The mother cat is presented as a warm, caring person, who is not only concerned with her children’s wellbeing, but she also encourages their integration into the larger collective of the farmyard community. Her physical proximity to her children forms a striking contrast with the way the poky puppy’s mother is depicted. We observed that in *The Poky Little Puppy*, the mother figure is absent from the images and when she appears in the text, she is described as an authority figure who is first and foremost concerned about her children following rules and living up to social expectations. The story literally ends in a celebration of interspecies friendship: the mother cat organizes a picnic for her children and the other animals they met on their adventures.

Chapter 2: Discourses of domestication, taming and wildness

The previous chapter highlighted how discourses on pet keeping in some of the Little Golden Books are embedded in a middle class ideology. Pethood obviously presupposes domestication, but apart from pet keeping there are other areas of domestication that have literary representations in the Golden Book series. In this chapter I would like to focus on a few of these sites of domestication. This chapter starts out with a discussion of the phenomenon of domestication and how this process influenced human and nonhuman animals. The concept of domestication is complex and at times highly problematic. Here I will take up the discussion of the term within a social science context in order to frame my discussion of the representation of domestication within a picture book context.

One important insight into domestication is put forward by Stephen Budiansky in *The Covenant of the Wild. Why Animals Chose Domestication* (1992). Budiansky explains domestication as an evolutionarily beneficial trait that favors some species of animals. Budiansky's main contribution to thinking about domestication is the idea that it is not the humans who deliberately initiated the process of domesticating certain animals they thought useful, but it was the animals themselves who found it useful to live in the proximity of humans.

Layla AbdelRahim's book *Children's Literature, Domestication, and Social Foundation; Narratives of Civilization and Wildness* (2015). In AbdelRahim's analysis, human beings are a domesticated species as well, and we are continuing to domesticate ourselves through certain cultural practices. Reading and writing is one practice that propagates domestication and in teaching young children to read, we socialize them into a domesticated life. Reading picture books can be viewed as a particular practice that contains elements of domestication.

The first case study of this chapter will focus on depictions of horses and horsemanship. The books selected for this case study consist of a fact-based account of horses' roles in human societies and two adaptations: *National Velvet* (1961) is ultimately based in the novel by Enid Bagnold, and *Fury* is based on the television show with the same name. More than in any other human-animal relationship that is discussed here, the centrality of riding the

horse highlights bodily interaction. I will analyze the verbal and visual representations of this particular type of non-verbal communication in an attempt to identify the prerequisites of this particular relationship.

The second case study will deal with two sets of problems: first of all, the representation of animals within the entertainment industry. The representation of individual, real animals is central in this discussion, since they complicate the idea of fiction and make the question of what anthropomorphism means and how it functions on an ideological level even more pressing. The stories of *Smokey the Bear* (1955) and *J. Fred Muggs* (1955) do this, first and foremost, by opening up a discussion about the urgency of ethical reflection on the nature of the treatment of animals for entertainment purposes or as vehicles for promotional/educational messages.

What happens in this final case study can be described in terms of ‘othering and saming’. This is how Lori Gruen and Kari Weil describe the dynamics of human-animal relationships: in parallel with the male-female dichotomy in Western cultures. Whereas othering results in demeaning on the basis of difference, saming denies difference to human and nonhuman people from non-dominant groups.

With regards to animals, this process has denied animals a soul, consciousness, rationality, agency, history, in short, those very qualities associated with human subjectivity and moral considerability. The process of saming results in moving the bar of difference so that some animals are allowed to be included in a category of likeness to humans and judged in terms of their likeness’. [...] [S]aming and othering might be compared to the twin mechanisms of anthropomorphism and, in Frans de Waal’s term, anthropodenial. If anthropodenial errs by refusing to acknowledge the many ways in which non-human animals are like human animals (or in which we are both animals), anthropomorphism errs through disallowing nonhuman animals their difference. (128)

We will see several instances of anthropomorphism and anthropodenial in the two case studies, which also stresses how intricate our relationships with both domesticated and wild animals are.

Discourses of domestication

To domesticate an animal is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as:

To accustom (an animal) to live under the care and near the habitations of man; to tame or bring under control; transf. to civilize.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines domestication as:

to breed or train (an animal) to need and accept the care of human beings: to tame (an animal).

What these definitions are suggesting about the process of domestication is that it is an activity that is consciously undertaken and initiated by human beings. The animals are casted as passive, and to a certain extent also unwilling victims upon which this act is perpetrated.

Aside from these dictionary definitions, there exist other, more discipline specific definitions. In the essay collection *Where The Wild Things Are Now; Domestication Reconsidered* (2007), Rebecca Cassidy and Molly Mullin stress the importance of tracing the evolution of the definition of this term within their field of research, anthropology. In their introduction, they cite Juliet Clutton-Brock's defined domestication in 1989:

a cultural and biological process ... that can only take place when tamed animals are incorporated into the social structure of the human group and become subjects of ownership. (1989:7, quoted in Cassidy and Mullin: 5)

Domesticated animals are then defined as:

bred in captivity for purposes of economic profit to a human community that maintains complete mastery over its breeding organization of territory and food supply. (Ibid.)

Whereas this definition emphasizes the economic function of domesticated animals within a hierarchical, anthropocentrically organized structure, other definitions may advocate a definition of domestication based on mutuality.

In using Wilkinson's definition of domestication, which says that domestication is a 'situation where humans force change on the animal's seasonal subsistence cycle' (6), Barbara Noske chooses to view domestication as not essentially driven by an active human decision to tame animals.

Budiansky also criticizes the idea that domestication is just another expression of mankind's desire to master nature and bring it under his control. He favors an interpretation of domestication as process that is not solely cultural but natural, based on evolutionary benefits for all species involved, not just humans. Emphasizing that humankind is part of nature, rather than above nature, he writes that:

If, rather than just another instance of man's arrogant exploitation of nature, domestication is instead a product of nature, then we will have to think more carefully about the interconnectedness between all species, and be less quick to apply the glib slogans of human politics the language of 'rights' and 'exploitation' and 'oppression' to relationships crafted by forces in many ways beyond our control. We cannot all be farmers, but we can all be students of evolution. As more of the natural world comes under our control, we had better start understanding how the natural world really works, one way or another. (viii)

Budiansky observes a distinction between 'real' nature and the human interpretation of it, and this informs his view of domestication. What he perceives is an America that becomes increasingly defamiliarized with the real living conditions of animals:

To an ever more urban America, animals are things, antiseptic packages of featherless and hairless chicken wings on a Styrofoam tray; or they are people, a beer-drinking dog in a television commercial. (1)

He explains how:

The urge to turn animals either into things or into people reflects the distance we have travelled in a generation or two. We conveniently alternate between anthropomorphism and blindness. Gourmet dog food is a great marketing success, since people, not their dogs, do the shopping; what we in the United States spend on our dogs and cats, observes zoologist Michael Robinson, amounts to a sum greater than the entire economy of medieval Europe. (3)

Domestication favors certain types of animals, as not all animals can be domesticated, and it has consequences for their morphology. Domesticated animals tend to look and behave differently from their wild counterparts. They retain their juvenile characteristics such as curiosity, playfulness and juvenile facial proportions (rounded head, bigger eyes, broader, stubbier snout). This makes them attractive for humans, and it also partly explains why children's books exaggerate these traits even more.

Even though we seem to have a relatively well-developed understanding of what happens when animals go through the process of domestication, there are many controversies regarding the definition and demarcation of domestication. One example from the field of archeology pertains to dating the

domestication of dogs. The archeological evidence suggests that dogs were domesticated approximately 12-14 thousand years ago, but recent genetic evidence makes an earlier date seem plausible. Cassidy and Mullin explain:

Biologists including Raymond Coppinger (2002) have argued that the dog domesticated itself, in the sense that the most adept scavengers within the canine population enjoyed an evolutionary advantage over those that adapted less well to this lifestyle, eked out on the rubbish heaps of human society. This theory has usurped the idea that dogs descend from wolf cubs captured from the wild and trained to serve as guards or companions, and replaces a scenario in which people drew the dog into their community for purposes practical or social (Serpell, 1989), with a story about opportunism on the part of the animal. The argument is based on DNA-level research that suggests that dogs were domesticated on multiple occasions, and for the first time 100 thousand years ago, rather than the 12- to 14-thousand year estimate based on fossil evidence. The DNA evidence is controversial, however, and the much earlier date of domestication is based on the idea that the changes that appear in the fossil record may have been caused by sedentism, and earlier dogs may have been morphologically similar to wolves (Vilà et al. 1997). [...] The secrets that we are discovering about the earliest relationships between dogs and humans are the by-products of a new technique of exploitation, one that epitomizes contemporary relationships between humans and animals, and is conducted in laboratories, via their genes and ours (Haraway 2003). (Cassidy and Mullin 2007: 7)

Domestication is not a clear-cut state of being, neither is the process of domestication a one-sided intentional event. Animals who are open to domestication need to have certain characteristics upon which living near humans can then have an influence. Some scholars argue that domination is a necessary part of the process of domestication, because the animals who can be domesticated already live in hierarchical social structures. In the same essay collection, Nerissa Russell writes:

Animal domestication inevitably involves domination as well as caring. From the point of view of the animals, many researchers have noted that, with a few minor exceptions such as cats, domesticable animals are those that live in groups with hierarchical dominance systems, among other traits (Clutton-Brock 1994). Humans are able to control them by substituting for the dominant animal. (36)

However, not all scholars agree that domination is such an important factor in domestication. In his chapter *Animal Interface: The Generosity of Domestication* in the same volume, Nigel Clark discusses the idea that generosity is part of the process of domestication – and that this generosity is multidirectional. Domestication, according to Clark, can be viewed as an expression of modernity when it is considered to be ‘a shortening and tightening of nutrient cycles’. (50) Here he mainly has in mind bio-industry’s mass production

of meat and other animal products, but as we have seen, domestication has often been defined as an economic relationship where the human species willfully exploits non-human animals. For Clark, this view is an essentially modern way of thinking about the phenomenon domestication:

There are many ways of defining what it is to be “modern,” but to put it simply we might say that it is a way of thinking and doing that likes to know its goals, and sets out to attain them in the most efficient and speedy manner. (50)

But there are always unintended consequences, and among those are animal diseases spreading to humans. Although these consequences may be substantial, and often frightening, they also offer opportunities to transform the way we view ourselves in relation to our environment and the creatures we share this environment with.

Clark uses the idea of an embodied generosity to think about the unintended consequences of domestication.

the renewed philosophical interest in generosity and generativity draws attention to the embodied nature of these openings between selves and others, to the inevitable “debt” that any body owes the other bodies who come before and beside it. [...] The field of animal domestication, I want to suggest, offers fertile ground for exploring the give and take, the eating and absorption, that links different kinds of bodies. (51)

This becomes especially significant when species are introduced in a process of colonization. In relation to colonization, Clark claims that:

The disorderliness, indeed contrariness, of the practice of species introduction appears especially pronounced in the event of domesticates that are released, or “overrun the border” of their own volition, and turn “feral”. Formerly domesticated animals that established viable breeding populations independent of human influence opened themselves to the selective pressures of a novel environment, resulting in both behavioral and morphological change. (53)

What is often overlooked, but is essential to Clark’s understanding of the colonization of foreign spaces by domesticated or de-domesticated animals is:

the active part played by animals in their own de-domestication and the transformations that resulted seemed to embody a degree of agency and creativity that was much more often attributed to human sociocultural life, or, indeed, was one of the characteristics that was supposed to distinguish human existence from an “unmotivated” natural world. (53)

As we will see in the case study on horses, Clark's perspective can help us understand the reintroduction of horses to the Americas by the Spanish conquistadores and their subsequent de-domestication, as well as how the Native Americans then re-domesticated these mustangs. Clark emphasizes the significance of affection in cross-species relationships. Their otherness, he claims in accordance with theorists such as Donna Haraway, should not be seen as an impediment to, but the 'foundation for ethical and emotional relating (56). According to Clark, 'Haraway's notion of an interspecies affiliation evokes "corporeal generosity" in the sense that each participant allows him- or herself to be drawn into an open-ended circuit of affect and transformation.' (57)

Non-human animals, however, are not the only ones to be affected by domestication, and in domesticating others we may have also inadvertently domesticated our own species, as Helen Leach argues. (59) Our bodies have changed in similar ways as those of other domesticated species. Changes in human morphology include a 'shift from robustness to gracility that is especially evident in the face and the head' (59). Clark describes Helen Leach's argument that human morphology and behavior are influenced by our choice of a sedentary lifestyle, and we responded to this in similar ways as domesticated animals. (59)

These are among the 'unintentional consequences' Clark sees as inherent to domestication. Neoteny is one of the traits that we humans share with other domesticated species, states Clark, referring to Budiansky, who claims that human neoteny (for example, our increased curiosity) created a platform for domestication to take place. (61) In this sense, we are as much shaped by domestication as are non-human domesticated animals.

The idea of an embodied generosity hinging on the susceptibility of living beings to the "affect" of other bodies helps turn our attention to the open-endedness of interspecies relations. It reminds us that the adaptability and creativity of living things is not simply an attribute of life in the "wild", and neither is it a capacity that has been entirely appropriated and overwritten by human technological practices. Rather, it is an ongoing process that is found wherever species come into sustained and intimate relationships, whether these are intentional or incidental. (66)

Representations of domestication in children's culture

Domestic animals are very common in children's culture. In books, they are often anthropomorphized in such a way that invites the reader to interpret them metaphorically. As Amy Ratelle writes:

the anthropomorphized animal body as a stand-in for the human had become a familiar, even expected trope. The domestic animal's body, for example, is often used to signify human values; one recognizes, to cite two examples, the nobility of horses or the pacificity of cows and sheep. (42)

But aside from this particular function, their presence can reflect different discourses of domestication. Discourses of domestication have an impact on animal representations for children, not in the least because the phenomenon of neoteny that is a common morphological change creates a similarity between non-human domesticated animals and human children. In the process of animal domestication, selection took place on two levels: exterior and character. Both aspects would preferably be 'childlike', since this made the animals easier to handle and appealed to the human urge to care for and nurture young, even those that do not belong to our own species. Konrad Lorenz has pointed out that juvenile features trigger a nurturing response in adult humans. Many representations of animals in children's culture exaggerate these features even more. We often find a resemblance in the way children and animals are visually depicted: large, round eyes, a large head in comparison to body size, and round features in general. Nowadays, pets are often treated as if they were children, even if they in fact are competent adult individuals.

The widespread use of neotenous traits in the depiction of fictional animals in different media can be explained by the evolutionary appeal these traits have on animals of many different species. Stephen Jay Gould attributes the gradual changes in Mickey Mouse's appearance to the appeal of neoteny and he relates it to the changes in Mickey's character. In his analysis, the transformation of Mickey's face is a direct reflection of his moral status:

The original Mickey was a rambunctious, even slightly sadistic fellow. In a remarkable sequence, exploiting the exciting new development of sound, Mickey and Minnie pummel, squeeze and twist the animals on board to produce a rousing chorus of "Turkey in the Straw". They honk a duck with a tight embrace, crank a goat's tail, tweak a pig's nipples, bang cow's teeth as a stand-in xylophone, and play bagpipe on her udder. (From: A homage to Mickey Mouse.)

But as his reputation grew, Mickey's character became more mainstream, and as 'Mickey's personality softened,' explains Gould, 'his appearance changed. [...] the blander and inoffensive Mickey became progressively more juvenile in appearance'. Gould explains how neoteny triggers certain responses in adult humans that cause us to be drawn to certain species of animals that possess these traits, even in their adult morphology:

Many animals, for reasons having nothing to do with the inspiration of affection in humans, possess some features also shared by human babies but not by human adults --- large eyes and bulging forehead with retreating chin, in particular. We are drawn to them, we cultivate them as pets, we stop and admire them in the wild – while we reject their small-eyed, long-snouted relatives who might make more affectionate companions or objects of admiration. (ibid)

Apart from the evolutionary explanation, Gould's analysis of Mickey's transformations points out how closely affection and moral judgment are related. When we look at it from Gould's perspective, the literary convention that we can recognize the 'bad guy' by the way he looks is apparently deeply ingrained in our nature, and can be evolutionarily motivated.

Budiansky also explains neoteny as a trait that has the potential to provide the neotenuous animal with several advantages that, depending on the specific circumstances, might be evolutionarily beneficial. Especially when the environment changes rapidly, neotenuous traits can be a starting point of a species' transformation. According to Budiansky, the period before the agricultural revolution, in which domestication is said to have taken flight, was a period of great environmental change, which primed certain species for domestication. In *The Covenant of the Wild*, he writes that

The environmental changes that directly preceded the era of domestication would have been a powerful force favoring the selection of neotenic characteristics in many animals. First, neoteny is a way to introduce a whole slew of new traits very rapidly. It provides an abundance of raw material for specific, new traits that might be an advantage in a new environment; it is a way to overcome the inherent limits that natural selection itself imposes on the variation that is available within any species, in any one generation, for natural selection to act upon. But more important, the very characteristics of neonates, even unrefined by any further selection, could themselves have proved advantageous in a changing world. All young mammals and birds show a curiosity about their surroundings, an ability to learn new things, a lack of fear of new situations, and even a nondiscriminating willingness to associate and play with member of other species – all of which are lost as they mature into adults and much more predictable and fixed sequence of behavior needed to hunt and forage, maintain their place in the social hierarchy, and compete for mates. Curiosity, a willingness to move into new territory, and an ability to

learn throughout life are advantageous characteristics for individuals faced with swiftly expanding or contracting ecosystems. (77-78)

Neoteny can be thought of as a trait that encourages animals to interact with animals of other species, and through domestication, animals retain these traits, allowing them to interact with their human owners and other nonhuman animals with which they live in close proximity. Interestingly, an astonishing number of picture books reflect precisely this phenomenon. Budiansky further explains that domestication did not need to have been initiated by humans, and does not necessarily involve a human desire for dominance. Instead, he interprets it as a logical consequence of neotenuous traits that certain animals naturally possessed:

There is no reason to believe that domestication was inevitable. Knowing what we know now, we can with hindsight marvel that evolution and genetics should have rigged things so that the traits that make for a successful domesticated animal could have been produced so swiftly merely by selection for a single characteristic, tameness. On the other hand, were it not for the evolutionary mechanism provided by neoteny, it seems extremely unlikely that any animals would ever have been domesticated, and no one would be sitting around today scratching their heads and wondering why not. Domestication seems natural only because it happened, but it happened only because it was natural. (106-107)

Thinking about neoteny and its role in the process of domestication can also help us to see the phenomenon of anthropomorphism in picture books in a slightly different light. In fact, much of what we traditionally refer to as anthropomorphism (apart from the obvious use of human language, wearing human clothes and bipedalism) does not, strictly speaking, need to be interpreted as anthropomorphism. Cross-species friendships, for example, even between predators and prey animals, are not simply figments of the imagination. Neoteny gives us a biological basis for many behaviors that we encounter in popular picture books.

James Serpell amplifies this argument when he looks at the phenomenon of anthropomorphism from an evolutionary perspective, and in his article ‘Anthropomorphisms and Anthropomorphic Selection – Beyond the “Cute Response”’ he considers the evolutionary benefits it may offer human and nonhuman animals, pet owners and pets in particular. Anthropomorphism, defined here as the ‘attribution of human mental states (thoughts, feelings, motivations and beliefs) to nonhuman animals’ (83) Serpell’s explanation for the genesis and success of anthropomorphism as a conceptual and behavioral strategy is rooted in its supposed benefits for human evolution. Archeologist Mithen’s suggestion that human intelligence underwent a significant change circa 40,000 years ago. Prior to this change, Mithen argues, human intelligence was separated into four functions that operated independently. Ap-

proximately 40,000 years ago, archeological evidence showed a rapid increase in cultural artifacts, which Mithen explains as being the result of a change in thinking, more precisely, the emergence of ‘cognitive fluidity’.
(85)

Based on this theory, Serpell proposes that anthropomorphic thinking may have been one of the results of the merging of our intellectual faculties, and since anthropomorphic thinking enabled people to better anticipate animal behavior, increasing their success in hunting and paving the way for pet keeping and agriculture.

Relating this to modern day pet keeping, Serpell argues that anthropomorphic thinking makes it possible for people to think of their pets as significant social others, and therefore humans derive health benefits from social interaction, which then translates to evolutionary advantages. From the pet’s perspective, however, anthropomorphism is ambiguous. On the level of species, pets seem to do very well: they vastly outnumber their wild cousins (such as wild cats and wolves), and their numbers are growing. However:

[f]rom an animal welfare perspective [...] the effects of anthropomorphism are far less benign. Anthropomorphic selection – that is, selection in favor of physical and behavioral traits that facilitate the attribution of human mental states to nonhumans – imposes unusual and unique pressures on the objects of its attention. [...] many companion animal breeds effectively have become handicapped by selection for traits that appeal to our anthropomorphic perceptions. (92)

Anthropomorphic representations of domestic animals are equally ambiguous, since they can both stimulate empathy and distract the reader from uneasy truths about the reasons we keep those animals. Animals that are commonly intended for human consumption are often not described in terms of food. We can find a good example of how anthropomorphism can obscure the real motivations behind domestication in *The Animals of Farmer Jones* (1953) by Leah Gale and illustrated by Richard Scarry. This book opens with a bird’s eye view of the farm, where all the animals are present. We see a horse, cow, dog, cat, hens and a rooster, pigs, ducks, pigeons, a turkey and an owl. The text, however, only speaks of the domestic animals that rely on farmer Jones for their food. Food, the lack of it, and who provides it, is the theme of this Little Golden Book. The text explains:

It is supper time on the farm. The animals are very hungry. But where is Farmer Jones?

Starting with the horse, the animals speak up to express that they are hungry:

The horse stamps in his stall. “Nei-g-hh, nei-g-hh,” says the horse. “I want my supper.” But where is Farmer Jones?

The narrator's question, 'Where is Farmer Jones?' is answered halfway into the story, where we see him driving his tractor through a field of crops dressed in his blue overalls and straw hat.

Farmer Jones is out in the field. "Six o'clock!" Says Farmer Jones. "It's supper time!" He goes to get food for the animals.

Now the reader follows him as he feeds each animal the kind of food it prefers. Oats to the horse, grain to the cow, turnips to the sheep, and so on. Each animal then thanks him for providing their meal. This story reveals that at the core of modern domestication, we find a pattern of extreme dependency. Even though the animals wonder when they will get their food, they do not question their dependency, and neither is the reader invited to do so.

The question 'Where is Farmer Jones?' entails an implicit acknowledgment of the fact that without the Farmer, the animals would starve. But what is not called into question is the reciprocity that is part of the relation between the Farmer and animals: by presenting Farmer Jones as the one who solely provides food, while the animals stay in their respective enclosures and wait for him, the reader gets the impression that the animals are idle. So what can their purpose be? The book ends with an image of two feeding pigs, and the text beneath the image says:

He gives mash to the pigs. "Oink, oink," say the pigs. "I am hungry, too," says Farmer Jones. And off he goes for his supper.

And here the pattern is broken. Whereas all the animals are given their species appropriate foods, the reader is left to wonder what Farmer Jones' supper may consist of. The farmer is and is not part of the community of animals. Is it a little sinister that the book ends with the feeding of the pigs. Pigs on farms are not commonly kept for labor but rather to provide humans with their meat. This is a fact that is not often mentioned in picture books that invite the reader to empathize with the animals.

In chapter 1 I have discussed the significance of picture books for readers' development of cross-species empathy. Depictions of domestication and wildness in picture books also address aspects related to the development of empathy, but there seem to be different rules for species that are not considered pets. The close proximity of pets and people accounts for a greater need to develop a specific kind of empathy, especially in picture books for younger readers. For other domesticated species, such as cattle and pigs, the rules are different. Horses, who are neither pets nor food sources, form yet another category, and we discuss them in greater detail in the following case study.

In this brief discussion of definitions of domestication I have so far mainly highlighted the interspecies aspects. There is, however, another definition of domestication that includes human beings. Merriam-Webster defines this as:

to train (someone) to behave in an appropriate way at home (such as by using good manners, being polite, being helpful, etc.)

In both cases we see that domestication is always about the domus, the house. The house plays a central role in many of the Little Golden Books that I have discussed in the previous chapter. This is where many pet-child interactions take place. The house can also be viewed as the site of human domestication, and reading (in particular the process of learning to read) can be thought of as a domesticating practice.

In her book *Children's Literature, Domestication, and Social Foundation; Narratives of Civilization and Wildness*, Layla AbdelRahim discusses domestication from a wider perspective that focuses, first and foremost, on the domestication of the human species through discourses of humanism. According to AbdelRahim, human civilization is predicated upon domestication. She then proceeds to link this to the way humanism leads to the exploitation of other classes of human animals as well as nonhuman animals:

Specifically, human animals, who are being exploited as human resources in a labour chain and who are isolated from the wealth they produce, often fail to see how their own status of prey is linked to the abuse of other classes of human and nonhuman prey to which they directly or indirectly contribute. This participation in humanism keeps most human and other animals exploited, consumed and dispossessed. (9)

This is an interesting perspective, since it allows us to look at reading practices as sites of domestication. The picture book then not only reflects how animals are domesticated, but also how human children are domesticated while they learn to read words and images. As a contrast to wildness and wilderness, the domus forms the stage of domestication. Yet the home can be more than this. The pivotal position of the home in children's literature increases its possibilities as an interspecies contact zone, and area where children and animals can become together. But, being a representation of the home, this contact zone is politically and ideologically colored by the adult gatekeepers who stand for the production and distribution of the picture book.

In *Following the animal* (2015) Ann-Sofie Lönnngren also writes about the contact zone, a space where humans and animals, in spite of the power imbalance that is necessarily part of the relationship, can find the opportunity to interact, co-constitute one another, and become together. Species boundaries can be negotiated in the contact zone. (Haraway, 2004: 8) In literary texts,

Lönngren argues, certain themes, motifs and characters can fulfil a similar function as contact zones in 'real life' do, according to Haraway. In addition to discussing how discourses of domestication and wildness are activated in a selection of Little Golden Book, the following case studies consider the possibilities of certain fictional spaces or practices as contact zones.

Case study 3: Little centaurs: child riders and their horses.

Horses are powerful animals. This does not only pertain to their individual physical strength, but also to the cultural and symbolical value they have as a species. It is hard to overestimate the significance of the horse for the development of human culture and their significant influence on the inter-human power balance. Horses enabled us to master our environment and each other in ways that were unthinkable before their domestication. Learning how to harness the strength of the horse has changed humankind permanently. Our interspecies interactions started out as a hunter-prey relationship: archeological evidence indicates that prehistoric man hunted horses in a systematic and coordinated manner by driving whole herds from steep cliffs. But as the relationship evolved their use was no longer limited to being a food item.

Horses found their way into the human imagination early on in the process of cohabitation. Paleolithic cave paintings, such as the famous ones in Lascaux, France, show horses among the animals that our ancestors hunted. (Walker, 26) Wild horses lived in the Americas up to 8000 years ago, before they disappeared in an extinction event in which early human populations may have played a part. They were then reintroduced by the Spanish conquistadores, who brought their horses with them. Those that escaped or were abandoned by their masters rapidly reproduced and repopulated the Americas with the wild - or rather: feral - horses that we know today as mustangs. (Walker, 27)

For a prey animal, living in close proximity to a predatory species must, at least occasionally, be a troubling situation. Walker emphasizes that domestication changes both parties involved, and the adaptability of the horse, that makes it suitable for domestication in the first place, also makes it possible to overcome innate fears:

Wild, feral and domesticated horses are not only different in their status of belonging or not belonging to humans. Once a wild animal becomes domesticated, over the generations it changes, as do its human keepers, through the shared relationship.

[...] The horse's instincts are those of a prey animal and its flight response to danger is the strongest and, not surprisingly, the one humans find the most disconcerting in a domesticated situation. A horse does not naturally respond well to being tightly enclosed, approached by large and noisy unfamiliar objects, having anything on its back or its feet restricted. All of these situations suggest to it that it is in the presence of a predator, and yet it learns to be stabled, to go out in traffic, to be ridden and to have its feet handled regularly. Not only does it accept this 'predatory' behavior but, depending upon its past experience and individual character, can do so without any concern at all. (Walker, 34)

We might say that the success or failure of domestication of a horse is established in each individual human-equine relationship. The Little Golden Books I will discuss in this case study thematize the problem of handling the horse's flight instinct in different ways. As such, they can be read as indirect comments on the nature and success of the horse's domestication. The idea of the wild horses is never far away in these books. The horse can, at any time and for a number of reasons, revert to a state of wildness. This idea of the horse as a symbol of the wild and free animal, which is so central to many cultures (Walker: 184), is what often threatens the fictional child-horse relationship. The adults in these stories are often concerned about the nature of the particular horse the child protagonist interacts with, and the child then has to prove his faith in the horse by demonstrating that the animal is thoroughly domesticated.

Two of the Little Golden Books in this case study are adaptations: *National Velvet* is based on a television series, which in turn is based on Enid Bagnold's famous novel (1935) and the film adaptation of the novel (1944). *Fury* is based on a successful television series that was broadcasted from 1955-1960. Because these books are part of an intricate intertextual network, I will discuss aspects of intermediality and intertextuality that are relevant for the Little Golden Book aesthetics and our understanding of the human-animal interaction within that framework.

The three Little Golden Books I have selected for this case study make relatively little use of visual anthropomorphism. The visual representation of the horses is naturalistic, in the sense that the depictions of their appearance and behavior consciously stay close to how horses appear to us in real life. For example: their colors and the proportions of their bodies are true to life. The tack and other equipment used by the people that interact with them are also consistent with reality as well as culture specific. However, this effort to provide objective representations does not imply that the images of the horses are ideologically neutral: the selection of poses and expressions and

the way the relationship with humans is depicted certainly carry ideological significance.

I will start this case study with a discussion of a fact-based Little Golden Book, since it so clearly illustrates the significance of the horse for human cultures all over the world. It is also interesting because of the way the book defines what a horse is through focusing on a wide range of different horse practices. On the one hand, its language is highly anthropocentric, yet this anthropocentric language manages to highlight the horse's uniqueness.

A discussion of the Little Golden Book adaptation of *National Velvet* reveals how a tentative search for alternative femininities can revert to a more traditional interpretation of the role of the girl as caretaker. The relationship with the horse that symbolized a peculiar form of female strength in the original British novel, is reinterpreted as a domesticated and domesticating relationship in the American picture book.

Whereas *National Velvet* can be read as an exploration of femininity, the Little Golden Book adaptation of the television series *Fury* can be viewed as an examination of masculinities. The relationship between the boy and horse is depicted as unique and especially distinct from the adult male interaction with horses. What *National Velvet* and *Fury* have in common is a characterization of the child-horse relationship as a preparation for romantic inter-human relationships. In the characterization of the one special horse that is identified as irreplaceable and only responds to one special rider, it is reminiscent of ideas regarding romantic love. For the prepubescent protagonists, the horse is a proxy or precursor for a human lover, and against this background it becomes all the more interesting to focus on the representation of the communication – especially through body language- between horse and rider.

A history of horsemanship

Horses (1976, original from 1962) by Blanche Chenery Perrin and illustrated by Hamilton Greene is a fact-based Little Golden Book, designed to educate the reader on the lives of horses and their uses within different human societies and contexts. This is a thoroughly anthropocentric account of what a horse can be: at every turn, the horse is described and depicted in relation to humans, both visually and verbally.

This is already established when we look at the cover; it shows a mare and a foal at the center of the image but there is a barn and a boy riding another horse in the background. The life of a horse, from its birth to its maturity as a riding or breeding horse takes place within the human sphere. This scene is continued and elaborated when we open the book and are presented with an image of a farm in early autumn. Two brown mares and their foals

are peacefully grazing in a field, while a boy leads another mare by the halter. They are flanked by a (her?) foal and a dog. The text on the right page reads:

A foal is a baby horse. Boy foals are called colts; girls are fillies.

Foals are not like human babies who mostly sleep and eat. A foal can stand up on its wobbly legs and walk beside its mother a few hours after it is born.

Immediately, the adult narrator connects equine and human lives on a conceptual level. The moment the reader receives an introduction to horse-related terminology it is paired with a comparison to human terminology and development. Both species are described using a parallel type of gendered language, with different words designating young horses and young humans. When the results of domestication are described, this happens in utilitarian terms, with the central questions being: what does the horse offer its human companions and how does it do that?

The book, which is non-fictional in nature, sums up different horse practices and the type of horse that is used or preferred within these practices. It explains, for example, that 'A mounted policeman needs a good, steady saddle horse. [...] The horses they ride are especially trained to keep calm in noisy, swirling traffic.' The illustration that accompanies this shows a broad city street with people, dogs and traffic. The mounted police officer looks alert and attentive, but the expression of his horse is demure, almost detached. Together, they strike the reader as the ideal combination to perform their job.

The majority of the text-image interactions in this book are relatively unsophisticated, with the image mostly serving as visual support of the textual content. The two sign systems complement each other in a straightforward manner. Whereas the text is responsible for the narration and the transmission of factual information, the images in *Horses* are mainly intended to support the text. The function of the majority of the images is limited to, or focused on, their descriptive function. However, this does not mean that the images are ideologically neutral or innocent. In spite of this relatively unsophisticated text-image relationship, we can read some interesting messages in this book concerning the role of the horse in history and the animals' continued significance in the lives of humans.

For example, when this book describes an example of the historical development of the horse-human relationships, the text-image relationship becomes more sophisticated. At this point the text takes into account how certain breeds have historically evolved for special purposes, but as these practices became obsolete, their uses changed:

A Shire horse is descended from the great war horses.

Proud knights in heavy armor charged into battle riding these brave horses.

The Shire horse grows long hairs on his lower legs. This is called “feather”.
He is tall and very strong.
Shire horses are still used on some farms today.

The composition of the page can be linked to its message about the fate of the Shire horse. It is divided in three sections of about equal proportions: one illustration above the text, and one beneath it. The first illustration shows a knight against the background of a fortress and an ominously blue-grey sky, riding into battle astride his war horse. The image is dynamic: the horse, in the center of the illustration and viewed from below, is an awe-inspiring image of vigor. The animal is wearing colorful battle dress, which contributes to the overall impression of strength and vitality. The idea of virility is nourished further by the lance the knight is holding. There is no doubt that this horse is a powerful ally for his rider.

Beneath the text we see a much more subdued image of the working horse. This is an agricultural setting. There is a wooden barn in the background, and some trees, but the focus is on the farmer who is loading a milk jar on a sledge. A young boy is observing him. We may imagine that this is a father instructing his son, explaining to him the laws of the land, the age old wisdom of reading nature’s signs. There is a timeless quality in this passing on of knowledge between the generations, but the text undermines this by stating that ‘Shire horses are still used on some farms today’. The nostalgic image of a farmer and the boy contributes to the sense of melancholy that is expressed by the text.

Compared to the image of the war horse, the contrast is striking. They are supposed to represent the same breed, but their expression could not be further apart. This farm horse is standing still, passively (patiently?) awaiting his orders. His strength is no longer harnessed to carry a warrior and move forward at speed, but is arrested, perhaps indefinitely. The war horse has come to a halt. His descendant the farm horse, positioned on the bottom right of the page, facing away from the reader and into the abyss that is formed by the gutter of the book, confirms our suspicion that we are witnessing a lost era. The horse is on its way out of history, into oblivion, because we can no longer find any use for him. This page is an accurate reflection of the rhetoric that permeates this book. From this perspective, the presence of the horse is always interwoven with human cultures and history.

This example of the historical embedding of a specific breed shows the reader how the very existence of horses is made contingent on their use within human societies. This particular page also implicitly addresses another issue: that human culture evolves from a violent past but moves towards a more peaceful future. Horses, as we know, have been closely associated with both warfare and agriculture – two practices they revolutionized. But as they became less important on the battlefield, some types of horses lost their usefulness. That Shire horses are used on ‘some farms’ when the

book was published, indicates that, when this practice ceases to exist, the days of the Shire horse are numbered.

This account of one breed's history is not only a description of changing roles that are available to horses in human societies. It is also a nostalgic reflection of a lost ideal. Nathalie op de Beeck writes how picture books have the ability to:

[...] acknowledge cultural anxieties by buttressing ideals, and their superficial sunniness belies socioeconomic events. When picture books describe a bygone era or show bucolic settings rather than brick and concrete, they acknowledge what has been lost and give consumers a peculiarly modern chance to preserve that past – first by making it available in commodity form, and next by enconcing a culturally approved version of history in children's collective memory. (10)

The image of the Shire as a war horse or a farm horse reflect a society in which not only horses, but also people lived their lives according to well-defined patterns and expectations. The representation of the horse as a warrior or a farmer therefore also suggests a longing for simpler times.

While horses living their lives as war horses or work horses belong to the past, the opposite page shows us one aspect of equine culture that does still flourish: sports. More specifically, this page shows a polo pony in action. This signals that as a source of entertainment, as a companion or a status symbol, horses still have an important role to play. But this is not a role that comes naturally to the horse, it seems. The specific language that is used in describing work horses and horses used for entertainment purposes gives an indication of the tension that lies beneath the surface. In describing equine attitudes towards the work they are asked to do, the book uses a considerable amount of anthropomorphizing language to explain or justify certain practices. In this case, the statement that 'A polo pony loves this exciting game and has lots of courage', implies that the horse is aware of the playful, competitive nature of the game and joins in on its own volition. In this case, we may suspect that this language pre-empts any criticism from an animal welfare perspective that may question the ethics of using horses for such high risk activities. Another instance when this kind of language is used is in the description of a circus horse performing:

Snowball is a circus horse. His trainer chose him because he is clever and easily learns difficult tricks. Snowball can stand on his hind legs and nod his head gaily in time to music.

The apparent need to use anthropomorphic language to justify the use of horses purely for entertainment and sport indicates an awareness of the problematic nature of such practices, and for this reason the book cannot be considered naïve. The answer to the central question, 'what is a horse', is not as clear cut when the animal is used for inessential human activities. Another

answer to this question can be found in the emphasis on the horse's physical capabilities. Horses covers a range of activities that highlight the horse's speed and strength, vitality and athletic ability.

One instance where anthropomorphic language can be interpreted from a postcolonial perspective is when the palomino horse is described as being aware of his beauty in comparison to other horses:

The beautiful Palomino is "the golden horse of the West". His coat is gold or creamy and he has a light mane and tail. The Palomino knows that he is beautiful and likes to show off.

This description becomes problematic in combination with the accompanying image, that shows a blonde horse with a blonde girl riding him. The background of the spread is formed by the mountainous, rural landscape representing 'the West'. On the left page we read the abovementioned text fragment with the image of the Palomino. In front of the horse stands a dark-skinned child, dressed in nothing but a piece of cloth around the waist and holding a basket. We see the child from behind, so we don't know her facial expression, but we can see that her head is slightly tilted upwards, in a pose of admiration for the horse and, perhaps, its rider. The association of the light coated horse and the blonde girl with an idea of self-assured beauty becomes problematic because of composition and the way the half-naked, dark-skinned child is depicted in relation to the white girl and her horse.

The right page shows a Native American rider facing the girl against the backdrop of an encampment. He is further away from the viewer, and therefore appears smaller than the girl. Beside the rider we see another horse, saddled but without a rider. How is the reader to interpret this scene? We may wonder if the Native child has dismounted in order to approach the blonde girl? What happened that lead to this situation? The setting reveals that this is where the Native American man and the child live. Could the blonde girl be a visitor? The composition centralizes the blonde girl and the Palomino, while the gutter effectively separates the Native encampment, the adult rider and the two horses from the Native child and the white girl. The text beneath the image on the right page says:

Pinto means painted horse. Pintos are gaily spotted black or brown and white. Indians like to ride these tough horses. They also like the Appaloosa horse, which has a white coat with brown or black spots.

The horses in the image are a Paint and an Appaloosa. The text associates the painted, spotted color with the preferences of the 'Indians'. In combination with the composition of the image, this creates an opposition between us and them. The beauty of the palomino horse is described in objective terms, while the texts turns to the use of the word 'they' when describing the Native

people's preferred horses. 'They' like spotted horses, which, by contrast with the Palomino, become blemished, imperfect.

What could have been a moment of contact between two children becomes instead an affirmation of the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. The horses are instrumental in this division. Whereas the blonde girl rides a beautiful, elegant fair horse, the Native American favors rough, spotted horses. The division that is created in this fashion builds on the association of certain groups of people with certain groups of animals, as we have seen before, and which we will return to in the next chapter.

The horse's symbolical function is highlighted occasionally throughout this book, and this often occurs in connection with representations of non-Western humans. An image of an Arabian rider dressed in traditional attire is racing an Arabian thoroughbred in a desert environment. The text above the image reads:

The speediest horses come from Arabia. Arabians called them "Drinkers of the Wind" because they ran so fast.

The poetic description and symbolic language are mentioned in the past tense, as if the people and the Arabian culture that created these horses now belong to the past. The image becomes exotic because of the combination of the language and the visual setting.

We see how throughout the book representations of the horse's speed are consistently coupled with images of masculinity. The riders of horses that are described as fast or powerful are men. Compare this with the image of the circus pony, who is described as smart and social: here we see a female trainer/performer who performs beside the horse. She is neither dominating the animal nor is she in conflict with it.

Those who can harness the strength and speed of the horse are men, but when there is conflict, it is also men who are at the center of it. When the actual process of taming the wild or feral horse is performed by a man, this is often represented as a conflict of wills. Human physical strength is most dramatically demonstrated when the horse offers resistance, and such confrontations reinforce an idea of masculinity that relies heavily on mastery and dominance.

The full extent of the horse's domestication can be inferred from the rhetoric employed by this picture book: horses are always defined in relation to humans, even when they are described as 'wild'. That the horse is described as a being that is essentially embedded into culture is the red thread in this picture book. This rhetoric of the horse as defined by his use within a human cultural framework is coupled with a discourse of wildness. There is a particular discourse of wildness that is connected with the history of the American horse. In this book, it is described as follows:

Spaniards brought the first horses to our country. Some horses ran away from their masters. They found plenty of food and their numbers grew like Jack's beanstalk.

Indians caught some of these wild horses or mustangs and learned to ride. Indians made wonderful horsemen. They rode bareback and raced like the wind.

The initial contact between the horse and the Native peoples of America is described as a deliberate human strategy to bring the horse under human control. The illustration shows how a half-naked Native American man is being dragged behind a spotted horse. The man holds on to the rope around the horse's neck, pulling his head down. The horse's back is bent in protest and he violently kicks up sand and grass. This image implies that the capture of horses systematically occurred with significant violence and resistance from the animals, ignoring the fact that in real life, taming may have happened more gently and gradually and could involve different strategies to win the horse's trust.

The contrast of this image with the illustration of the Spanish conquistador on the same page is striking. In pastel shades of orange and blue, a rider from a distant past is depicted, his horse striding through a haze of clouds or fog. Dressed in armor he sits upright, his posture exuding a tranquil pride. In one hand, he holds a sword, in the other the reins. The reins are not held tightly, instead, they hang loosely over the horse's neck. The horse, too, appears calm and confident, and together they form an image of idealized, harmonious horsemanship. The visual contrast that is established between the Spaniard and the Native American, symbolized in particular by the loose reins and the tight rope, partly undermines the text's message that 'Indians made wonderful horsemen'.

The book depicts the process of being tamed after a period of living independently from human influence as an unpleasant experience for the individual horses in the images, even if the horse as a species can be considered domesticated. In this context, domestication is equated with domination, and taming is presented as essentially violent. This process is portrayed as essentially one-sided. On the right page we see another instance of violent taming: a cowboy trying to ride a bucking, protesting horse. In the background, sitting on and leaning against the wooden fence, two fellow cowboys observe the action. One of them is cheering the rider (or the horse?) on, evidently enjoying the spectacle. Like the previous depiction of the Native American man being dragged by the resisting mustang, this is a disturbingly violent image, reinforced by the approval of the spectators. The text that accompanies it explains how this type of horse is known for his resistance – it is described as part of his nature:

Bronco means rough and rude. The wildest mustangs are called broncos. A bronco hates to be ridden. He bucks and twists and jumps, trying to throw his

rider off. Some broncos are trained by cowboys, who use them to round up herds of cattle.

Wild, in this context, does not only signify that the horse is not familiar with interaction with humans. It also means that it actively resists the association with people, which may look like aggression. But, even though the horse's dislike of interaction with humans is acknowledged, it does not mean that the human will respect the animal and leave him to live his life in the wild. The horses are not described as aggressive, even though their behavior might seem to indicate that they are. They simply seem to disapprove of human intentions and their behavior becomes an act of defiance rather than aggression.

If all taming is one-sided and violent, which is what these images seem to suggest, then this becomes hard to reconcile with the anthropomorphic presentation of horses finding pleasure in the work they do for their human masters. This tension surrounding discourses of wildness and domestication of the horse reveals that it is difficult to justify animal practices that do not always serve the animal's interests. After World War II, horses disappeared from the labor force and became more and more companion animals. This has consequences for their moral status as well. When human became less economically dependent on their horses, their welfare came to be regarded in different terms, bringing them conceptually and emotionally closer to pets than other farm animals.

For domesticated animals that mainly serve as food, the rhetoric is different. They are not expected to take pleasure in the interaction with their human owners. But for human interaction with horses, the requirement of mutual trust and shared pleasure in interaction is essential. The myth of the union between horse and rider, the pinnacle of which is the image of the centaur, necessitates a rhetoric that highlights harmonious communication. Yet, we can surmise in many myths that are told in Western cultures that the horse can only find its true fulfilment in the interaction with humans. The rhetoric of the horse as essentially defined by his relationship with people also finds expression in the description of wildness as a state of being that ultimately is not viable:

Some horses are still wild. They live in many parts of the world. Wild horses love their freedom and roam the land in large herds. Zebras are cousins of horses. You can see them in a zoo. They have gay black and white stripes. Zebras are very difficult to tame.

The text makes several interesting assertions that deserve further attention. One of them is the implication of the word 'still' in relation to the wildness of the horse. Does this mean that wildness is considered to be a temporary state in the development of a species, one that is to be overcome? This may

be seen in light of the myth that the horse's true potential can only be developed in unison with the human, which lies at the core of many horse stories. The following two Little Golden Books show how the horse's development is intertwined with that of the human child. These stories are also permeated by the idea that true, authentic interspecies understanding can more readily be achieved by a child than an adult human.

'Putting the horse in history' or domesticated dreams? The Little Golden Book adaptation of National Velvet

The original novel *National Velvet* (1935) by Enid Bagnold, on which the Little Golden Book adaptation is ultimately based, is an example of an early pony book. The active role of the female protagonist is an important characteristic of this genre, which is closely related to the adventure story. The first pony books appeared in Britain in the 1930s, according to Jane Badger, and she explains that:

This is not surprising: the well-brought-up Victorian or Edwardian girl would never, ever have ridden anywhere without some form of chaperonage, making dashing adventure a little tricky. Direct care of the horse opened up to women when they began to take the place of grooms during and after the First World War, and the pony book emerged as women's position in society changed – as the equestrian world itself changed. Riding as a leisurely activity filtered down the social hierarchy during the 1920s. (10)

The pony book developed from the animal story, which had been around since the 1700s. Famous examples of animal autobiographies with equine narrators are *The Memoirs of Dick, the Little Pony, (Supposed to be written by himself)* (1799) and *Black Beauty* (1877). (Badger: 10)

In her chapter 'Rides of Passage, Female Heroes in Pony Stories' Alison Haymonds points out that the genre, in its original form, is empowering for girls. In the interaction with the animal the female characters become aware of their own strength and abilities:

girls in pony books are transformed by their association with ponies into physically adept, brave riders, tackling their own problems, and getting some measure of control of their own lives. (51)

The pony helps the female protagonist to gain confidence in herself, and this prepares her for adult life. (52-53) Haymonds summarizes the characteristics of the genre:

It can be defined as a story in a British setting, generally rural, with a young hero, nearly always female, whose relationship with her pony is central to the action. The formula seldom varied: girl acquires pony by luck, chance, as a reward, or by her own endeavours. It is often unrideable, badly treated, neglected, or has been written off, but its young owner, despite obstacles, transforms it by love, care and training, and rides it to success. (54)

This British rural setting in which these stories take place is significant, because it highlights the contrast with the American horse story, which usually had boys as their heroes. Haymonds describes the differences between the two types of horse stories as follows:

While the American genre is inextricably bound up with the story of the Wild West, where the horse is part of a wider and wilder landscape, and often the means of livelihood, the British pony story is placed firmly in a rural, domestic setting and enclosed stableyard, with riding perceived as a leisure or sporting pursuit. (57)

We see that the different places of origin of the genre are coupled with differences of class and gender. The Little Golden Book adaptation of *National Velvet*, which is set in the United States, shows some transformation that are related to the American genre of the horse book.

At this point I would like to briefly consider the term ‘pony mad girls’. This is a recurring concept in the discussion of pony books, especially in relation to *National Velvet*, but it is a problematic term. In her book chapter ‘“Oh God, give me horses!”: Pony-Mad Girls, Sexuality, and Pethood’ Amalya Layla Ashman writes:

A pony-mad girl who imagines breaking in a horse, personally and unassisted (as is the goal in the majority of wild horse stories), is fantasizing, but not about a horse as a cute, playful pet; rather, she is fantasizing about possessing the maturity and skill to successfully dominate another animal completely: to create her own pet, or “thing”. And so, the pony-mad girl’s obsession with taming the wild horse is a form of pethood, not in the sense that the horse is a conventional “play-thing,” but in the sense that by training and taking responsibility for an animal, the young girl disciplines herself into an adult and the animal into a pet, participating in the “civilizing” activity of domestication. (155)

Ashman touches on several problematic issues in this statement. The first issue I would like to take up is the use of the term domestication, which is not optimal in this context. Although one can theoretically domesticate an individual, domestication of animals, as we have seen, is better understood as a

process than a goal-oriented activity. Since this process takes place over generations and involves the mutation of genes, it is not something that can be accomplished, or even re-enacted, but a girl in a pony book. Further, domination and domestication are not necessarily related. For domestication to result in successful cohabitation, it needs the two species to actively participate in this process. To present this as an intentional act of one girl does not give enough credit to the animal's agency in this process, and in the individual relationships that ensued. And, as the horse is a big and potentially dangerous animal, as these stories also often emphasize, the horse's agency is something to be reckoned with. I also have my doubts about the assertion that the goal of the interaction is complete domination of the horse. Many pony books emphasize the need to achieve a harmonious companionship that eventually benefits both parties.

Another issue is the use of the word 'mad' in this context, that evokes the image of the hysterical woman. Horse girls in pony books are in most cases not hysterical or otherwise mentally ill, but, rather, determined to live a life outside of the conventional female sphere. Haymonds emphasizes this when she writes:

Girls in pony stories did not want to work in offices and despised girls who did. Their life was dedicated to horses and any desire to "stay at home" had nothing to do with domestic duties – or marriage. (62)

To question the rationality behind the decisions of these young women diminishes the radical and empowering potential of the genre. In addition, it reinforces the patriarchal tendencies that tend to disparage the girl-horse relationship. In *Animal Stories* (2011), Susan McHugh writes:

From Sigmund Freud's case study of "Little Hans" onward, psychoanalytic interpretations of fascination with horses as a childish diversion reduce animals to perverse substitutes for adult human sexual agents, nowhere more clearly than in attempts to account for the "horse-crazy girl." Eclipsing older, militaristic associations, women's rise to power in equine sports implicitly becomes the target of sociobiological accounts attempting to recover the horse as phallic symbol through a sort of surgical strike against girls. (66)

The Little Golden Book adaptation of *National Velvet* (1961) is an intriguing example of how an American commercial picture book grapples with genre conventions that are at odds with the presence of strong female characters. The book was written against the backdrop of a patriarchal genre environment of the American horse story and the Western, but had to stay true to the British original.

The Little Golden Book version is not a direct adaptation of the 1935 novel by Enid Bagnold, but is, as the front matter states: 'based on the NBC

television program, *National Velvet*. This series, broadcasted in 1960-1961 on NBC, is in turn based on the 1944 film version. This is typical for how the adaptation process often occurred in the Little Golden Books series: a successful television series becomes a picture book and even if there are earlier versions, it is the television series, not the original novels, that provide the foundation for the images. Commercially, this is effective: the association with an already popular medium rubs off on the books and is bound to ensure a successful purchase for the adult buyers. The fact that readers know what to expect also plays into the accessibility of the Little Golden Books for reluctant or beginning readers.

Unlike the original British novel, the setting of *National Velvet's* Golden Book adaptation is quintessentially American. In what follows I will foremost focus on the adaptation from the original novel, since this comparison will foreground the culturally specific representation of the horse. The function of the horse in British and American society, as represented in the adaptation, differs dramatically. The main reason is that the relationship between the protagonists and the horse depends on totally different conditions.

The novel is set in early 20th century Britain. Velvet is the youngest daughter in a family of 5: she has three older sisters and a little brother. Her fondness of horses is shared by her sisters, but none of them is as passionate about them as Velvet. For Velvet, a sickly child who suffers from a sensitive stomach and an easily excited mind, horses are empowering. Imagining them and enacting how she would ride and care for her imaginary horses is part of her daily life, and is accepted and encouraged by her sisters. When Velvet by chance inherits five horses and on top of that wins The Piebald in a lottery, the women in the family have to find ways to pay for their food, since the father is reluctant from the very beginning. According to Jane Badger:

National Velvet has some of what became the classic pony book themes: Velvet loves horses but does not have one; acquires one (actually several); overcomes adversity and wins a race; then settles into a calm procession of gymkhana summers. (21)

But this could not have been achieved - and this is rather unusual for the genre - without the support and encouragement of her sisters and two significant adults in Velvet's life. Velvet's bond with her mother is special. Her mother, weighing 16 stone (approximately 100 kilos) now, swam across the Channel when she was 19, and this feat made her briefly famous. When she observes her daughter's passion for horses, she recognizes her own spirit in Velvet. There is a certain stubbornness, a desire to both defeat and exceed expectations, in Velvet, her mother and the piebald. And this unites them and forms the basis of their success. Mi, who works as a help in the Brown household, recognizes it as well. He is the son to the man who coached Velvet's mother to cross the Channel. One afternoon, as the sisters are riding their horses:

Mi watched them go off with a queer look in his eye, a look old Dan had when he saw Araminty Brown strike out from the brim of the land. There are men who like to make something out of women. (84)

Because of the way Velvet's desire to surround herself with horses and to race The Piebald in the Grand National are described, National Velvet promotes emancipation, and respect and admiration for female ambitions. Mi has faith in this unconventional girl who harbors a passion that's larger than life. Women are not allowed to compete in the Grand National, and with her braces and her skinny, ephemeral appearance she is an unlikely candidate to finish such a physically demanding race, let alone win it. Velvet is hardly a traditional heroin. The Piebald, too, is described as an outcast, an unconventional horse that resists being confined by his owners. Time and again he escapes his enclosures to gallop down the village's main street, as if he wants to express his discontent to all its inhabitants.

The Piebald is a stubborn horse, a loner. Some call him an ugly horse, and Velvet is described as a plain-looking, child, but both possess great character, ability and willpower. The narrator describes the sensation that Velvet experiences when she is riding him as supernatural, one that borders on both life and death, which momentarily evokes the image of Velvet as a rider of the Apocalypse:

Velvet, with her great teeth and her parted lips, her eye sockets and the pale eyes in them, looked like a child model for a head of Death, an eager bold young Death. (102)

Two unlikely heroes, both flirting with death: Velvet by her constant vomiting, The Piebald by his obstinate behavior - at one point Velvet's father tells her that the horse is at risk of being slaughtered. But even though death is omnipresent, the novel also seems to suggest a supernatural dimension that becomes accessible through interaction with the horse. In *National Velvet*, the horse becomes a gatekeeper to another world, occasionally allowing its human companions a glimpse of this world:

In the eyes of little Sir Pericles, something soft and immortal shone. (103)

In Velvet's eyes the horses she interacts with are always more than 'just' animals. She attaches a spiritual significance to them that elevates them to another level. There is more to them than their physical being, although it is the act of establishing physical contact that opens up a portal between two minds that are both alike and fundamentally different. In Velvet's mind, there is nothing more exquisite than the union between a horse and a human being.

As a consequence, competing is not merely a contest between opposing humans (or animals, for that matter). It is the pinnacle of successful communication, the ultimate affirmation of the human-equine relationship.

Velvet's thoughts about the upcoming gymkhana where the girls are supposed to win enough prize money to buy horse food for the winter are both of a practical and a metaphysical nature. She wants, more than anything else, to win. But winning does not only mean glory, or prize money. The narrator explains that:

It was not the silver cup standing above the windblown tablecloth that Velvet saw – but the perfection of accomplishment, the silken co-operation between two actors, the horse and the human, the sense of the lifting of the horse-soul into the sphere of human obedience, human effort, and the offering of it to the taste of human applause. All this she had learnt already from the trained mouth and the kneeling will of Sir Pericles.

And as the dim sense of this understanding sighed up and down her body in entered too into Sir Pericles' nerves, and through his nerves to his comprehension. (103)

Embodied communication is at the center of equine-human interaction. Velvet senses that this necessarily goes in two directions: as we ask the horse to perform for us, he also needs to be allowed to express his own opinions. Even though horses lack human speech, they have their bodies to communicate with their handlers. The final sentence of this fragment equates feeling with understanding. Understanding is not conceptual or cognitive, but in the interaction with the horse it assumes a physical quality. In this communication, the border between the human and the equine body seem to dissolve. However, if this reciprocity is absent from the relationship, communication has failed and the horse becomes a victim of human domination. Horse books, all in their unique way, formulate an answer to the question 'what is a horse?', and consequently: 'how should we interact with this animal in an ethically responsible way?'. In *National Velvet*, one possible answer is put into words by Velvet when she watches some livery horses being ridden. In a dialogue with her sister she laments the fates of the horses:

"Must be awful," said Velvet after a while, "to be a livery horse."

Merry slid her feet into the sunny dust. It rose in a roll round the toes of her shoes and she said nothing.

"It's not what they're born for."

"What are they born for?"

"They're simply born," said Velvet rather suddenly, "to try to get to know what one person thinks. Their backs and their mouths are like ears and eyes. That's why those horses move like that and hang their heads down from the whither like a steep hill."

"What horses?"

"The livery ones. They've got broken hearts."

"How d'you know?"

“Oh,” said Velvet, “I can see. It’s like seeing the dead go by.” (137)

Horses are like people, according to Velvet, in their desire for a meaningful partnership with another person. But unlike people, they communicate through their senses, their bodies. That is why Velvet considers bad riding to be such a violation of the horse’s integrity. It breaks their hearts and their spirits. Again, the horse is described as an entry point to another world, one that is both mystical and deeply embodied.

Another aspect of the acknowledgement of the embodied relationship is, according to Amy Ratelle (2015) embedded in Velvet’s aversion to eating meat:

Coupling Velvet’s aversion towards food with an especially strong aversion to animal flesh is an alternate means by which Velvet can be viewed as engaging in practices of mutual corporeality, a precondition of the companion species relationship described by Haraway, and necessary for natural horsemanship. Velvet’s athleticism is bound up in both her own body and that of her horse. McHugh (2011) further contends that Velvet’s eating habits (or lack thereof) introduce a “micropolitics” regarding mass consumption (p. 81). As such, both food and sport become sites of entanglement, enabling Velvet to actively resist cultural narratives that deprioritize animal subjectivity, particularly for the meat animal. (39)

Velvet’s love for animals, horses in particular, leads to a physical discomfort at the thought of consuming their flesh. This deep sense of embodiment that is part of living with horses, like Velvet does in the novel, is not a major factor in the Little Golden Book adaptation. The format of the Golden Books necessitates certain transformations in the process of adapting stories from other media. For example: the concise format does not allow much room for character development – at least on a textual level – so the action becomes central. The demand of accessibility and the desire to appeal to a broad readership also entails limitations. But aside from these more obvious adaptations based on medium, format and target audience, there are a number of changes that are interesting from an animal-centered point of view, especially when we want to interpret the significance of the horse-girl relationship.

To begin with the most visible adaptation, we can focus on the landscape and milieu of the picture book. The setting and circumstances under which the Brown family live are, in keeping with the television series, adapted to reflect an idealized rural America. While the British Velvet is a butcher’s daughter, the American Velvet lives on a cattle ranch. The cover of the Little Golden Book version shows Velvet wearing blue jeans. She is standing beside her saddled horse, her cheek pressed against his muzzle in an affectionate embrace. At their feet we see the dog, Jacob, sniffing the grass. It is a rural setting. The lush grass and panoramic view of the undisturbed countryside feed into the bucolic setting of the book. In this setting, having access to

horses is a given, in part because the setting is a ranch and not a village butcher shop.

The horse itself, who was a piebald in the original, is brown in the adaptation. This necessitated a change in his name: The Piebald is conveniently transformed to a King. The laws of the film industry that dictate that female protagonists are to be pretty have also influenced how Velvet is portrayed in the Little Golden Book. She is depicted as a flawless, well-proportioned, wholesome young lady who does not display the obsessive passion of her British counterpart. The physical imperfections of Velvet, her mother and The Piebald, do not in any way enter the television series or the picture book.

The relationship between Velvet and her mother that occupied such a central position in the novel, has been left out of the Golden Book entirely. She is invisible, as are her three older sisters. The female community that supports, encourages and comforts the sickly Velvet in the novel is absent in the picture book. Velvet is, in fact, the only female character in the book, surrounded by men: Mi, her father, her little brother Donald, an anonymous farmer on a tractor, and the veterinarian. This is among the more striking changes when we compare the television series and the picture book to the original.

The character and function of the father figure is also significantly altered. His transformation goes from a butcher who is reluctant to allow Velvet to keep her horse to a rancher who says:

”I want Velvet to be happy. She can keep King if she takes care of him herself, and doesn’t keep Mi from his farm work.”.

Velvet becomes marginalized by her father who describes her as a distraction. In other ways, too, the Golden Book adaptation foregrounds traditional gender roles. For example, the plot of the original novel, which is centered around the desire to achieve the seemingly impossible, epitomized in winning the Grand National, is in this Little Golden Book reduced to the much more mundane achievement of getting to the vet in time to save a sick cow. The welfare of this cow depends on Velvet and King, since the telephone is not working and the vet lives far away. The interaction between the girl and the animals in the Golden Book adaptation serves to highlight traditional gender patterns.

This is hugely different from the social setting in which Velvet grows up in the novel is permeated by female presence. The novel inscribes Velvet into a long line of female riders: the Amazons in Greek mythology, Queen Isabella of Spain, Elizabeth I of England, adventurers Celia Fiennes and Isabella Bird, to name a few. (Walker, 112-113) ‘Reckless riding can denote an especially feisty female spirit’, writes Walker (113), but at the same time:

[w]omen excelling at riding [...] stirred complex responses until relatively recently. During the arguments over women's desire to ride racehorses in mid-twentieth century America, one jockey revealed the true nature of the protests: 'If you let one woman ride in one race, we're all dead.' This fear had already been justified back in 1804 when Alicia Maynell beat two male jockeys in challenge races and one trainer was soon admitting that, 'Our horses seem to respond better to girls than men. (Walker 115)

This is certainly true in the novel, where the Piebald only responds well to Velvet, who seems to understand his personality and shares certain essential traits with him. However, the physical aspect of the communication between horse and rider is, in the picture book, reduced to relatively one-sided communication. The initiative to interact is taken by Velvet, sculpted with Mi's help, until Velvet can guide King to an understanding of himself as a champion. Mi's role has changed from being a support and someone who views himself as being essentially in Velvet's service, to a more conventional trainer. During their training session he instructs her to 'take the jump sooner' and to 'sit easy', to let the horse jump the fence 'the way he wants to'. Velvet echoes his lessons when they have to jump a fence on their way to the vet and tells King: "Take it easy. Take it just the way you want to." It is the affirmation, not so much of a succeeded communication between Velvet and her horse, as of the human male's authority.

The Golden Book adaptation does not offer the readers the challenges that the novel does, but in staying closer to the television show it leans much more toward the dominant ideology. Velvet, the horse and the story can be discussed in terms of domestication. The horse, in particular, is a more domesticated version of the original Piebald. Compared to the original Piebald, King is docile and eager to please his human masters. It is, of course, essential to acknowledge the distinction between taming and domesticating. Whereas the horse as a species can be considered domesticated, individual horses may grow up in the wild or may have a feral disposition, which requires taming before they can be safely handled by humans. It is the element of wildness that is absent in the Little Golden Book version.

In the novel, The Piebald is painfully out of place in the village, and causes havoc every time he escapes. Here is a horse who will not be confined. He is also a horse that cannot be managed and risks an unpleasant fate if he does not in some way learn to act appropriately. Velvet's father hints at this possibility when he tells her that if she will win the raffle, she had better prepare herself that the horse 'will be meat'.

So domestication, in this case, is not a condition that comes natural to this particular horse. In that respect he resembles his owner: it does not come natural to Velvet either. She is well aware of the fact that she projects all her passion onto horses, and that this may be to compensate for a desire that she lacks – a desire for motherhood. So this novel presents an alternative femininity, not by presenting the horse as something to be mothered, but as a

partner. A companion who mirrors Velvet's rebellious nature and enables her to defy authorities.

Elaine Walker makes an interesting observation in her book *Horse*, when she states that: '[w]ays of training the horse have changed over the years, often reflecting changes in humans' understanding of themselves, rather than of horses'. (19) We can see a reflection of this idea on an individual level when we try to interpret how Velvet's understanding of herself changes in her contact with the horse. In the novel, Velvet is attracted to the Piebald because of his wildness, his refusal to comply with his owner's expectation. Compared to the experiences with the 'civilized', 'noble' horses she inherited, the experience of riding The Piebald is rougher, less refined, but nonetheless genuine. The Piebald's unruly strength and speed ask for a confident rider – one who is a diamond in the rough herself.

In the picture book, this element of wildness and non-conformism that is an essential element of The Piebald's character is replaced by domesticity and a will to please. Not only the horse, but more significantly, the relationship between the horse and the girl is domesticated. Velvet's dreams are domesticated, too, in that they lack the outrageous passion and ambition that characterized the original relationship. The significance of this difference can be traced back to the American picture book's relationship to a dominant middle class ideology.

In this ideology, the relationship between the girl and the horse easily becomes an anticipation of romantic love. We see this most clearly in the encounter with the one special horse. As we often see in children's horse books, especially in those for girls, the relationship with the horse foreshadows romantic love. The prepubescent protagonist's encounter with the one special horse has all the elements of falling in love: the recognition of a kindred spirit, the passion of longing for a unique bond with the horse (which is ideally sealed through ownership), the experience of profound physical engagement with another being. The love for the horse can be said to anticipate romantic love between two human beings, and the physical aspect that so clearly is part of the relationship anticipates interhuman intimacy.

Fury: orphaned boys and wild horses

The Little Golden Book adaptation entitled *Fury* (1957), based on the television series of the same name. In this story, masculinity and horsemanship are explored in parallel with discourses of wildness and domestication. The history of this Little Golden Book resembles the one of *National Velvet*. Here, too, the story is told in several media that co-exist and influence each other. In this case, one could argue that the reader is supposed to possess some basic knowledge about the protagonist Joey from the television series in order to understand the import of the relationship between the boy and his horse.

The television series this book is based on is a Western that ran for 5 seasons from 1955 to 1960, airing a total of 116 episodes. Author Albert G Miller wrote a number of novels based on the television series, and two Little Golden Books were created in the wake of the television series: *Fury* (1957) and *Fury takes the Jump* (1958).

In *Fury*, we encounter the trope of the wild stallion who cannot be approached or tamed, save by one special boy. We see how, on the first spread, a cowboy and a young boy are leaning on a corral fence, looking at the black horse in the enclosure. The horse is facing them, looking interested in their direction, as the text beneath him reads:

Joey saw the new black horse in the corral, and he knew right away that he wanted this horse for his own.
“What’s his name, Dad?” Joey asked.
“He’s called Fury,” his father, Jim Newton, said.
And they soon knew why.

Here we see again a reflection or anticipation of romantic love at first sight. When Joey lays his eyes on the new horse, he immediately knows that this one special creature may not escape him. And Fury, as it turns out, has a similar affection for the boy. They are tied together by something that is strong and inexplicable, but nonetheless familiar. It is recognized and acknowledged by the experienced horsemen on the ranch, who acknowledge that Fury is ‘a one-boy horse’.

This insight comes after all the stable hands tried to ride Fury, but none of them succeeded. The second spread shows us a saddled Fury, bucking in protest as Jim Newton tries to ride him. Jim, as all the other riders before him, is thrown. “He is a wild one”, is Jim’s comment. But on the right page the reader is confronted with a completely opposite image: an unsaddled Fury, calmly watching how Joey approaches him. The horse is relaxed, and has a friendly, inquisitive expression on his face as the boy stretches out his hand towards him. The text underneath the image continues:

All the time Joey was watching.
And when his hands had gone back to the ranch house, he slipped into the corral. The big horse watched him from the corner of his eyes.
Joey spoke softly. “Easy there,” he said.
Fury snorted a little, but he did not shy away when Joey stroked his glossy neck.

The text and the image do not overlap completely, as the body language in the image is much more inviting and open than the text suggests. The image shows a horse that has a positive, inquisitive attitude towards the young boy who approaches him. Rather than illustration the initial situation the image foreshadows the result of their meeting: a friendly encounter between a boy and a horse. This is a scene that we encounter over and over again in pony

books. The moment of the creation of a bond between horse and child, based on nothing but their mutual will to be joined. The horse remains 'wild' to most of the other humans, but appears tame when it interacts with the chosen child.

The scene is reminiscent of Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *Petit Prince*, where the fox explains what it means to be tame, and subsequently invites the little prince to tame him:

"Who are you?" asked the little prince, and added, "You are very pretty to look at." "I am a fox," the fox said.

"Come and play with me," proposed the little prince. "I am so unhappy."

"I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed."

[...]

What does that mean--'tame'?" "It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. It means to establish ties."

"To establish ties?"

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . .

[...]

if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow.

[...]

"What must I do, to tame you?" asked the little prince.

"You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me--like that-- in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day."

Being tamed, the fox suggests in this passage, is a precondition for the formation of a relationship between a human a nonhuman animal. If the animal isn't first tamed, the human and nonhuman animal cannot interact with each other in a playful or otherwise meaningful way. At the same time, taming means 'to establish ties', being bound to one another, and these ties need to be accepted both by the animal who is tamed and the human who tames it. Significant otherness, according to the fox, is born in and through the act of taming.

In *Fury*, the process of taming fails miserably when the adult stable hands and Jim Newton attempt it, but when a child applies the rules that are stated by the fox in *The Little Prince*, the horse accepts being approached. "I shall look at you from the corner of my eye," says the fox, which resonates when

we read that '[t]he big horse watched him from the corner of his eyes'. Taming, as the fox pointed out, is not possible without the consent of the animal. What is suggested, too, is that taming is not a violent process. If domination takes the form of violence, it will often only yield protest. Joey's gentle manner of establishing contact and waiting for the horse's acceptance is, in this case, where the animal is first classified as wild, the right way. But why does it work?

One of the reasons, as we may deduce from the television series rather than the book, is the boy's background. Joey was an orphan before Jim Newton adopted him. From the perspective of society, outcasts and wild animals have something in common. Marginalized creatures are grouped together and they tend to stick together. Aside from Joey's marginalized status as a social outcast, his age is another precondition for the 'taming' to be successful. As Joey is a child, society ascribes him certain qualities that he has in common with animals and that put him into a privileged position when it comes to communicating with wild animals.

Also, since he is still relatively new at the ranch (again, the reader is supposed to have acquired this knowledge from watching the television series), Joey has not yet internalized the cowboy masculinity. Rather than saddling him and trying to break him, his approach is soft and gentle. He speaks to the horse in a low voice, waits for Fury to approach him rather than to force his presence on the animal.

Visually, his innocence, coupled with his proximity to the animal and lack of socialization into cowboy practices is expressed through his habit of riding Fury bareback. This is not mentioned or motivated in the text, but it speaks to the readers' imagination. Bareback riding suggests extreme physical proximity: there is direct contact between the horse's body and that of the boy, unmediated and unhampered by a saddle. Joey clearly feels comfortable riding like this, and the illustration show us two bodies that move in unison. The idea of the centaur is an association that is never far away when we encounter such representations.

After the horse's initial suspicion is overcome and the relationship is established, (literary) convention dictates that this fragile bond is to be tested. In *Fury*, the catalyzer that brings about this test is an upcoming race for boys who have their own horses. Joey's classmates ask him if Fury can win the race, and Joey confidently answers that: 'Fury can do anything'. But when he rides home through the pastoral idyllic landscape that surrounds the ranch, he realizes that Fury has never been in a crowded environment and he doesn't know how he will behave. Therefore, Joey decides to ride to town as a test. When we turn the page we immediately see that the result of this test was not the desired one: against the background of a classic Western main street we see a rearing Fury throwing his rider.

The text beneath this image explains the circumstances that lead to this situation:

The town was busy that day. Joey looked around at the traffic and the people in the street. Suddenly Joey was afraid. What if Fury became nervous? What if Fury threw him, in front of all those people?

“Come on, we’re going back,” he said, giving the reins a sharp, hard pull.

Fury gave one surprised neigh; then he bucked, throwing Joey on the ground, and off he ran.

As in many horse books, the result of the horse misbehaving constitutes a threat to separate the child and the horse. And in spite of his many years of experience as a cowboy, and his own personal experience with Fury throwing him earlier, Jim Newton’s immediate response is: “Well, if Fury can’t be trusted, we’ll have to sell him.” Now, according to the conventions of the pony book, it is up to Joey to prove that the horse is trustworthy, and what better way to do that than by running the race.

All on his own, motivated by his determination to keep Fury, Joey has come to the insight that his own fear caused Fury to panic, and that it, in fact, was the human who proved to be untrustworthy. As he explains to his father:

“I know why he threw me. It was my fault. I was afraid of what might happen and I made him afraid too.”

And after the race, which they had won, he continues his plea:

“He’s a good horse, Dad,” Joey said. “That day in town, I didn’t trust him, so he didn’t trust me. Now we trust each other again.”

Mutual trust is presented as the basis and the *conditio sine qua non* of their relationship. When trust breaks down, everything breaks down, but once it is restored, anything is possible:

Joey grinned: “Didn’t I tell you that Fury can do anything?”
And this time he knew it was true.

With these words, accompanied by an illustration of Joey and Fury surrounded by classmates celebrating their victory, the book ends. The fragile relationship has passed the test and the couple has graduated to a real partnership. ‘Words are the source of misunderstanding’, says Saint-Exupéry’s fox to the little prince, and this message also shines through in Fury. Joey’s claim that Fury can do anything is meaningless – and false – until it is supported by true confidence in the relationship. Joey takes responsibility for the horse’s actions when Fury throws him, thereby accepting the consequences of taming.

As we have seen, horses are often defined in terms of what they can do or mean to their human partners. The anthropocentric vision that dominated many discussions on horsemanship centered around the taming of the wild horse. But as *National Velvet* and *Fury* demonstrate, this can be undermined

and in this sense, literary interactions between children and horses can be subversive.

With respect to equine-human relations, domestication is often described as a fragile condition, a balance that is constantly at risk of collapsing. *Horses*, in their interaction with humans, establish embodied relations. In stories about horses, part of this relationship is often viewed as spiritual by the protagonists. The horse mirrors the human in many ways, as Joey learns from his friend Fury. The fox in *The Little Prince* imparts an important piece of wisdom when he states that:

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

He addresses the boy, urging him to remember, when he grows up, that he is responsible for the creatures he tames. This raises many questions when we think about the relationships with horses, especially when they are depicted in stories written for children. To what extent can we say that we are behaving responsibly when we tame our horses? Is Velvet's choice, which is the starting point of her own emancipation, a responsible choice for The Piebald? And would Fury have been better off in the wild? Is human companionship valuable enough to justify certain limitations on the lives of their equine partners? Vicki Hearne answers this question for us:

If what I have said so far were all there is to it, it wouldn't be hard to come to the conclusion that training horses is morally indefensible, but this isn't all there is to it, because horses have their own grammar of time. They can't say anything that requires past, present or future tense, but that doesn't mean that without us they live in eternity, in the present tense only. Their concept of time might be expressed by saying that the names of their tenses are "not yet, here and gone". You can't make appointments with such tenses, but you can remember, and you can anticipate the future with no little anxiety. That is to say, horses do have some sensitivity to the knowledge of death, and it makes them nervous, as it makes us nervous.

That knowledge is what they are relieved of, just as their riders are, in the tremendous concentration of horsemanship at the highest levels. This is why we are forgiven for riding them (...)' (165)

Case study 4: Circus animals; animals in the entertainment industry; animals as propaganda

In this fourth case study, the discourses of domestication and wildness are discussed with a focus on animals in the context of entertainment and advertising. In the case study about horses we briefly touched on the zoo as a place to preserve an idea of wildness. In this case study, I will discuss how non-domestic animals are used to promote a specific idea of civilization. The protagonists of three of the four Little Golden Books that I will discuss here are based on real animals: J. Fred Muggs the chimpanzee and the orphaned bear cub who became famous as the ‘real’ Smokey Bear. Again, we will see that the display of anthropomorphic traits is one of the most effective narrative techniques to obscure possible ethical issues that may arise in relation to the treatment of animals in human societies. In my discussion of animals that are used for entertainment, I will discuss this aspect of anthropomorphism in closer detail.

J. Fred Muggs is one of the Golden Books that is based on the life story of a real animal: a chimpanzee who has a role in a television show. The reader follows him as he gets ready for work, on his way to the studio, on a trip to the zoo, and so on. His activities certainly follow human standards. But when we consider the level of J. Fred Muggs’ anthropomorphization, we quickly observe that even though he lives with a human family, is dressed as a human being and follows human routines, his humanization is not extreme. He doesn’t speak a human language and the behavior he displays is typical for juvenile primates growing up in human homes.

Although Muggs’ behavior and expressions are occasionally interpreted anthropomorphically by the narrator and the human characters, this remains well within the margins of what is commonly accepted. This is the kind of ‘everyday’ anthropomorphism that humans apply in their interactions with their pets. The story does not suggest that the chimpanzee possesses any extraordinary abilities. He simply behaves the way a trained animal would when placed in a similar situation. Because of this, the reader cannot be certain that Muggs is aware of his role as an entertainer. And this brings us to the ethical dimension of this story, since we can – and should - ask ourselves to what extent we are allowed to force a human lifestyle onto an animal who is, admittedly, a primate, but has other needs than human primates. Does his entertainment value alone justify his living conditions, which are clearly not natural and less than optimal for a chimpanzee? In this case study I focus on if and how the picture book asks and/or answers these kinds of questions for the reader.

We will see that *J. Fred Muggs* embraces middle class family values and redefines the chimpanzee's role in accordance with those values. By contrast, *Topsy Turvy Circus* uses not only anthropomorphism, but also the Bakhtinian carnivalesque to question what right human beings presume to have to keep other animals in captivity for the sole purpose of providing entertainment. The circus, in particular, is a form of entertainment that is predominantly directed at children and families, yet it is based on relations that resemble slavery. By reversing the roles of animals and humans, *Topsy Turvy Circus* playfully interrogates the premises and legitimacy of these conditions. Anthropomorphism, here, creates a dynamic, multi-layered world where the animals resist their assigned roles and take control of the circus. Anthropomorphism, employed in this way, can serve to question and even overturn power relations.

Under the right circumstances, anthropomorphism can be one of the more constructive tools that humans have at our disposal to highlight the continuity with other species. Stressing this continuity is especially effective when the aim of the representation is to engender empathy and encourage kindness. The animal rights movement, as we have briefly discussed in the previous chapter, has used this technique since its inception. Here, I will describe how an animal character came to be the emblem of a conservation effort, before he transformed into a Little Golden Book character.

Similar to *J. Fred Muggs*, the character of Smokey Bear has become intertwined with the life of a real living animal. Though, significantly, Smokey Bear as a mascot predates the 'real' animal. Smokey was designed to be an emblem of the forest fire prevention campaign, and when by accident a real bear cub was rescued after being trapped in a forest fire, this cub's story was added to the identity of the fictional Smokey. But even though the anthropomorphism makes it possible to empathize with the plight of the animal character and encourages the reader to extend her compassion to nonhuman animals, the ideology behind the campaign is questionable and hinges on the power imbalance between adult and child.

J. Fred Muggs

The story of *J. Fred Muggs* (1955) by Irwin Shapiro and illustrated by Edwin Schmidt is based on a television show that had a real juvenile chimpanzee as its protagonist. The front matter shows us the protagonist dressed in a sweater, trousers and shoes, operating an NBC camera, while the text tells us:

Every morning, everywhere in the country, people feel better because they have laughed at J. Fred Muggs, the cheerful TV chimpanzee. This Little Golden Book takes you in front of the camera with Muggs.

This establishes the intermedial dimension, so that even readers who are not familiar with the television show will understand that this Little Golden Book is based on a real life story and a protagonist who has a real life counterpart. Like many other Little Golden Books, *J. Fred Muggs* has a straightforward storyline: it shows the reader a day in the life of the protagonist and his human companions Bud and Roy. On the second page, Bud, the boy, tells Muggs that they have a surprise for him, and the rest of the day Muggs wonders what this surprise may be.

This story presents another example of what we may call intradiegetic anthropomorphism, where the human characters within the fictional work anthropomorphize the animal. The visual representation of the chimpanzee is relatively naturalistic; his physical proportions and posture, for example, are close to that of real chimpanzees.

However, there are a number of ways in which the chimpanzee is anthropomorphized by the human characters. To begin with the obvious: he is made to wear human clothes and he follows a human daily routine. Fred's customs mirror a human child's daily routines, with the exception that he goes to the television studio rather than to school or daycare. The food he eats is human as well: we see him consume breakfast cereals, candy, milk, orange juice from a baby bottle, and spaghetti and meatballs. The significance of food events in children's books can hardly be overestimated, as we will examine more closely in the next chapter. Here, it is important to note that the food is coded as human food, and in particular children's food. Further, his behavior is understood by the text in terms of human behavior. Much like a human child he enjoys playing with his toys, watching television and playing with the family dogs. And like a human child he gets frustrated when he has to wait to get the surprise that was promised to him.

The book is fascinating, not only because of the ethical concerns raised by the story itself, but mainly because it is based on a real life situation. The fact that there exists a chimpanzee called *J. Fred Muggs*, who performs on television complicates the reading experience and raises ethical questions that reach beyond the realm of literary representations. What is also interesting about this story is the way people's responses to the chimpanzee are described. We have already seen that the front matter describes how Muggs is an animal to be laughed at. When they drive to the studio, '[p]olicemen waved to Muggs as he passed by'. One image shows two children watching Muggs' show on television, as the text explains that 'all over the country, people watched Muggs on their television sets. They laughed as they watched Muggs watch the buzzing bee'. These reactions show that *J. Fred Muggs* enjoys a special status within human society: that of a celebrity. The narrative tries to draw the chimpanzee into the human sphere, but it does so without granting him full human status. His celebrity-status which elevates him to a near-human position within the household also alienates him from his animal identity.

An interesting situation arises when Bud and Roy take Muggs for a visit to the zoo after his work at the studio is done. Yet even there, his experiences are recorded:

A cameraman took Muggs' picture. Muggs looked up at the long, long neck of the giraffe. "Oooh! Oooh!" said Muggs. Could this be his surprise?

But on the next page the text continues:

Just then a lion roared a big, loud roar. Frightened, Muggs jumped into Bud's arms and began to cry. What kind of surprise was this – scaring him out of his wits!

The confrontation with other exotic animals emphasizes that Muggs falls into a different category. Even though the lion and the giraffe are fulfilling similar functions in human society: entertaining the public. The images stress this on a visual level. On the left page, a high wire fence separates the public from the giraffe. The animal bends down towards the little chimpanzee who watches her, standing on two legs and dressed in human clothes. The little chimpanzee who started out as the object of observation has now, because he is anthropomorphized by the people around him, become the observer. However: there is always a human observer at the top of the hierarchy, as the presence of the cameraman indicates.

The lion who scares Muggs provokes an instinctive reaction to a powerful predator, and Muggs seeks refuge with someone he trusts: his human companion. His response highlights that the text classes the chimpanzee in the same category as the humans. This is reinforced when the surprise is finally revealed: as it turns out, the surprise was not the visit to the zoo, but to the kiddy park. The images show Muggs riding the horse on the merry-go-round and the airplane swings, and the text explains tells us that he 'was having a fine time'. This connection again serves to associate Muggs not with other exotic animals from the same continent, but with American children. In combination with the anthropomorphism with which Muggs is treated in his daily life, these examples reveal a profound desire to incorporate the young chimpanzee in a human society. It can be read as an example of how the exotic other is assimilated into the dominant culture by repeatedly denying him his otherness.

Beneath the surface of the narrative we can find an ambivalence regarding difference and similarity between the human child and the young chimpanzee. Even though we are shown that large portions of Muggs life are spent in a human household, the reader is never quite sure about the nature of the relationship between the human family members and the juvenile chimp. Do they consider themselves family members? Are they trainers? Keepers? When Vicky Hearne writes about the training of domestic animals, she

makes an important distinction based on the way these animals respect language. Dogs, Hearne explains in *Adam's Task* (2007), may not be able to command language, but they have a certain respect for it that enables them to interact with people the way they do: this is essential to being a domestic animal, and distinguishes dogs from, for example, wolves, who will never have this kind of respect for language. Inversely, humans do not possess the social skills that enable them to communicate successfully with wolves, which makes them equally wild in their eyes:

The wolf has wolfish social skills, but he has no human social skills, which is why we say that a wolf is a wild animal. And since human beings have for all practical purposes no wolfish social skills, the wolf regards the human being as a wild animal, and the wolf is correct. He doesn't trust us, with perfectly good reason. (22-23)

This animal perspective that Hearne introduces here is important if we want to understand the implications of domestication. For the domestic animal, training means finding a mutual vocabulary, and '[a] trained dog, a dog with a vocabulary, is sane and trustworthy' (24) The distinction between domestic and wild animals based on their innate respect for language and their willingness to view humans as part of their community is in a sense challenged by picture books that depict wild animals as domesticated. But it is challenged at great risk. One problem that is pointed out by Hearne is that we often only meet juvenile chimpanzees in such stories.

There are some very bad movies about chimpanzees living with people and dressing in human clothing, and there are, lately, real-life stories about chimps such as Lucy and Nim Chimsky living with families. The movies use preadolescent chimps and don't confront the issue of what to do with sexually mature ones. (32)

Hearne expresses her concern about the fact that these animals will become unmanageable and can become dangerous once they reach sexual maturity. The fictional representation does indeed already indicate that the chimpanzee has a problem with impulse control, but because of the use of anthropomorphic language this is equated with a child's tantrums, something he will eventually grow out of. The serious risks involved in introducing a wild animal into a human household are obscured by anthropomorphizing the animal. The inherent risk of living with exotic, essentially wild animals within a domestic context is denied by specific use of anthropomorphism in this Little Golden Book.

The uprising of animal entertainers in Topsy Turvy Circus

Topsy Turvy Circus (1953) by Georges Duplaix and illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren is a carnivalesque reversal of the human-animal power dynamic in the circus. Based on the original story by Duplaix (1940), this Little Golden Book is about a French traveling circus, Le Cirque Mirliflor, owned by the Augustin family. The cover shows monsieur Augustin in the arena, raising his whip at the animals who surround him. Some of them stand on their hind legs, the hippopotamus opens his mouth, and a bear sits with a polka dotted scarf on her head. The behavior they display is what we have come to expect as typical circus behavior, and the man in the center could hardly be a better representative of the Western anthropocentric, androcentric worldview.

What is interesting and unexpected about this story, however, is that it predominantly narrated from the perspective of Rosalie, the young female giraffe. She occupies a special position in the circus because she is one of the favorites of the Augustins. We read how Rosalie admires mademoiselle Caroline, the Augustin's daughter, how she is 'overcome with fear and excitement' when Monsieur Augustin, who is also a lion tamer, puts his head in the lion's mouth. But we also learn that 'Brutus, the lion, didn't like it. The moustaches tickled his throat and made him feel like sneezing.' This consideration plants a seed of doubt in the reader's mind and leads her to question the practice of lion taming, and by consequence, the circus as a form of entertainment. The next page takes this one step further, initiating the animals' revolt:

One day, as the Augustins were going to see Rosalie, a terrible thing happened. Babylass, the crocodile, escaped from his cage. And just as the Augustins were passing by, he rushed out on them and - biff! With one blow of his mighty tail he thrust them into his cage and quickly closed the door.

With the humans captured, the crocodile seizes his chance and immediately starts liberating the other animals from their cages. Soon, only the humans are caged.

What happened was astounding. Rosalie could hardly believe her eyes. It was a revolution! The old crocodile behaved like a madman, rushing from one cage to another and freeing all his comrades. What a day for the animals! They danced, they sang, they laughed.

The narrator is fascinatingly ambiguous in his description of the animal uprising. On the one hand, he describes the crocodile as a madman, on the other, he empathizes with the animals when exclaiming: 'what a day', and describing their merriment.

Since the story is set in France, which is described in great detail. The crocodile cries 'real tears' when the band plays the Marseillaise, and the use

of the word revolution immediately reminds us of the historical French Revolution. Since the book so obviously evolves around the power imbalance that the institutions of the circus creates between the people and the animals, it makes us wonder whether it promotes a posthuman interpretation of the famous motto liberty, equality, fraternity. Can we extend our moral community to include the (circus) animals?

Does the book offer the reader any real opportunities to rethink our relations with the animals we commonly use for entertainment purposes? How do the animals use their newly attained power? From the start, we recognize two sentiments among them. Babylas, the clever instigator of the revolution, turns out to be an unscrupulous leader who seeks revenge for the injustices done to him by the people. On the other side of the spectrum, we have Rosalie, the demure giraffe, who feels compassion for the humans who were, after all, always kind to her. When the other animals organize a feast, she goes to check on her human companions, and although she does not free them, she brings them some food. Rosalie, too, cannot resist the new power that freedom has brought her, and at night she sneaks into mademoiselle Caroline trailer:

She was very curious (like all giraffes), and she could not resist the temptation to try on Mademoiselle Caroline's hats. But the crocodile spied her through the window. "What are you doing?" he said. "Come out here, it is time for the show, and hurry up."

The show turns out to be a carnivalesque celebration of the animals' freedom. They now invent acts of their own. The show also includes a reversal of some of the animal's circus acts, with the humans now playing the animal parts, as in the example below:



Figure 8: Topsy Turvy Circus (1953)

This spread is followed by a mirror image of Brutus putting his head into Monsieur Augustin's mouth:



Figure 9: *Topsy Turvy Circus* (1953)

The moment that was a turning point in the story, namely, the statement that the lion was not happy with the way he was treated by Monsieur Augustin, is reversed in order to highlight the absurdity of the primary situation. It is up to the reader to decide if the Augustins got what they deserved for treating the animals as entertainment instead of subjects in their own right. However, the dominant perspective of Rosalie prevents the reader from siding with the animals unconditionally.

When the animals have finished their dinner, they discuss the future of the circus, and it is Rosalie who comes to inform the Augustins that the circus is moving to another town. She also suggests that there might be an opportunity to escape. Rosalie then sabotages the engine of the car *Babylas* is driving, which makes all the circus cars crash and makes him look like a bad driver. The other animals start questioning his leadership and decide to free the humans. The elephant motivates his choice as follows:

Every man to his trade! You are a crocodile and Monsieur Augustin is a circus man. Now I am going to let him out of his cage.

Monsieur Augustin, grateful to be free and well aware of the fact that he 'had not always been good to the animals', holds no grudge against them and

assumes his former position as circus director. The book ends when the Augustins enthusiastically thank Rosalie, and promise her to get her a hat with flower for her birthday.

When the animals overthrow the ‘natural’ anthropocentric order in a carnivalesque revolution, the elephant is the first to realize that this kind of revolution can only be a temporary state of affairs. Nothing essential about their living situation as circus animals – because that is still how they choose to define themselves - can be changed by it. What can be changed, however, is the attitude of their human owners. The temporary uprising is carnivalesque in the Bakhtinian sense: it has the power to undermine authority and can perhaps, in the long run, bring about change. For the time being, the animals are satisfied with their position as circus animals and they have no intention to overturn human society as a whole. It is significant that Monsieur Augustin, once he is liberated, responds with consideration for their plight and promises them to treat them more kindly in the future.

Whereas the animal uprising can be read as a critique of the way humans treat certain animals, Rosalie, who undermined the revolution, simultaneously mediates a message of interspecies love and compassion. She does not want to be disloyal to her animal friends, but she likewise loathes the idea of imprisoning the humans for whom she also feels loyalty, affection and respect.

Is this then a critique or a justification of the circus? The text remains ambiguous with respect to this question. Where the text is at risk of becoming conservative or anthropocentric, rather than affirming this, it steers the reader towards a more equivocal alternative. For example, the elephant’s statement that ‘every man to his trade’, can be read as a defense of a static, conservative stance on the animals’ place in the social hierarchy. However, addressing the crocodile as a ‘man’ undermines this reading. The elephant acknowledges difference without attaching a hierarchy to this difference. This, the reader may infer, was Monsieur Augustin’s greatest flaw: he knowingly mistreated the animals, assuming that his own sense of superiority functioned as a safeguard. By starting a revolution and turning the tables on the human characters, these animals remind Monsieur Augustin of the responsibility he has towards the ones he tames, to come back to the famous words of Saint Exupéry’s fox. They accept their position as circus animals, but do so with the proviso that Monsieur Augustin acknowledges their contributions and respects their integrity.

“Only you can prevent wildfires”: Smokey the Bear (1955) and Smokey Bear and the Campers (1961)

Domestication implies transformation, physically and behaviorally. The Little Golden Book adaptation of the story of Smokey Bear can be read as a

picture book representation of this idea. Both books are problematic texts, not in the least because of the entanglements of fiction and reality it displays. As some of the books discussed in the case study on horses, these two books have an interesting intertextual background. Smokey the Bear as a fictional character existed before the creation of these Little Golden Books, and was part of a campaign to prevent wildfires. The Smokey the Bear campaign was one of the most successful and longest running advertising campaigns in the history of American advertising. On the website smokeybear.com the public can find information on the history of the campaign and how Smokey became their mascot:

‘Created in 1944, the Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign is the longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history, educating generations of Americans about their role in preventing wildfires. As one of the world's most recognizable characters, Smokey's image is protected by U.S. federal law and is administered by the USDA Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters and the Ad Council. Despite the campaign's success over the years, wildfire prevention remains one of the most critical issues affecting our country. Smokey's message is as relevant and urgent today as it was in 1944.

Smokey's original catchphrase was "Smokey Says – Care Will Prevent 9 out of 10 Forest Fires." In 1947, it became "Remember... Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires." In 2001, it was again updated to its current version of "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" in response to a massive outbreak of wildfires in natural areas other than forests and to clarify that Smokey is promoting the prevention of unwanted and unplanned outdoor fires versus prescribed fires.’ So how exactly did Smokey Bear become associated with wildfire prevention?

The answer begins with World War II. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor. The following spring, Japanese submarines surfaced near the coast of Santa Barbara, California, and fired shells that exploded on an oil field, very close to the Los Padres National Forest. Americans were shocked that the war had come directly to the American mainland. Fear grew that more attacks would bring a disastrous loss of life and destruction of property. There was also a fear that incendiary shells exploding in the forests of the Pacific Coast would ignite numerous raging wildfires.

With experienced firefighters and other able-bodied men deployed in the war, communities had to deal with wildfires as best they could. Protection of forests became a matter of national importance, and a new idea was born. If people could be urged to be more careful, perhaps some of the fires could be prevented. To rally Americans to this cause, and convince them that it would help win the war, the Forest Service organized the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) program with the help of the War Advertising Council and the Association of State Foresters. Together, they created posters and slogans, including "Forest Fires Aid the Enemy," and "Our Carelessness, Their Secret Weapon."

In a stroke of luck for the cause, in 1942, forests and their animal inhabitants were celebrated in Walt Disney's wildly popular motion picture, "Bambi."

Disney allowed the CFFP program to use the film's characters on a 1944 poster. The "Bambi" poster was a success and proved the success of using an animal as a fire prevention symbol. However, Disney had only loaned the characters to the campaign for one year. The CFFP would need to find an animal symbol that would belong to them, and nothing seemed more fitting than the majestic, powerful (and also cute) bear.

On August 9, 1944, the creation of Smokey Bear was authorized by the Forest Service, and the first poster was delivered on October 10 by artist Albert Staehle. The poster depicted a bear pouring a bucket of water on a campfire. Smokey Bear soon became popular, and his image began appearing on more posters and cards. By 1952, Smokey Bear began to attract commercial interest. An Act of Congress passed which removed Smokey from the public domain and placed him under the control of the Secretary of Agriculture. The Act provided for the use of collected royalties and fees for continued wildfire prevention education.

Though he has already accomplished so much, Smokey's work is far from over. Wildfire prevention remains crucial, and he still needs your help. His catchphrase reflects your responsibility: Only you can prevent wildfires. Remember that this phrase is so much more than just a slogan: it's an important way to care for the world around you. (December 2016)

So by the time these Little Golden Books were published, the 'real' Smokey had already been a living mascot for a number of years. The website also informs us about the life of the 'real' Smokey, a bear cub who got injured in a wildfire in New Mexico in 1950. After his burns were treated, he was moved to the Washington Zoo, where he became the living mascot of the wildfire campaign. He was immensely popular with the public, and became even more so after the Junior Forest Ranger Program was developed in 1952, as the website of the SDDA informs us:

'This activity encouraged children throughout the Nation to write to Smokey Bear expressing their interest in fire prevention. In reply they would receive a Junior Forest Ranger Kit and other fire prevention materials. By 1965, the volume of mail for this activity was so high that Smokey Bear received his own Zip Code – 20252. The program was recently redesigned to keep pace with state-of-the-art educational techniques'

(<http://na.fs.fed.us/ceredirect/jfr/>).

When Smokey died in 1976, the Washington post even published a full obituary. Similar to J. Fred Muggs, Smokey is an animal who had reached celebrity status. In his case, the purpose was not to entertain television viewers, but mainly to embody the idea of wildfire prevention. The little injured, orphaned bear cub is a victim of a real wildfire, and as such he personifies the suffering of the animals that survive these events.



Figure 10: The 'real Smokey' in the Washington Zoo. (Smokeybear.com, December 2016)

The front matter of the Little Golden Book adaptation informs the reader that:

Ever since his rescue from a raging forest fire, Smokey the Bear has been a symbol of our national effort to fight the terrible destruction of our woodlands by fire. The publishers are proud to present Smokey's story as a Little Golden Book. They hope that this book will help Smokey in his work. It has the official approval of the State Foresters and of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As this text indicates, his role in the advertising campaign around forest fire prevention translates comfortably to the Little Golden Book aesthetics. It is a message that appeals to a white, middle class readership, but with a bear cub as a symbol for a 'national effort to fight the terrible destruction of our woodlands', the story reinforces a sense of nationalism that is seemingly independent of class and race.

Written by Jane Werner and illustrated by Richard Scarry, the 1955 Golden Book adaptation stays close to 'real' Smokey's story, as the front matter points out:

It was a bright May morning in the mountain forest of New Mexico. Bear Cub followed his mother out into the sunshine. He sniffed the hot, dry, pine-smelling air.

So the Golden Book starts. When mother bear teaches her cub about survival in the forest, her most important piece of advice is: 'when danger threatens, climb a tree.' When a forest fire breaks out and Bear Cub, which is Smokey's name before he is adopted by humans, gets separated from his

mother in the chaos and confusion, he remembers her advice and climbs a tree where he waits for danger to subside. Hours later, he finds himself alone and injured in a now desolate landscape. It is at that moment that a friendly Ranger discovers him and takes him to his home to nurse him back to health. When he has recovered, it is time to think about his future, and seeing how Smokey enjoys the company of the ranger's little daughter, the state warden contemplates that it would be good for other children to meet Smokey and learn of his story. The illustration accompanying this text shows how the bear cub puts his ranger's hat on his head, and we also see the other familiar attributes that makes up the Smokey Bear mascot: the blue jeans, shovel and backpack. In the Little Golden Book version, the real Smokey is thus presented as identical to the mascot.

Because the little bear cub's story fitted the Smokey Bear campaign so well it was easy to reverse the order of events and to allow the bear cub to become the origin of the mascot. The Little Golden Book adaptation shows the transformation of this anonymous bear cub to mascot. This transformation is captured on three levels, first by the evolution of his name from the generic 'Bear Cub' to the more specific 'Smokey' to the iconic 'Smokey the Bear'. The transformation of the name goes hand in hand with physical transformations, characterized by an increase in anthropomorphism. Where the first illustration depicts him walking on all fours in the woods beside his mother, the final pages show him as a teacher, dressed and bipedal, handling tools and demonstrating how to put out fires.

The first transformation is described as follows:

Suddenly he heard a friendly voice. It was a fire-fighting forest ranger. The ranger reached up and took Bear Cub into his arms. "What is your name, fellow – Smokey?" From then on it was.

The bear cub, even though he has been renamed, is at this point still essentially a bear, and the way he sees the world is described from a bear-like perspective:

Though Smokey could not understand the words, he knew the voice was kind. He knew the water from the ranger's canteen felt wet and cool in his dry throat. He knew the food from the ranger's pack tasted fine, and felt just fine in his hollow insides. He knew the salve and bandages made his burned paws feel good again.

Smokey's perception of events and experiences is still an animal's perspective. He lacks the ability to consciously reflect on what is happening to him, but the fact that it feels good convinces him that it is in his best interest. The real transformation from wild animal to domesticated, and on top of that hu-

manized animal is initiated when the ranger takes him home and Smokey becomes a member of their family: ‘He likes to sit with the family and play with their little girl’.

Visually, this transformation is indicated by the image of Smokey, standing on two legs, holding a toy bear in his paws. The ranger’s daughter is holding an adult toy bear on her lap. This scene, reminiscent of the opening scene where Smokey and his mother were a family unit, indicates that he has found a new family. But this situation does not last long, as we see already when we turn the page. The illustration shows Smokey donning his iconic attributes: ranger’s hat, blue jeans, shovel and backpack. This reveals the final stage of Smokey’s transformation, which is motivated by the humans who are now in charge of Smokey’s fate:

“I wish every boy and girl could meet Smokey,” said the State Game Warden. “He’d teach them how extra important it is to be careful of fires in the woods.” “Good idea!” said another. “The best place for him to meet boys and girls is in a zoo.”

The next page shows him getting off an airplane and walking away, to his final destination: the National Zoo in Washington D.C. In the background we see reporters photographing him, which fits his status as a celebrity. The Golden Book fictionalization of Smokey’s transformation from victim to teacher and role model gradually introduced Smokey as an agent and an actor in his own story – which was denied to the real Smokey. The illustration that accompanies the words of the State Game Warden shows how Smokey is getting dressed. It pictures an active, independent, content looking Smokey, which could indicate that the reader is invited to interpret this as Smokey expressing his consent with the decision mentioned in the text. In this story, the idea of animal agency is used to defend an anthropocentric message. By depicting the animal as an active, consenting agent, it justifies the fact that some animals are used for entertainment or promotional purposes.

Children are implicated in this act when they are asked to subscribe to the message that the story promotes about the prevention of wildfires. The final five pages contain instruction for the readers on how to prevent forest fires, as well as an encouragement to join the ‘Junior Forest Rangers:

He likes to have them [his visitors at the zoo] join his Junior Forest Rangers, to help him prevent terrible forest fires, like the one that destroyed his home. These are their easy rules: Remind you parents to... Break matches in two. When they can hold the burned end between their fingers, no fire is left. Crush out smokes, then use the ash tray. Drown camp fires, then stir the ashes to make sure they are out. Never burn grass, brush or trash on windy days. When they do burn it, they should have plenty of help.

The final page gives the reader practical information on how they themselves can join the Forest Rangers:

If you would like to be a Junior Forest Ranger, too, and help your friend Smokey the Bear, send a post card to Smokey the Bear Headquarters, Washington 25, D.C., and you will receive a membership card.

This is another example of how *Smokey the Bear* effectively blurs the line between fiction, advertising and propaganda. From its inception, the Smokey Bear campaign played into nationalistic sentiments. The landscape and the wild animals were depicted as needing protection - also indirectly from foreign enemies.



Figure 11: Poster from the 1943 campaign



Figure 12: The Disney characters in 1944



Figure 13: The first poster featuring the character of Smokey the Bear, 1944.

The website gives its visitors access to historical material, educational material and information about naturally occurring wildfires. There is information about the organization's 'Smokey Bear Awards', designed for:

people or organizations that provide sustained, outstanding service, with significant program impact, in the wildfire prevention arena. Honorees demonstrate innovation, creativity, commitment and passion for wildfire prevention. (Smokeybear.com, December 2016)

We also find that Smokey now has his own Twitter and Facebook accounts. Due to the high visibility in various media (historically, there have been Smokey ads on the radio, posters, television, children's songs, cartoons, stamps, reading material, and now also internet and social media), the slogan 'Only you can prevent wildfires', has become ubiquitous. Generations of children have grown up with the idea that forest fires are in itself a destructive force. However, the policy to prevent as many forest fires as possible may have the opposite effect. Wildfires are not always destructive, even if they are caused by man. They may even be necessary to keep the landscape as we know it in its current state, since certain landscapes we now consider pristine have evolved in pace with (manmade) wildfires.

Sometimes, as Budiansky points out in *Nature's Keepers: The new science of Nature Management* (1995), landscapes that we assume to predate human presence turn out to be highly influenced by us. Preventing wildfires at all cost can have the opposite effect: when we allow biomass to accumulate it provides fuel for wildfires. When it accumulates over a number of years, the resulting fires are much more devastating than they would otherwise have been.

The controversy surrounding wildfire prevention is described by Budiansky as one of the epic misinterpretations of ecological data of our times. According to Budiansky, the simplified narrative of campaigns such as this one provides the reader with misinformation rather than scientific facts. He explicitly mentions the Smokey campaign as an example of such a failure, and even indicates that it was responsible for a delay in the development of sustainable wildfire prevention (78, 231). This argument is part of Budiansky's thesis that nature, as such, cannot be seen as separate from human beings, and vice versa. We shape nature as much as we are shaped by it, and to deny that nature is not a pristine, untouched state is to deny our own biology and our own role as an integral part of nature. The use of the real Smokey in his story is effectively reinforcing a nature-culture dichotomy.

The image of the anthropomorphized animal is used to reinforce the message that mankind is not a part of nature, but rather a threat to a pristine land. When the 'real Smokey' was introduced to the campaign, he became entangled in a web of meanings, relationships and messages that determined the course of his life. Becoming more valuable as a 'symbol of our national effort to fight the terrible destruction of our woodlands by fire' than as an individual, the decision to send him to the Washington Zoo, where he would enjoy maximum exposure to the target audience, may not have been in the animal's best interest. His symbolic function was foregrounded at the expense of his individual needs. We may never know whether he could have been released after his rehabilitation.

Another problematic aspect that a discussion of this book gives rise to is the issue of the responsibility of the child in conservation efforts. Positioning the child as the one who is ultimately responsible for adult behavior is to

sidestep the problem of political responsibility in favor of personal responsibility. It also reinforces a power imbalance that is always already present in picture books which have such an outspoken message. Including the anthropomorphized animal in this process masks the axis of power and feeds on the empathy of the reader for the animal. The use of anthropomorphized animals within this context highlights once again how children's literature reflects and reinforces an adult ideology. As Zornado writes in his introduction to *Inventing the Child* (2013):

Children's literature is a part of a montage of adult cultural practices that, along with child-rearing pedagogies, speaks to the cultural context that gives to adult authors and children's texts and so to a reproduction of unconscious relational practices bent on exercising and justifying adult power over the child. (xviii)

The anthropomorphized animals - and by extension and through entanglement this also goes for the 'real Smokey' - are framed to spread an anthropocentric message that says that humans are not part of nature. They also mask the adult ideology that allows adult humans to evade their responsibility and project it instead on future generations. This is exemplified in the second Little Golden Book adaptation of a Smokey Bear story.

Smokey's transformation continues and takes on a different form in another Little Golden Book: *Smokey Bear and the Campers*, published in 1961. This story has human protagonists: the Swift family, a nuclear family consisting of mother, father and two children, who go on a camping trip. The children, Ernest and his younger sister Mary, are suburban, middle class children who have a clear interest in camping, bird watching and fishing. At the end of their first day of camping, Smokey Bear is introduced:

That night, as the Swift family slept in their warm sleeping bags, animals from all over the forest came to see their visitors. Smokey Bear, Head Fire Warden of all woods, stopped by to make sure that the Swift's campfire was out. And it was, for Mr. Swift had poured water on it and buried the ashes where it had been. Mr. Swift was a good camper.

The illustration shows the family's tent against a dark forest background, in which seven pairs of yellow eyes light up. In front of the tent we see Smokey Bear, bending forward to inspect the fireplace, leaning on his shovel. He is wearing his famous ranger's hat and blue jeans, but as opposed to his depiction in *Smokey the Bear*, he is an adult now. Smokey has grown up, has left his enclosure in the Washington Zoo and has found employment as a fire warden. This distances him not only from his previous literary representation, but also from the little orphaned bear cub that was found in the woods of New Mexico.

Throughout this book, Smokey is thoroughly anthropomorphized. This represents a new phase in the life of the icon: one where he is an adult bear,

living and acting independently within the context of forest fire prevention. That this book is intended to be promotional material in the Forest Service's campaign can be deduced from the front matter, which states that this book is:

Authorized and approved by the Association of State Foresters and by the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, in Cooperation with the Advertising Council, Inc.

The book is profoundly didactic in nature, as the sentence 'Mr. Swift was a good camper', already indicates. The book is brimming with hints and instructions for the child reader to pick up on and incorporate. These instructions are explicitly patronizing at times, for example, when the children get lost and are found by Smokey, he responds by saying: 'I'll bet that's because you didn't listen to your father'. More than in *Smokey the Bear*, this book attempts to inculcate a sense of responsibility in the child reader, but this goes hand in hand with a firm and unyielding adult dominance. Smokey has become the representative of adult authority, as he himself describes his duties as follows:

"My job is to protect the forest against careless people," said Smokey. "I sniff the air for smoke, climb trees to look out for forest fires and visit campsites to be sure that campers have put their fires out. It's a big job for one bear. But children like you can help me."

Once again, we see how adult human responsibility is obscured by the use of anthropomorphism: it is up to one bear and the children to mind the forests and wild places. Because he is a wild animal, Smokey can become a spokesperson for the protection of wild places. But his domestication that is reflected in his transformation provides a rationale for his claim on moral authority.

These three stories about animals that belong to species that are not domesticated but are nonetheless asked to function in human society shows us the many faces of anthropomorphism. The entertainment industry and organizations such as the Advertising Council have shared objectives when they use animals to further their messages: to engender empathy and captivate the attention of (young) audiences. Emotional engagement can be a start of cross-species compassion, as in *Topsy Turvy Circus*, which can be read as an alternative, exploring the power imbalance that lies at the core of the animal entertainment industry.

But it can also mask questionable ideological purposes. The fictionalization of animal celebrities has an added value in this process because it allows for a higher degree of anthropomorphism. By transforming them into characters in the picture book, anthropomorphizing them becomes less problematic. The real animals that are implicated by these stories become entangled in a

web of symbolical meanings that does influence their daily lives. In Smokey Bear's case, anthropomorphism's prime function can be to highlight the similarities between human and animal, and stress the importance of imitating the good example set by the animal. Simultaneously, this naturalizes the conservation effort – which, as we have seen, is not always in the ecosystem's best interest.

Chapter 3: Killing, hunting and eating anthropomorphized animals⁵

‘Today is the day I will slaughter my pet and eat her.’
‘I am a predator by nature, so it is perfectly alright for me to kill for fun.’
‘It is permissible to hunt and eat your friends if you are hungry.’

To most of us, these statements sound quite absurd. And in a sense, they are, because for those of us who live in Western cultures, they contradict our basic assumptions about moral behavior and decision making. We do not eat our pets. In fact, one of our core conceptions of pethood, as we have seen in Chapter 1, includes that a pet cannot be classified as a food item. Neither do we hunt and kill our human friends, and consuming their flesh would immediately qualify as cannibalism. Even mentioning such things is borderline taboo. However, in many picture books with anthropomorphized protagonists these dilemmas become very real, and they demand real answers. In picture books that depict societies that resemble human societies, but are inhabited by animals, the moral justification of the phenomenon of predation becomes interesting, and anthropomorphism plays a role in this. In this chapter I focus on the moral questions and dilemmas that are raised by the representations of such activities as the hunting, killing and eating of animals. Often, these violent events are represented and justified by relying on a humanist discourse, and both visual and verbal anthropomorphism play an important part in the characters’ process of decision making.

Again, the Little Golden Books make for interesting source material because they are merchandise books. Acts of violence are commonly framed within not only a humanist, speciesist discourse, but also mediate a middle class, capitalist ideology. The books I will discuss here highlight various problematic aspects of the representation of predation in anthropomorphic animal characters and interrogate the validity of the human-animal binary. We will see that anthropomorphism almost always serves two purposes: depicting animals with different degrees of anthropomorphism can justify violence, yet anthropomorphism also presents the reader with the subtleties of species identity - rather than species difference - that undermine this justifi-

⁵ Parts of this chapter appeared in: *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji/Issues in Early Education* 12/3(34), 48-57

cation. Anthropomorphism, as we have already seen in the previous chapters, consists of a complex set of verbal and visual practices and within this choreography, the existence of animal subjectivity and agency often remain viable alternatives.

The characters in the case study explored in this chapter cover a range of different species. On the one hand, we find apex predators, animals that are traditionally considered to be meat eaters par excellence. In the picture books, these animals are placed in situations where they are expected to make a moral decision that involves the killing or consumption of other animals. In some cases, the violence is justified by relying on the notion of the ‘naturalness’ of the act, the biological necessity that makes these specific animals kill to survive. Yet their anthropomorphism poses a problem: if they are humanlike in some respects, the argument of the ‘natural born killer’ becomes questionable.

Especially when they are endowed with moral agency and the intellectual capacity to explore other alternatives. For this reason, these picture books can be considered arenas of ethical significance. They show how species membership can be used as an argument for denying or allowing certain animals access to the moral community of the dominant species. Identifying the narrative and visual strategies that allow the naturalization of species difference and hierarchy is a first step towards a re-evaluation of the category of species and the function of anthropomorphism in popular picture books. This chapter is an attempt to take a closer look at the nature-culture and human-animal dichotomies active within the stories in order to reveal the social hierarchies that are built on them.

The problems of hunting, killing and meat eating in children’s literature

As a contrast to stories that center around predators, this chapter also considers the perspective of prey animals and farm animals who are bred for (human) consumption or find themselves at risk of being eaten. It is not uncommon that, within an all-animal fictional world, prey animals object to being cast as the victim. The fictional farm animals, in this case pigs in *Gaston and Josephine*, offer a particular challenge, since they bear witness to our ambiguous relationship with the animals we exploit in agribusiness. There is a significant discrepancy between the depiction of them within a farm context, where their purpose is to provide products for human consumption, and the narrative function they have in relation to the empathy we would like young

children to develop for them. The reality of most families, where meat eating is still common practice, conflicts with the values that are expressed within the literary context of the picture book. Unraveling the complexities of these stories will therefore also help us to better understand the background of our dinner table politics. Annie Potts writes that:

While there is a shared general meat culture across industrialized nations—one which maintains the invisible belief system that meat is normal, natural, necessary and nice (known as the 4Ns) (Piazza et al 2015)—different countries, and even places within the same country, will have their own forms of meat culture reflecting regional and social differences such as the ways in which nonhuman species (especially those categorized as killable and edible) are understood and treated. (20)

Because our habits and their underlying values surrounding the killing and eating of animals are to a large extent culturally determined, the way any individual picture book represents such events is highly contextual. Who can eat what/whom and under which circumstances is dictated by tacit, but unbending cultural conventions. Yet there is a tendency to naturalize these conventions, and one of the ways this happens is through the use of different degrees of visual and verbal anthropomorphism. Meat eating takes place within a social framework that is especially culturally specific.

“For their efforts at settling the west”, Willard (2006, 108) says, “the country rewarded frontiersmen with the myth of the cowboy, a lone hero who took on Indians, wild animals, and the desert heat to build a land suitable for producing what would become America’s meal mainstay: beef”. Thus, American meat culture is fundamentally associated with (and invested in) capitalism, consumerism and the notion of free will, a perspective that “positions all non-human life as a potential resource” (116). (Cited in Potts, 20)

The consumption of meat is surrounded by taboos, mostly connected to which species and which parts of the animal are deemed acceptable food items. In Western countries, the consumption of cat and dog meat is a taboo because of their status as pets. Other animals, such as insects and amphibians, are generally considered dirty.

These taboos can be even more country or region specific, as illustrated by the 2013 horse meat scandal, where the discovery of horse meat in product that were claimed to consist of beef led to public horror and outrage. Horse meat, although widely consumed in large parts of Europe, is considered an ‘unethical’ food choice in countries such as Sweden and the United Kingdom. The scandal clearly illustrates how consuming a certain species that is not generally considered to be a food source can evoke highly emotional reactions. The media referred to the use of horse meat as a ‘food safety issue’ with connections to ‘criminal trade’. The public outrage at the discovery of horse meat in products and the subsequent panic reactions would not

have been as pronounced if the meat used in these product had been pork or chicken instead of beef. An important factor in this scandal was that people were unaware of what they were consuming. However, as Carol Adams, Annie Potts and others have demonstrated, unawareness and invisibility are central concerns in a society that exploits animals on an industrial scale. Adams explains her concept of the absent referent in the preface to the tenth edition of *Sexual Politics of Meat* (2010) as:

Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. The “absent referent” is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the absent referent is to keep our “meat” separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep the “moo” or “cluck” or “baa” away from the meat, to keep something from being seen as having been someone. Once the existence of meat is disconnected from the existence of an animal who was killed to become that “meat,” meat becomes unanchored by its original referent (the animal), becoming instead a free-floating image, used often to reflect women’s status as well as animals’. Animals are the absent referent in the act of meat eating; they also become the absent referent in images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable. (13)

The process that transforms the live animal into a food item is surrounded by taboos and implicit rules. Even slaughterhouse employees don’t experience this process from beginning to end. The mechanization of much of the actual killing and disarticulation coupled with the conveyor belt system ensure that they only witness part of the process, and are therefore ‘spared’ from seeing the entire transformation. But this also desensitizes employees which makes them immune to the violence and suffering they witness on a daily basis.

Barbara Noske writes how ‘meatworkers are aware of the desensitizing nature of slaughterhouse work’ (28), and that they actively convince themselves to hate the animals they slaughter to make the work they do more bearable. In addition to the mental damage this work leaves them with, there is also a high rate of injuries and accidents among slaughterhouse employees. (Noske, 29). The strategies used by the advocates of the meat industry to legitimize the violence against both animals and employees build upon the notion that there exists a qualitative difference between humans and animals, and between various groups of humans. In order to overcome the inequality between groups of humans, we need to start by erasing the qualitative difference between humans and animals. Noske writes:

To adopt a non-exploitative, inter-subjective attitude towards one’s fellow human whilst continuing to approach animals as objects, is indefensible. Animal exploitation cannot be tolerated without damaging the principle of inter-subjectivity. Yet the basic Western attitude towards animals as well as other aspects of nature remains to a large degree that of a subject dealing with a natural object or resource. (38-39)

Even though the exploitation and objectification of animals in order to make them killable is a common feature in Western societies, it still causes discomfort among its members. A coping strategy to legitimize the object status of the animal and to disguise the connection between the living animal and the meat on the plate is located on the level of linguistics. Many languages have created linguistic distinctions between the live animal and their flesh that is intended for human consumption. The English language uses for example different terms for a cow and beef, sheep and mutton, calf and veal, pig and pork. This linguistic separation of the living animal and the meat on the plate helps create a barrier between the animal as a living, sentient being and the dead animal made fit for consumption.

This movement of concealing the animal origins of food seems to be linked to a specific context: the industrialization of the whole process of transforming animals into food. Hunters, for example, do not conceal the origins of their quarry but take pride in the fact that they have succeeded to track and kill the animal. This death is in many contexts represented as a dignified death for the animal in question, and hunting is represented as a respectful way of ending a life. The fact that this animal is targeted as an individual by the hunter contributes to this idea. The animals that are bred within bio-industry disappear into the masses when they are alive, and into the anonymity of the conveyor belt system after their death.

Once the animal has become meat and all connections with the living animal have been severed, both the hunter's quarry and the anonymous meat provider are transformed by culture into edible and inedible parts. Because not the entire animal is deemed fit to end up as dinner. Depending on the culture, certain body parts are not considered food, but waste. Intestines and certain organs, for example, although consumed by some people, are often frowned upon or considered unhealthy. The preparation of meat is also subject to society's scrutiny: most meat tends to be consumed in a cooked state. In Western cultures, the consumption of raw meat and fish can be suspicious, and is often considered uncivilized and/or unhealthy.

Meat also has a function as a cultural code relating to social status. (See Cudworth, 2011) This goes for eating meat in general, but in addition, there are certain types of animals that give their consumer added social status: lobster, oysters and game are examples of this. Interestingly, these are not the type of foods we encounter in the Little Golden Books. One of the reasons may be that they are not very common and children are less likely to recognize them, but on another level, the kinds of meat that are represented are exemplary of a middle class diet.

The (in)visibility of the animal and the killing process, the act of renaming and the sanitation of meat by hiding its animal origins are all indicative of the profound unease people experience regarding the industrialization of agriculture and slaughter. The suggestion of many animal rights movements, such as PETA, is that if people were to recognize the living animal in the

meat on their plate, they would not be (as) willing to consume it. Obscuring the violent mechanisms of the bio-industry and slaughterhouses makes it possible to avoid difficult conversations, especially between parents and children. Typically, children are often offered meat that does not resemble the animal it came from. Fish fingers, chicken nuggets and sausages are good examples.

Meat eating is a practice that increases globally, mainly due to technological developments that allow us to produce more and cheaper meat products than ever before. Annie Potts writes about the complex history of what she refers to as 'meat culture':

The history of creating contemporary 21st century 'meat culture' is an industrial history that blends agricultural science and technologization with mass production, vertical integration production systems with globalized economies, and the hyper-stimulation of consumer demand emblemized by the rise of suburban fast food outlets since the 1950s. Colossal shifts have occurred over the last half century with respect to the breeding, farming, slaughter and consumption of animals. (1)

Those shifts are not always mirrored in picture books for a young readership. Whenever farms are depicted in the Little Golden Books, they are portrayed as idyllic, bucolic spaces where humans and animals live together harmoniously. The fact that many of the animals are kept for their meat is not mentioned. Instead, these stories tend to focus on farmers feeding the animals in return for their labor. If the animals are providing milk or eggs, this is mostly depicted as a voluntary act, an expression of gratitude towards the farmer who provides them with food and a home. However, underlying these stories is a deeply embedded ideology that connects meat with fundamental cultural values. Annie Potts explains:

In all human cultures it is also symbolic: in the Western context it signifies important ideas about gender (Adams 2010, Parry 2010, Potts and Parry 2010, Hovorka 2012), class and taste (Potts and White 2008), socioeconomic position (Galobardes et al 2001), geographical and economic factors (Hovorka 2008). Its acceptance is facilitated by beliefs about humans' right to dominate nature, including the bodies of animals and their reproductive lives (Luke 2007, Adams 2010, Joy 2010). (18-19)

In parallel with the strict codes surrounding slaughter and meat consumption, the literary conventions regarding the representation of meat and food more generally, are quite rigid. Since food has such a deeply rooted cultural significance, their representation is always charged:

Food events are always significant, in reality as well as in fiction. They reveal the fundamental preoccupations, ideas and beliefs of society. (Daniel, 2006: 1)

In her discussion of eating practices in children's books, Carolyn Daniel emphasizes the strong socializing function of mealtimes: it is at such times that young children learn what is expected of them if they want to qualify as full members of their culture. Because, to begin with, they are not: as uncultured little savages, Western culture tends to side them with animals. The reason food can have this socializing function, according to Daniel, is because it is culturally specific: what is classified as 'good to eat' or taboo is culturally determined. There are rules that state what can be eaten and by whom, when and how much. And there are consequences for transgressing these rules. (Daniel, 2006: 12)

The adage 'You are what you eat' seems to be true in many children's books, where food is often used as a metaphor for human behavior. In fiction, it is not unusual that we can recognize morally corrupt characters by their transgressive eating habits. This includes the eating of non-foods, such as, in Western culture: insects, dog meat, or contaminated foods. Consequently, otherness can be signaled through food choices. The coding of food can therefore promote racism, imperialism as well as speciesism. (Daniel: 2006) So how does this apply to anthropomorphic animals who eat other animals? In other words: what are the lessons children may learn from seeing animals eat, or attempting to eat, other animals in picture books? When we focus on anthropomorphized characters there appears to be a very fine line between norm and transgression, simply eating meat and cannibalism, and this reveals some fundamental societal tensions regarding the justification of meat eating.

Food is 'a cultural signifier, not only the product of a culture but one that gives shape to the mentalités that structure thought and expression'. (Keeling and Pollard: 4) As such, food is also important in literature:

If food is fundamental to life and a substance upon which civilizations and cultures have built themselves, then food is also fundamental to the imagination and the imaginary arts. (5)

Daniel emphasizes that it is not just about what is eaten in children's literature, but more importantly, about whom is eaten. This is especially pertinent in case of anthropomorphized animals, as we will see. Teaching children food rules through literature has a socializing effect:

As far as adult culture is concerned, children must internalize very precise rules about how to maintain a "clean and proper" body, what to relegate to abjection, and how to perform properly in social situations. Children must also learn all sorts of rules about food and eating. Most important – they must know who eats whom. Food events in children's literature are clearly intended to teach children how to be human. (2006:12)

However, the answer to how one can be human is not the same for everyone, and not every person is equally human. Because the food we eat and how we eat it is so culturally specific, it can easily be used to other certain groups of people whose habits differ from our own. The same goes for how animals are treated in the context of the hunt.

Postcolonial readings of hunting and eating animals emphasize their function with respect to dominant and marginalized cultures. Animals in postcolonial readings can be understood in broadly two ways. They can represent or be the colonial other, or they can be vehicles for reinforcing colonial attitudes. Nathalie op de Beek writes:

The implied reader of an animal story might answer the text's invitation solely on the basis of the animal character's nonhuman status. This allows for a foreign setting often populated by people judged as different from the text's likeliest audience. International stories frequently introduce a sympathetic animal protagonist in mortal danger from racialized or nationalized humans, and the reader's affiliation lies with the hero rather than with the antagonists. (101)

She addresses how picture books such as *Curious George* (1941), which has a monkey as its protagonist, 'affiliate human, especially child, physiognomy with an animal other or associate an animal with the human ethnic group in its habitat.' (102) In the following case study we will see how the early Little Golden Books indeed suggest a domestic implied reader, thereby excluding others. Later Little Golden Books do attempt to be more inclusive by narrating animal stories from around the globe, but even though this highlights cultural diversity, the problem remains that the implied reader hasn't changed. The representation and significance of animals, especially exotic animals in their 'proper' habitats, still contributes to a worldview in which the other is exotic. She cannot be your neighbor, let alone your equal. By depicting exotic animals as 'belonging' somewhere else, and positioning the implied reader 'at home' in the US, the schisms between self and other is reinforced. Op de Beek writes that:

In many ways, popular picture books organize a cultural imperialist point of view, naturalize middle-class whiteness, and compartmentalize populations by picturing Indians in India, Africans in Africa, nonwhites as the underclass and so on. (116)

Because readers are trained to order animals in distinct categories according to species, and because these species are often depicted in their 'natural' habitat, coupling a certain kind of animal to a certain kind of environment is naturalized. Readers start learning this from an early age, and as we have seen, this categorization is closely tied to the acquisition of reading skills. Reading careers often start with ABC-books, primers, etc., linking words with animals. Readers are also used to reading animals metaphorically (for

example through fables). It is for reasons such as this that animal representations can so easily become vehicles for the reproduction of cultural imperialism. The following case study will demonstrate the mechanisms that allow the text to achieve this.

Case study 5: Anthropomorphism's function in the representation of predation

Hunting, killing and meat consumption in Pierre Bear

In *Pierre Bear* (Patsy and Richard Scarry, 1954) hunting, killing and eating other animals is a fairly unsentimental matter. On the contrary: it is described in positive, matter of fact terms. The answer to our question concerning which animals can be classified as food seems to be: any animal who is not a bear is a potential prey. The text does not call into question whether these acts of violence against other animals are ethically justified. On the level of the images, however, we find limited room for the reader to develop empathy with the prey animals. And empathy, as we will see later on, can be a starting point for ethical consideration.

The story essentially evolves around the sequence of hunting, killing and eating of other animals by protagonist Pierre Bear, whom we can see dressed in a trapper outfit, making a living on his own in the Canadian wilderness. The text tells us that 'when Pierre wanted a fish supper, he went fishing, all alone'. When his cupboard is empty, he hunts for moose, and when he needs a new coat, he hunts for seals. The activity of hunting permeates the entire book and serves as a catalyzer for the action.

On the level of the images, hunting is equally omnipresent. From the cover, where Pierre and his son are depicted sporting rifles, to the house's interior that is decorated with hunting trophies, to the furs that Pierre uses for a blanket, to the food he cooks. Hunting is at the very center of Pierre's existence, and throughout the book, this is described as a self-evident, honorable, even civilizing, activity. For a picture book aimed at a fairly young readership, this level of pervasiveness of acts of violence is relatively unusual. Yet the narrative makes it appear unproblematic. How does this happen? Compared to other wild animals, bears occupy a special position within human cultures. Through the ages, and through different narratives, people have expressed their wonder at the similarities between bears and people.

Like humans, the seven bear species that currently exist inhabit all continents except Antarctica. Their diet resembles that of humans: except for the polar bear and the panda, most bears are omnivores with a diverse diet consisting of fruit, vegetables, grasses, insects and meat. In pre-agricultural societies, we can imagine how bear and human shared and occasionally competed for the same food sources.

In some cultures, bears have become part of myths and stories of origin – many of which emphasize the connection between bears and humans by referring to interspecies couplings. Robert Bieder describes in his book *Bear* (2005), how these stories, that can be found in the cultures of the Native American and Scandinavian peoples, acknowledge the kinship between two species. As human ways of life changed, so did the function of the bear in the stories told within their cultures. Bieder writes how changes in human society lead cultures to reimagine the bear: the new stories testify how kinship bonds were broken when human society entered the age of agriculture:

As hunter gatherers gave way to agriculturalists, the image of the bear in stories changed. Of course, in pre-agricultural times, narrators often took liberties in presenting tales. Depending on the context in which the tale was told, the story might alter slightly but the symbolic meaning of the bear remained constant. This all changed, however, in a new world devoted to herding and agriculture. The bear became seen as an impediment to progress and was desacralized, made to represent an ogre or a fool, and marked for destruction. (...) Post-agricultural tales generally represent bears in negative terms that applaud their disappearance. It is only now, when bears are marginalized and pose no threat to common daily life, that they have been invested with a gentler demeanour. (70-71)

In children's stories, according to Bieder, the image that is often mediated nowadays is that of a clumsy, but good-natured creature. (71) Winnie-the-Pooh is an excellent example of this friendly, chubby 'new' bear. Bieder traces the anthropomorphic representation of bears in children's literature back to the hugely popular story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, first published in London in 1837. (121). According to Bieder, this new anthropomorphic image arose as a reaction to a changing landscape in the United States. He describes how the disappearance of the American wilderness and the wild bear lead to a 'repackaging' of the bear:

The new image engendered a vision of bears as fuzzy creatures with rotund bodies suggestive more of fat than muscle, walking on hind legs, speaking European languages, and possessing a foreshortened humanoid face with a smiling demeanour and expressive eyes. (122)

Pierre Bear partly follows this pattern, but even though the images depicted him as a chubby, kind fellow, his demeanor is not in the least of the good-na-

tured, harmless variety. The illustrations may give him the rotund, furry, neotenous look that had become expected of illustrations of bears in children's picture books, but in the text he is described as a cunning, calculating hunter. This ambiguity that is so typical for how we think and feel about bears is also highlighted by Lauren Harding (2014).

In an ethnographic study Harding explores the attitudes of inhabitants of the Canadian Rockies towards the presence of bears in national parks. In her article 'What Good is a Bear to Society' (2014), she describes the multi-layered, often contradicting emotions and attitudes that the Canadian bears evoke among the visitors and local population. She writes:

Bears are troubling creatures, not only because of the fear they evoke, but also because bears inhabit an uncertain space, both metaphorically and physically, that forces us to question not only their place, but our place, in the natural world. (178)

Even today, when bear habitat has diminished, bears have largely disappeared from human urban territory, and encounters with bears are (in most places) becoming rare, they retain their symbolic function. The interviews revealed how many people saw the presence of bears as a defining characteristic of 'wilderness'. (176) And in their discussions with Harding it became clear that the bears symbolized not only wilderness, but also invited people to reflect on their 'attitudes towards nature, civilization, wilderness, and their own place in the environment' (177). With bears provoking such powerful reactions, we can understand the appeal they have on writers and illustrators. They are a charismatic species as defined by Lorimer as the 'popular appeal' of a species and 'the features of a particular organism of ecological process that configure its perception and subsequent evaluation' (39). However, a species' charisma is not necessarily positive, but may be different for different people. For Harding:

The bear teeters on the brink between human and nonhuman animal, civilization and wilderness, both metaphorically and behaviorally. Its behavior, habitat, and physiology, are uncannily humanlike. (178)

This troubling status is intensified in a picture book story such as *Pierre Bear*, where the protagonists are such obvious human-animal confections. The story accentuates acts of violence that are more typical for human beings than for bears. Yet it is the animal form that allows this violence to take place unquestioned. Playing on the image of the bear as a carnivore, the bear form of the protagonist is used as an excuse for hunting and killing other animals, with whom the anthropomorphic bears have less in common than with human beings. Although 'the carnivorous portion of the bear diet consists primarily of carrion.' (Harding, 179), Pierre is described as an avid hunter.

In this respect he is much more humanlike than bearlike – even though it is his bear nature that excuses the violence.

The depiction of Pierre Bear in the illustrations is also indebted to that famous bear-shaped toy, the teddy bear. According to Forrest, Goldman and Emmison (2005), the teddy bear does not ‘attempt to penetrate the impenetrable otherness of beardom’. Instead, animal representations in the shape of toys ‘function as disguised humans, symbols that obliquely reference ourselves.’ (142-143) This is one of the functions of the humanizing of the bear family in *Pierre Bear*: the anthropomorphism of the bears is intended to comfort the reader, and to recast as innocent the acts of brutal violence against other animals. Here, the nostalgic aspect that is so characteristic of the Little Golden Book series coincides with the nostalgia that can sometimes be evoked by the teddy bear:

Teddy Bear syndrome represents nostalgia for the innocence and comfort of childhood, nostalgia for a time when life seemed simpler. This nostalgia overlaps with another form of reminiscence that the bear may represent – a type of nostalgia for nature entwined with an Edenic longing for the pristine wilderness. (Forrest, Goldman and Emmison, 184)

When we want to trace the literary forerunners of *Pierre Bear*, we find that the Canadian literary tradition knows many nature writers who also wrote for children. Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946) and Charles G.D. Roberts (1860-1943), for example, were authors who were famous for their realistic wild-animal biographies. Seton wrote *The Biography of a Grizzly* in 1900. (Townsend: 97) In it, Seton describes the dietary habits of bears, and he classifies bears accordingly. There are bears ‘that eat little but roots and berries’; other ‘love best the great black salmon they can hook out of the pools when the long ‘run’ is on’, but there are also ‘bears that have a special fondness of flesh. These are rare’. (Cited in Townsend: 97)

In addition, it is interesting to explore the connection between Pierre Bear and the genre of the Canadian hunting tale. Jean Stringham discusses how this genre reinforces Canadian colonial ideology through acts of killing animals:

in these stories youths are not members of the colonized other as so frequently happens, but are young empire-builders, themselves smaller versions of the adult empire-builders, miniature colonizers who attempt to establish imperial domination over colonials more vulnerable than they – animals. The language of Empire tells youths they have a moral responsibility to lead those groups with less power or agency than that which is rightfully administered by themselves as young Anglo-Saxon representatives of the dominant culture. Young colonialists may practice their colonizing forms of power on animals. (*Voices of the Other*: 136-137)

Note that in these stories, animals do not (always) function as mere stand-ins for colonial others in the sense that they can be read as metaphors. Instead, they too are victims of colonialism, as they fall prey to similar acts of violence as the human colonials.

Within the conventions of the hunting tale, hunting is omnipresent and encounters with wild animals are always framed in a hunting context. These wild animals, then, represent the other. (137) However, even though they represent other lives, other ways of being, these animals are not as alien as to become unknowable. In fact, the reader empathizes with them, because the writers endow them with certain human traits or describe them in human terms. Anthropomorphism has an important function in the hunting tales described by Stringham:

The reason the reader comes to care about many of these stories is that the writer humanizes the animal he writes about. In order for animals to be adventurers, they must carry a moral equivalent approaching that of a human. In fact, this humanistic quality about the animals in hunting fiction is another compelling reason to believe that the animals and hunters are playing out a scenario of the colonizer and the colonized. The sturdy, young male Imperialist narrators speak and act without any awareness that they are interlopers in an untamable world. These young colonialists never question their right to control the land nor the wild animals living upon it. (150)

In *Pierre Bear*, the hunt is described in similar terms of adventure and conquering the wild animal. The book motivates Pierre's actions by relying on the discourse of subsistence hunting:

Next morning, when Pierre looked in his cupboard he saw that he needed more food. So he took his big rifle and headed for the wild woods to hunt the Terrible Moose, the biggest, wildest animal of the North.

The text wants the reader to believe that Pierre hunts to fulfill his basic need for sustenance. This in itself may be justification enough, with Pierre being a bear, and a moose a natural prey. But while the text tries to objectify the moose, the image creates room for the reader to sympathize with the prey animal. When we look at the moose, what we see is indeed a wild animal, but also an animal who fears for his life. He is not as ferocious as the text would like us to believe. The only difference lies in the markers of civilization that the bear is given and the moose is denied.

The way anthropomorphism is used to distinguish the bears from the other animals lies at the core of the answer. First of all, there is a sharp contrast in the way the bears and the animals they hunt are depicted visually, and the reader is implicitly invited to accept that this justifies the killing. We see that the bears are highly anthropomorphized, while the animals they hunt are not. The bears are bipedal, wear clothes, speak to each other in what can be understood to be human language, and they live in humanlike conditions.

There is an aura of civilization, homeliness and order surrounding the bears' lifestyle. However, there exists a confusion at the heart of this interaction. Pierre is not human, he has the body of a bear. Highly anthropomorphized, but undeniably: a bear. The fact that he is a 'natural' predator serves as a justification for his acts. This confusion cannot be resolved by interpreting the bear as merely a metaphor, or a human in disguise. The being of the bear is infused with culturally significant markers that have a meaning in the discourse of colonialism.

Here, colonialism and anthropocentrism overlap. The way Pierre handles his prey is human, and it is coded as civilized, which reinforces a positive reading. Unlike real bears, Pierre hunts with traps and a rifle. The activities surrounding the preparation of food are equally significant. We see that Pierre cooks and prepares his food, rather than eating it raw, as we might expect a bear to do. This confusion of human and animal, of hunting and predation, builds on a common misconception in the debate surrounding the practice of human hunting, as Garry Marvin explains:

Hunting cannot simply be explained as being triggered by something in the genetic makeup of humans nor as being motivated by a mystical link to a putative past. Human hunting is a set of cultural rather than natural practices, and it is important here to emphasize that it differs from predation in the non-human animal world with which it is sometimes compared. Human hunting certainly involves predation, but predation is not the same as hunting. (Marvin, 2006: 13)

The text then takes the argument even further. The capitalization of the words describing the moose makes the reader even more aware of the fact that the reader is expected to view Pierre and the moose as worthy opponents, but not opponents within the same category of being, or even the same moral community. Pierre's actions are rationally explained: the text speaks of the moose as irrational, wild, terrible and aggressive, and therefore killing him becomes not only a way to sustain himself, but also a courageous act in the defense of civilization:

But the brave little bear was not afraid. He shot him. BANG! And the Moose fell dead. For Pierre was the bravest hunter of all the North.

We notice how the language of civilization is contrasted with a vocabulary of wildness and ferociousness. The brutal evidence of Pierre's act of violence is omnipresent. The text then describes how Pierre uses the different body parts of the moose. First, the moose meat is transformed into food by the process of cooking:

Pierre took his moose home and he made a moose stew, and moose pie, and moose cake, and thirteen jars of minced moosemeat. His cupboard was full and he wished he had someone to help him eat all that good food.

We see Pierre preparing the dishes on his woodstove. Some jars are already filled, and a large pot is almost cooking over. While he is cooking, Pierre is grinning, the tip of his tongue sticking out in hungry anticipation of a meal. Note also how the moose has become 'his moose', in an act of claiming post mortem ownership.

Apart from hunting for subsistence, Pierre also hunts to acquire fur. There is no obvious practical reason why he would need fur clothing, being a furry animal himself, and the narrative doesn't motivate this. Fur occurs a number of times in this story. The first time it is mentioned is when Pierre's bed is described. We see Pierre in his bed under thick, brown, furry covers, which is in itself quite a remarkable sight that asks for further explanation. Why not use more conventional bedsheets, when the rest of the house is decorated in a human style? The text, although it mentions the fur, presents it as unproblematic: 'Then Pierre climbed between the soft furs that were his bed.'

There are two instances where hunting for fur gets acquired meaning in relation to family relations. The first one is when Pierre sells the skins of the trapped animals at the Trading Post. The skins he sells are stacked in a pile in the center of the illustration and are still completely recognizable as animals, their bodies seeming intact, but flattened. In spite of this crude image, the text lightheartedly describes the events:

The trading post was a jolly place, and the traders greeted Pierre merrily. They counted his furs. They weighed the skins. And they gave him many dollars for them.

This again activates the discourse of capitalism: with the money he earns he can buy commodities in the store nearby. And as luck has it, he falls in love with the lady bear working there. He marries her and soon after they have a son together. So the profits he makes killing other animals allow him to literally buy himself into the middle class ideal of the nuclear family.

For Pierre, the activity of hunting other animals enables him to enter a state of civilization, and this brings us to another discourse that is activated by this picture book: the myth of Man-the-Hunter. This myth envisions the hunting male as the source of humanity. This view has been dominating the discourse on evolution, as Noske writes:

The idea of male activity as the core of humanness is also present in the Man-the-Hunter scenario, a reconstruction of the process by which pre-human animals became human. (...)

The Man-the-Hunter hypothesis has been dominating the discussion about human evolution for the last hundred years or so, and has been supported by many different types of scholars from the social as well as the biological sciences. (...)

According to the Man-the-Hunter hypothesis the hunting and killing of animals, a (supposedly) all male activity, took the pre-human primates to the borders of humanity. (...)

The hunting adaptation which ensued is thought to have constituted the groundwork for human society, human social institutions and human language. It is thought to have brought about tool-making and tool-use (of weapons by males) and to have led to greater curiosity and mobility. (...)

In short, the success of human evolution has traditionally been attributed to the development of male skills. Later versions of the hunting hypothesis have focused on the adaptive phenomenon of male bonding. Male hunters were able to cement reciprocal relations with a widening network of male allies through the presentation of meat. (103-104)

Pierre Bear reiterates this myth by showing the reader how hunting forms the foundation of the bear's socialization process. It is the act of hunting that enables him to start a family, a micro-society. It initiates cultural activities such as cooking food and decorating the house. When his son is born, Pierre acquires a male partner to whom he can pass on his skills. Hunting in this story is clearly portrayed as an act of male bonding. We encounter this in particular in the second moment of significance: the joint father-son hunting expedition, where the two bears shoot a seal:

One day Pierre decided he needed new fur coats for the whole family. So he and little Pierre paddled in their little boats through the thundering ocean to the place where the Fur Seal lived.

In the worldview of the bears, the seal is defined in terms of the commodity he provides. When one turns the page one comes to the spread that depicts the actual seal hunt. It shows the two hunters in their boats on the left page, pointing their guns at:

the biggest, wildest, furriest seal. They found him. And they shot him. BANG!
For Pierre and little Pierre were two great hunters.

The right page shows a spotted seal in close-up resting on the sea ice. And as in the illustration of the moose, the seal does not look wild at all. In the background we see three other seals, observing the bears curiously from behind the ice. While the text tries to describe the intentions of the bears as heroic and manly, the images expose them as the intruders and aggressors. We also see how patriarchy and hunting go hand in hand in this story: it is Pierre who decides 'he needed new coats for the whole family'. In this context, naming the cub 'little Pierre' is also a sign of the timeless continuation of power relations based on act of violence against others. When they come home after the seal is killed, Mrs. Pierre sews them all fur coats 'with her bone needle'. Again, a reference to animal body parts that are used to enhance the standard of living for the bear family.

What function does the coat have in *Pierre Bear*? For an animal who does not need a fur coat to survive, Pierre and his wife endow it with an enormous symbolic value: to them it is a sign that father and son are ‘The Two Greatest Hunters of all the North’. In part, this can be related to the value of fur to Canada’s national history, since the fur trade was central to the formation of Canada as a nation. But, as Julia Emberly writes, it also functions as ‘a complex sign of symbolic power’. (438)

The textual and visual practices to ascribe significance to fur, such as sumptuary legislation, political codes of sartorial display, and literary as well as visual modes of re-presentation, constitute a set of signifying practices that work to establish fur as an object of communication in a general discursive field of libidinal and economic exchange. (442)

Fur as a fashion item:

recalls a residue of colonial relations layered by current ecological correctness and the spectacle of fetishism of cruelty to animals at the hand of the bourgeois female consumer. I would argue that we can read in this excess of signification a postcolonial allegory of the history of imperialism. (443)

The depiction of fur and trapping in *Pierre Bear* predates the critique from the animal-rights movement, but it is significant that this Little Golden Book is no longer in print, while many other problematic books, such as *The Boy and the Tigers* (a retelling of Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo*) still are.

What we have seen so far is that the aspects that qualify some animals in this story as food rather than as companions or equals - something the reader might expect if the main character is also an animal - is the degree of anthropomorphism. The narrative creates difference on the level of species by attributing subjectivity and agency to the bears, while withholding it from the fish, the moose and the seal. And this subjectivity is essentially a humanlike subjectivity. This is supported by the fact that Pierre categorically refuses to see other animals as persons. He is described as a lonely bear, who is desperately longing for company, yet his actions and words betray that ‘company’ is strictly limited to other bears: ‘He dreamt that he was with a lot of other bears who were laughing and singing and never lonely’. Perhaps the most striking example of this radical distinction can be found in the scene after Pierre has killed the moose: ‘From the Moose antler he made a big hat rack to hang upon the wall. Pierre hung his hat on one of the antlers. “Someone else’s hat should hang on the other antler”, thought the lonely bear.’

One of the lessons a child reader might infer from her encounter with these anthropomorphic bears is that there is a clear and fundamental difference between certain categories of animals, and based on this difference we decide which ones can safely be consumed. Some are more like us than others, and deserve moral consideration. The ones that are less like us have bod-

ies that are merely useful, either as commodities or as food. Readers may infer that differentiation on the level of physical appearance forms the foundation of ethical decision-making. From there on, it is only a small step towards an ideology that considers human beings in similar terms of difference.

It is also significant that the hunter is an adult, and moreover, an adult male. The gendered nature of hunting and killing as a masculinely coded activity is presented to the reader as a natural state of affairs, again, by employing anthropomorphism. The assumption here is that culture mirrors the natural world where males are responsible for acts of violence, that are necessary for survival. To maintain the status quo, one has to accept killing and meat eating as unavoidable.

There is much about this book that could inculcate uncritical anthropocentrism in a young reader's mind. Given these problematic rationalizations of acts of violence and the possible consequences this may have for the moral and empathetic development of young readers, would it then be logical to dismiss this book altogether or are there alternative reading strategies that allow us to use this book to question the anthropocentric assumptions behind it? Later in this chapter I will say more about how critical literacy can be applied in the context of postcolonial readings of picture books. Critical literacy offers the reader an opportunity to identify and question the power relations at work in a book. Even when most books tend to contain different points of view, they do not always value them equally. We can see that in *Pierre Bear*, even within the bear family, the points of view are not equally valued. Pierre's point of view is dominant, which invites the reader to side with him and his anthropocentric worldview.

Within critical animal studies, there are attempts to devise pedagogical strategies that question anthropocentrism and the use of animals in education. Karin Gunnarsson Dinker and Helena Pedersen's text 'Critical Animal Pedagogies: Re-learning Our Relations with Animal Others' (2016) investigates an alternative education that is not anthropocentric and does not promote the domination and oppression of animals. Their 'critical animal pedagogy' is an attempt to radically rethink the premises of pedagogy with respect to animals. They point out that animals in education are often used 'to teach children care and compassion and, presumably, enhance children's social, cognitive or emotional development' (417). However, there is always a double standard built into education that requires children to regulate their affect to certain well-defined circumstances. Dinker and Pedersen write that when dissecting animals in science classes, children are actively discouraged from empathizing with the animals and are encouraged to deny any negative feelings they might have. According to the authors, this 'guilt-denial is part of a socialization process in science education that begins at a younger age' (418).

This double standard is also at the heart of many popular picture books that feature animals as their protagonists. In *Pierre Bear*, for example, the

readers are encouraged to empathize with the bear family, and to see the deaths of the other animals as necessary for the survival of the protagonists. This way they are taught that some animals are better than others, and this hierarchy justifies violence. But even when the stories involve no direct violence, anthropocentrism and species hierarchies dominate many narratives. Consequently, even relationships that are depicted as affective can be characterized by dominance. In the previous chapter I discussed how the fictional relationship of children and their pets often centers on the necessity of obedience and domination that appear to be necessary to learning ‘good manners’. As we have seen, anthropocentrism in picture books can be regarded as one of the strategies that reinforces this double standard.

This can be countered, Dinker and Pedersen suggest, by ‘breaking the silences normally surrounding the situation of animals in human societies’ (419). This can be achieved in different ways, for example by critical discourse analysis of learning materials, or by reflecting on how animals ‘experience being hunted, slaughtered, separated from their mother, forcibly inseminated, castrated, held in captivity, being a pet, forced to perform or participate in competitions, or being experimented upon’ (419). This can also be applied to reading picture books like *Pierre Bear*. We can ask the reader to question how the book sets up and justifies species hierarchies. Or we can discuss how the book positions the reader in relation to hunting. For example: why does Pierre need fur blankets and a seal fur coat to stay warm, when he already has his own fur? This question could also lead to a critique of capitalism and the commodification of certain animals.

Another strategy to counter anthropocentrism is to emphasize the literary context in which animal stories come into being. When reading stories about bears, we can highlight how they are informed by the cultural and literary traditions that value the bear as kin. The anthropomorphism with which these bears are depicted can then be interpreted as rooted in a tradition of stories that emphasize the kinship between bears and humans. This story, seen in the light of that tradition, acquires layers of complexity that may encourage the reader to question not only the use of violence in this story, but perhaps the entire human-bear relationship. It is difficult to fully comprehend the representation of the anthropomorphic bear family in *Pierre Bear* without mentioning its connection to these stories. *Pierre Bear*, even with its conservative and questionable ideology, connects the reader with a past in which bears and people were not considered to be so very different. However, in order to see this we need to start reading consciously and critically, and teach young readers about the significance of animal presence in the books they read. Also, as educators, we need to stress the interrelatedness of life and fiction. *Pierre Bear* raises ethical questions, but also invites us to discuss identity, difference, similarity and continuity beyond species boundaries.

Giving up hunting as a sign of civilization: The Tawny Scrawny Lion

In the discussion of *Pierre Bear* it became clear how acts of violence against other animals can be rationalized by activating codes of naturalness and masculinity. Killing and consuming other animals is often presented as the way of the world, and a marker of masculinity. Therefore, the choice to abstain from eating meat becomes an interesting and significant one, a choice that can ultimately be equated with the acceptance of a more civilized lifestyle. This is the case in the next book I will discuss: *The Tawny Scrawny Lion* by Kathryn Jackson and Gustaf Tenggren (1952).

As opposed to *Pierre Bear*, this narrative does not approve of the initial lifestyle of the protagonist. In this story, we are met by a different degree of anthropomorphism, which also serves a different purpose. Here, transformation is central: the characters display a gradual metamorphosis from wildness to civilization that is signaled by increasing degrees of humanization of their appearance and behavior. Initially, the animals are depicted as senseless slaves of their instincts: the predator hunts and the prey animals try to escape. In the next stage of the story, they try to reason their way out of their predicament and negotiate a solution, and eventually they end up as members of the same moral community.

The initial inter-animal relationships are comparable to those in *Pierre Bear*, and predation is a key element of their interactions. In this story, the protagonist is a lion, which makes it appropriate for him to eat meat. Yet the cover already reveals that something out of the ordinary is about to take place: it shows the lion holding a carrot in his mouth and four bunnies in his lap, two of which are also munching on carrots. From the onset, food choices and the reversal of predation is presented as the book's core concern. The central conflict evolves around the predator's constant hunger, which, the story explains, stems from chasing prey every day of the week. In a humorous circular argument the lion explain how in his opinion, the prey animals themselves are to blame for their unfortunate fate:

"It's all your fault for running away," he grumbled. "If I didn't have to run, run, run for every single bite I get, I'd be fat as butter and sleek as satin. Then I wouldn't have to eat so much, and you'd last longer!"

Humor in children's books can serve diverse purposes, and in this case it reveals that there may be an unease, a friction, even a taboo connected to hunting and eating animals that are anthropomorphized to roughly the same degree as the predator.

Another inappropriate aspect of the lion's eating habits is his particular behavior when he catches his food: the wildness of the chase is presented as unhealthy and ultimately unsustainable. He transgresses society's food rules by displaying a ravenous appetite and preying on other anthropomorphized

animals. If we follow the internal logic of the story, these other animals should, on account of their ability to speak, be members of the same moral community. This brings the act of hunting and eating them alarmingly close to committing cannibalism.

Macbeth, Schiefelhövel and Collinson (2007) define cannibalism as 'consumption of the flesh and other tissue of another individual of the same species.' (189) Because this definition is so heavily dependent on the concept of species, defining cannibalism can become a problem when animals are depicted anthropomorphically and species is no longer a reliable distinction. When anthropomorphism becomes a uniting trait among a fictional animal community, species begins to lose its significance in favor of a wider moral community. So can we say that the tawny scrawny lion is committing cannibalism when he consumes other animals that are endowed with a similar degree of anthropomorphism? The answer to this question seems to hinge on whether the animals he preys on qualify as 'people'. When considering cannibalism, the question that needs answering, according to Macbeth et. al. is not so much why we eat people, but: 'Why not eat people?' (199) Their explanation is that:

any phenomena which are somehow anomalous or contradictory in relation to major classifications are often 'marked out' by human societies in some way, in order to maintain the coherence and purity of the classifications which humans use to interpret life. (...) Extending this argument to cannibalism, the reason why the practice is 'marked out' by every society may become clearer. Humans represent the ultimate anomalous animal. In nutritional terms, humans are an obvious source of food, and yet we think of 'food', even if of animal origin, as belonging quite firmly to 'matter' not 'people', and thus, in social terms, we are classed as 'non-food'. (199)

We see how this tension between nutritional value and the obvious edibility on the one hand, and the 'people' status of the animals becomes an issue in *The Tawny, Scrawny Lion*. The reason why we can interpret the lion's behavior as cannibalism, even if the animals he consumes belong to different species, is that these animals are described as persons. We could say that they qualify as 'people' in the sense that they belong to the same social community as the lion. All animals, with the significant exception of the fish, are attributed agency, which provides authority and credibility to their claims when they at last decide to object to the lion's behavior.

The story demonstrates clearly what Macbeth et. al. present as a simple but convincing argument for the taboo of cannibalism in most societies, namely, that 'social species cannot cooperate effectively if individuals regularly view each other as possible meals.' (201) And even though these animals clearly do not belong to the same species, they do belong to the same community. When they come together to find a solution to the lion's transgressive behavior, they are actively engaged in shaping their society.

It is clear that the prey animals in this story refuse to be cast as passive food items: the narrative invested them with agency and they use it to speak up in protest. They get organized, but since they are afraid to confront the lion themselves, they trick the rabbit into negotiating with him. The rabbit's solution, rather than reasoning with him, is to civilize him in another way: he wants to turn the solitary lion into a full member of their society by way of altering his eating habits. The rabbit presents him with an alternative to meat: carrot stew and fish. Now the reader encounters an animal that is apparently good to eat, in the sense that eating fish does not constitute a moral dilemma. The motivation provided by the narrative hinges on species hierarchy: while the large exotic animals are all given agency, the fish remains a passive, voiceless victim. The fish is also the only animal that is actually caught and killed in the images. This passes as relatively unproblematic since fish is not generally considered to be meat. As Annie Potts explains:

The flesh from fish and other marine creatures may not always be understood as 'meat' but it should be; this categorical error is largely generated and perpetuated by Judeo-Christian beliefs about the difference between the value and consumption of creatures of the sea versus land-based animals (demonstrated, for example, in the practice by the devout of 'replacing' (animal) meat with fish on religiously-determined 'meat-free' days). Attitudes in Western nations are influenced by anthropocentric discourses that position humans as superior to other species in a hierarchy where creatures deemed the most unlike humans (in physical appearance or form, ways of perceiving and experiencing the world, and/or modes of living) are deemed of least value or worth. Fish are relegated near to or at the bottom of this hierarchy. They are viewed as so different to humans that they have commonly been disregarded as sentient creatures. (11)

Not only does this story reflect Western attitudes regarding species hierarchies, it is also a story about cultural imperialism. It shows the reader how a wild, unruly animal can be brought under the control of culture through the regulation of his food choices. The lion displays childlike boundless behavior, which needs to be addressed and corrected in order for him to become civilized. The narrative values properties such as self-discipline, impulse control and social behavior. This reflects common Western attitudes about the education and socialization of human children, as well as other groups of people who are considered 'savage' in the eyes of the dominant culture.

The visual transformation of the animals reveals how their relationships evolve. Both predator and prey undergo a process of visual humanization. Clothing, for example, is presented as an indication of culture: the rabbit is the only one to wear clothing in the beginning of the story. Eventually, the other animals also wear clothes. Body posture is another sign of civilization: in the beginning, the lion walks on all fours, later he walks on his hind legs. Bipedalism, clothing and tool use are all common visual indicators of culture

and civilization in picture book animals. On an ideological level, the message embedded in this story seems to be that mutual respect follows from a shared identity. One earns the right to receive moral consideration if, and only if, one resembles the dominant culture. Note that the clothes these animals wear are European clothes, while most of the animals are not indigenous to Europe. Depicting European clothes as the pinnacle of civilization is another argument for interpreting this story as an example of colonial imperialism.

It is equally significant that the lion doesn't stop eating his fellow animals because he empathizes with them - he rather feels sorry for himself for having to chase them. He stops eating them because the alternative is healthier and more satisfying for himself, and only after he realizes this does he begin to look at the other animals as possible members of the same community. Empathy is entirely absent as a motivation for moral consideration. That empathy can indeed be a powerful driving force behind the inclusion of an animal of a different species in the moral community of the protagonists, can be seen in the next story I discuss.

Conflicting starting points for moral consideration in The Goose That Stuffed Herself

Richard Scarry's *The Goose That Stuffed Herself* (2005) describes how a goose transforms from food item to pet to family member. This is not an individual Little Golden picture book, but an illustrated story that is part of a collection of Christmas stories published by Random House. It is of interest, nonetheless, because of the way it describes the transformation from prey animal to pet to family member, but also the ease with which another animal, who lacks this status, can become a substitute for the intended victim.

As in *The Tawny Scrawny Lion*, the humor behind the double meaning of the title indicates that this story touches on a sensitive subject. In this rather unsettling story, the question of meat eating is problematized from the start, when Tobias Tiger brings home a goose, which he intends to fatten for Christmas. But almost immediately, the tiger family starts to develop empathy for the skinny little goose, and instead of fattening her, feeding her takes the form of caring:

The goose began to eat. She ate until she was happy. She ate until she was warm. She ate until she could not keep one eye open, let alone two. Then she flapped happily into Mrs. Tiger's lap, tucked her head under the red shawl, and snored loudly. Mrs. Tiger rocked her gently. The little boy tigers talked in whispers. And Tobias tiger (ready for bed in his striped pajamas) said good

night in a sort of snort and went upstairs. Before many days had passed, that goose had made herself one of the family.’ (Jackson and Scarry, 2005: 52)

The last sentence reveals that the goose has agency: she had made herself part of the family. Agency here is not necessarily coupled to the possession of language: the tigers acknowledge that even though the goose does not have the ability to speak, she clearly has the same range of emotions as the tigers. It is this realization that she is an animal who can suffer, who can be hungry and cold, convinces the mother and children that eating her would be wrong. It takes the father, Tobias Tiger, significantly longer to respond empathetically to the goose. He initially actively resists his family’s attempts to include the goose in moral community and insists on her status as food. Only after she does him a favor – by being a comfortable pillow – is he willing to reconsider his attitude towards her.

In a final act of defiance, she actively appeals to the tigers’ sense of justice and empathy: when Tabitha Tiger places her on a plate to see what she would look like stuffed, the goose turns around and licks the plate, actively resisting a classification as food and suggesting she should be eating instead of being eaten. In the final image, we see how the goose, who is at this point also wearing clothing, has at last obtained her place at the dinner table. But, shockingly, a turkey has replaced her as the dinner’s main course. The irony of this replacement is not lost on the reader.

This story clearly suggests that personhood can be granted to some animals, but refused to others. But the reasons for viewing them as a member of the same moral community may vary and may have different consequences. Tobias represents a perspective in which one can sympathize with some animals, while their consumption remains a real possibility.

The approach to this moral dilemma appears to be related to the gender and age of the characters: there is a clear contrast between children and mother on the one hand, and the father on the other. Although empathy is suggested as a foundation for ethical decision-making, it is not extended equally to all creatures. Apparently, the reader again has to learn the lesson of species difference and hierarchy: the goose is more ‘like us’ than the turkey at that point of the story, justifying why the tigers can safely eat the turkey. When personhood is flexible, as it appears to be in this story, this offers us a narrative to explore our relationships with other species.

How to survive as anthropomorphic pigs in a human world: Gaston and Josephine

The Little Golden Books version of Georges Duplaix' *Gaston and Josephine* (original 1933, adaptation 1948) was illustrated by Russian artist Feodor Rojankovsky. What is so interesting in this story is that it interrogates the place of the pig in human society, and it does so by anthropomorphizing the protagonists, Gaston and his sister Josephine 'two very rosy French pigs'. They and their pig parents wear human clothes, live in human conditions and use human ways of transportation. They are indeed anthropomorphized to the degree that they quite easily move through human society, even if they retain much of their porcine physique. They are depicted as upright walking, bipedal animals, but their hands and feet are anatomically still porcine. Their presence within a society in which most inhabitants are human presents them with particular challenges related to the common status of pigs.

When Monsieur Dubonnet, the pigs' father, receives a letter from their uncle in America, inviting them to come and visit their cousins, the siblings embark on their journey, which takes them by train to Paris, and later to Le Havre, where they take the boat to New York. Their journey starts without incidents, and their fellow passengers on the train accept the pigs as if they were human travelers. The siblings are hungry and 'went to the dining car and ordered all the good things on the menu'. The presence of the pigs within human society is accepted by the human characters, and, moreover, the narrative actively positions them as consumers. As Daniels describes, participating in food events is a significant moment in the socialization into society, and at this point in the story, *Gaston and Josephine* follows society's food rules.

Significantly, the society that is depicted in the images is recognizably and unequivocally human, with no signs of other anthropomorphized animals inhabiting the fictional world. At this point in the narrative, the pigs' presence goes unquestioned, they are naturally considered to be members of society, possess subjectivity and agency to a similar degree as the humans they encounter. This sense of belonging appears natural to the pigs themselves, as well. They are not surprised that they are treated as fellow subjects, and why should they, as long as they comply to society's rules? But things begin to get complicated when the two pigs visit the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. The captive animals in the zoo are not anthropomorphized to the same extent as the two pigs, but when Josephine feeds the monkey a peanut, he 'thanked her and said: "Au revoir, Mademoiselle"'. There is apparently no language barrier between these two characters. However, this does not imply that they have the same social status. Possessing the ability to

communicate through language, in this fictional world, is not enough to give one access to basic rights.

When Gaston and Josephine encounter the lion and the tiger, the narrator states that 'they would much rather have eaten the little rosy pigs themselves', thereby identifying the pigs as food items for the first time in the narrative. Yet the pigs do not realize the danger they are in: the illustration shows how they, separated from the predators by bars, lean against the fence, observing them with an air of calm fascination. Their body language does not express fear or concern; in their role of humanlike spectators, they can be sure to be protected by the conventions of human society. In this specific context, they are not prey, they are not captive, they are not food, instead, they are literally depicted as being on the 'right' side of the fence, on the dominant side of the power scale.

How wrong they are only becomes clear later. After a visit to the opera, it is time for Gaston and Josephine to move on, and they board the train to Le Havre. However, after a while, they are overwhelmed by hunger and decide to pull the emergency break. When the angry conductor asks them if they were the ones pulling the brake, they explain to him that they wanted to milk the cows in the field to satisfy their hunger. The desire for food is the driving force behind their illegitimate action, which in a sense foreshadows the events to come.

After they milked the cows and ate their meal, they pick flowers and enjoy themselves, forgetting all about the train until it is too late and it had left without them. Their search for the train takes them to a farmhouse, where they tell their story to the farmer who admits that he 'is very fond of little pigs' and promises 'to take good care' of them. The reader, at this point, has noticed the devious expression on the farmer's face, and isn't surprised to learn that '[t]he wicked farmer rubbed his hands with glee. He thought Gaston and Josephine looked nice and tender and would make a fine roast, and he shut them up in his pigpen.'

The two little pigs, driven by their desire for food, are now themselves at the mercy of a human who considers them as food. The wickedness of his desire lies in his failure to acknowledge that Gaston and Josephine are no ordinary pigs, as Josephine herself stressed when she noticed the other pigs and exclaims: 'O dear, oh dear, those pigs are so dirty! And they have such bad manners!'. In her eyes, there is a clear distinction between Gaston and herself and the 'normal' pigs in the pigpen, and this has everything to do with their cleanliness and humanlike behavior. In the morning, the pigs see the mayor of the town, they escape from their prison and beg the mayor to save them from becoming the farmer's food. The mayor is quick to comply, and even offers to 'punish this mean farmer as he deserves'.

It is clear what is expected to qualify as a member of the moral community: behave like humans, and you will be saved. The pigs inhabit a middle ground between human and animal, and therefore consuming them becomes

a crime – if not directly against the law per se, then at least against the ethical codes that state that moral subjects deserve consideration. Any offense against this rule is punishable, so the farmer, even if he is justified to slaughter and eat the other pigs, is transgressing a moral boundary by attempting to slaughter and eat pigs that within the rules of his society obviously do not qualify as food. Gaston and Josephine, then, are spared this fate because of their unique, human characteristics, and they are free to continue their journey.

However, the story, nor the message, doesn't end there. Gaston and Josephine make it to the boat just in time, and they set sail for New York. When the ship enters a fogbank and the foghorn malfunctions, the humans are desperate. But: 'Gaston and Josephine had an idea. They rushed forward and climbed way up to the crow's nest. They opened their mouths wide: "Squeak!...Squeak!...Squeak!...".' Their porcine voices achieve what no human passenger could have accomplished: they are heard by other ships in the vicinity and thus disaster is averted. After having saved their human travel companions, the pigs are rewarded with their gratitude, a place at the captain's table, and upon arrival in New York they are met by 'reporters and many other important people'. The French pigs' arrival in the new world is characterized by their newly established relationship with the humans, which has changed from one of dependence to one of mutual respect. No longer in need of saving, as they were in France, their own inventiveness combined with their unique qualities have transformed them into celebrated heroes with a bright future ahead of them. Even before entering the country properly, they have come to embody the American dream of gaining success and respect through one's own achievements.

Their porcine physiques that make them stand out in human society was a reason to fear certain humans in their native country. They were always at risk of being mistaken for prey or food, a characterization they actively resisted, but that they could not change without the help of some humans. On their journey to America, their distinctive nonhuman bodies become the reason for their success. A difference that once only constituted danger, now becomes the basis for their achievements and leads to their explicit acceptance within human culture. They embody every immigrant's dream – even more so soon after the horrors of WW2.

The illustration shows Gaston and Josephine's uncle and cousins waiting for them on the kay. They are anthropomorphized pigs as well, the only animals amid a crowd of humans. The final page shows the image of a train traversing the landscape at high speed, and the text reads: ' "Now we must take the train for three more days" said their uncle, "before we get to our ranch in the West".' The dream of progress and expansion captured by the concept of the 'West' is adopted and continued by the pig family. What they also needed to adopt in order to become fully accepted members of human society is a set of human values that are not necessarily beneficial for themselves as nonhuman animals.

To illustrate this point it is helpful to compare the two scenes that require an act of compassion to save another live. The first scene describes Gaston and Josephine begging the mayor to save their lives: 'The two pigs threw themselves at the mayor's feet. "Save us, Mr. Mayor!" they cried. "We were on our way to America to visit our little cousins. "And now that wicked man is going to eat us! Oh, save us!... Save us!..."' The illustration shows the two pigs, kneeling in front of the mayor and his four friends. Although the composition of the image clearly depicts the five human men a position of power, towering over the begging little pigs, they seem benevolent. The mayor's posture is friendly, leaning in towards them, hand outstretched in an act of acceptance. Culturally, this is a very powerful image, reminiscent of Michaelangelo's fresco *The Creation of Adam*.

The benevolence of the mayor saves the day and as he gives them his bicycle and sends them on their way, he promises them that the wicked man will be punished 'as he deserves'. Ironically, the men themselves were on a hunting expedition when the pigs encountered them, and the illustration shows one of them carrying a gun. So, because it is not self-evident that each animal has a right to live, he pigs needs to actively appeal to the sense of justice of the humans.

By contrast, the pigs themselves show compassion without having to be asked by their fellow passengers on the boat. When they sense the despair of the humans, they act. By saving the lives of the human passengers the pigs implicitly pledge allegiance to the sanctity of all human lives. Conversely, the value of animal lives is contingent not only on species membership, but on how closely certain individuals resemble humans or represent human values.

At the same time as they seem to have escaped the fate of other pigs now that their porcine bodies now make them both unique and attractive, we can distinguish a humanist undercurrent to this story. The value of the pig as a subject, rather than a food item in these narratives depends on their benefit for human people. Janet Sayers writes:

Pigs' allocation in Western cultures as commodity and meat-animal rather than pet is a fact of language and culture, not nature (Serpell, 1986). In many cultures, pigs are considered unclean, a belief that probably originated in observations of pigs eating things humans find unpalatable. Pigs are actually intelligent, curious and clean animals, with similar social characteristics to dogs; they can be affectionate companion-animals. Also, and unfortunately for pigs, they are extremely efficient at converting organic material into meat and are genetically similar to humans. Consequently, they have become a valued meat-animal in many cultures, and their body parts are used to make an astonishing variety of nonfood products including insulin, heart valves, skin to treat severe burn victims, drugs and chemicals (Essig, 2015). (2016, 373)

And in the same spirit it becomes clear that Gaston and Josephine, in order to qualify as members of a human society, need to accept and participate in

some of the institutions of this society, notably: agriculture and keeping captive animals for the purpose of entertainment. The scene of the pigs visiting the zoo and the fact that both the French pig family as their American relatives keep farm animals themselves testify of this. Also, the fact that the mayor who saves the pigs was on a hunting expedition supports the claim that not all animals are equal, and not all animals deserve to be saved. The phrasing used to describe the zoo animals certainly is anthropomorphic, though not to the same extent as the anthropomorphism with which the pigs are described. It remains limited to the verbal level: the monkey experiences and expresses gratitude, and the kangaroo feels shame for pocketing Gaston's wallet.

The episode in the zoo, where the pigs are carelessly observing the lion and the tiger, unaware of their position in the food chain, is a critical turning point in the story. Up to that moment, the reader, too, was unaware of the possibility – in this particular fictional world - of the pigs becoming food. Before intensive farming and industrialized slaughter, many families kept pigs in close proximity to their own homes. The cohabitation of pigs and humans has always entailed the eventual slaughter of the pig, in spite of the empathy and perhaps even love that their owners must have felt for these creatures with whom they shared their living space. Real human and porcine identities are equally complex as the ones portrayed in Duplaix' story. As Sayers explains:

In the language of critical posthumanism, pigs and their humans have always been ontologically interdependent and co-constituted subjects through their relational becomings with one another (which includes the sacrificial rituals around their being eaten). (Sayers: 373)

Gaston and Josephine reflects how intricate human-animal relations can become when being eaten is presented as a possibility, but it is not certain under which conditions one can become food. The presence of pigs in children's literature is always, in a sense, problematic in comparison to other farm animals. Whereas chickens lay eggs, cows provide milk, sheep give wool and horses provide labor, all of which happens while the animal is alive and present, pigs only contribute after their death with their own flesh. Only when they cease to exist do they become meaningful contributors to the institution of the farm. It is their deaths that should be celebrated, then, if we want to do justice to the productivity of the species from a humanist perspective, but this apparently is too cruel a message to relay to young readers.

This is an absence that needs to be addressed, since it obscures animal suffering while it encourages young readers to develop empathy for the pigs. This is a betrayal of their emotional and intellectual faculties. Consuming animal products is a choice, but to young readers it is often presented as inescapable, and as a logical consequence of living with animals. As we have seen, representations of farms in picture books are often pastoral idylls in

which animals willingly and happily provide humans with the products of their labor or their bodies. While this may create empathy for the animals in question, it fosters the cultural blind spot that farming happens with the consent of the animals.

The question is if and how one can read commercial picture books with young readers to address this absence. An interesting observation by Matthew Calarco stresses how emotional motivation is at least as important as an intellectual understanding regarding matters that touch on the consumption of animal products. He argues that reason alone does not influence people's opinions regarding meat eating if they do not already have some degree of previously existing empathy with animals:

After speaking with countless meat eaters about vegetarianism/veganism over the past two decades, and after teaching standard philosophical material on vegetarianism/veganism to thousands of students over the past several years, I am more convinced than ever that philosophical arguments nearly always arrive on the scene too late to have the force that most animal ethicists wish them to have. And even when the arguments are considered rationally persuasive by readers, they rarely seem to have the transformative force with non-vegetarians/non-vegans that philosophers claim. I would suggest that for philosophical arguments to carry any persuasive force on these matters there must already be in place a certain set of dispositions, relations, and experiences that attune one to animals and their lives. (*Meat Cultures*: 47)

Reading picture books with an animal centered perspective in mind can help young readers to be more open to the lives of others, be they animal or human others. In subsequent discussions, readers can be challenged to explore their feelings and ideas concerning the place of animals in our food chain, and this is also where philosophical arguments can enter the dialogue – even with very young children. When animals are no longer conceptualized as others, and their perspectives are taken into consideration, young readers are offered a starting point to reconsider their own perspectives and prejudices.

In this process it is very important to acknowledge that the reader does not need to have the same opinion as the narrator of the story. This is why young readers ought to be trained to identify the narrator's voice and to see it for what it is: one perspective among many, and not necessarily the best one. Postcolonial studies can serve as an inspiration in this project. The identification of power relations that is central to this field can be a fruitful approach for animal centered readings as well, since both animals and colonial others are often marginalized. On the effects of reading stories from the perspective of the protagonist on the reading experience of marginalized readers, Houhihan writes:

Readers who belong to one of the groups marginalized by hero stories – primarily women and non-Europeans – are doubly affected by the narrative point of view of these tales. They see human beings like themselves depicted

as unimportant and inferior, and sometimes as evil. But as they read they must participate in the hero's perspective and share the feelings of the narrator towards these characters. Thus they are taught to despise themselves, to collude in the construction of their own inferiority rather than to rebel against being so labeled. (1997: 44)

Critical literacy may offer a strategy to help readers grapple with colonial texts without being pushed in a subordinate position by the colonial narrator and protagonist, since it empowers the reader and gives her alternative reading options. The four dimensions of the framework of critical literacy according to Van Sluys, Lewison and Flint (2002) are:

- 1) Disrupting the commonplace
- 2) Considering multiple viewpoints
- 3) Focusing on the sociopolitical
- 4) Taking action

By addressing these four dimension the (child) reader can contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms behind the continuation of colonial attitudes. Using critical literacy in order to familiarize readers with the fact that each text contains different points of view, but that the text does not always value them equally, can be a good starting point to discuss picture books and the animal characters in them. Merchandise books in particular can be read like this, because they initially evoke little resistance from the reader.

Case study 6: postcolonial readings of human and animal characters

In *The Picture Books Comes of Age* (1991) Schwarz and Schwarz write that, as an art form, the picture book 'strives to overcome cultural boundaries and to offer entertainment in a metanational context.' (5) However, in many cases, picture books do not achieve this and instead reinforce and perpetuate colonialist attitudes, even if they attempt to be inclusive. Animal characters are often used to mask ideology, and adult-child power imbalances in particular. (See Nikolajeva, 2010) Certain ways of representing animals, and animal-human interaction in particular, can also highlight cultural differences

and in that way they can promote colonialist attitudes. Clare Bradford describes the various ways in which colonialism may enter children's literature:

Children's texts reinvoke and rehearse colonialism in a variety of ways: for instance, through narratives that engage with history in realistic or fantastic modes; through sequences involving encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters; through representations of characters of mixed ancestry; and through metaphorical and symbolic treatments of colonization (2007:3)

In her evaluation of Perry Nodelman's article "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children's Literature" Clare Bradford criticizes the view that children are colonized in a similar fashion as Orientals:

Nodelman proposed what has come to be accepted almost as a given in children's literature criticism: that children constitute a colonized group spoken for by adults just as Orientals are spoken for by Orientalists. Nodelman's mobilization of Said's work converts an analogy into a model of child-adult relations, constructing "children" as a dehistoricized and homogenized category. I would argue that children stand in a quite different relationship to adults than do Orientals to Orientalists, since children are always seen as occupying a state or stage that will lead into adulthood, whereas Orientals never transmute into Orientalists and are thus always and inescapably inferior. (7)

A similar argument can be given for reading animals. They, too, can never grow out of their nonhuman status and will always remain inferior as animals. However, anthropomorphism presents us with an interesting challenge here, since it allows animal character – though never animals as a category – to approach the human. They can mediate certain colonial values by dint of their humanlike traits.

This case study starts with a text that clearly mediates colonial values and attitudes through the use of a highly anthropomorphized protagonist: *The Sailor Dog*. We can read this story as a canine version of the Robinsonade. In *The Little Trapper* (1950), by Kathryn and Byron Jackson and illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren, the game of hunting animals becomes an arena where the young colonialist meets the colonized. This story portrays a young protagonist who sets out to play an – in his eyes - innocent game, but when he is confronted by a little 'Indian girl', he has to decide where the boundaries of his games are, and whether he is willing to cross them in order to prove his masculinity to her. The animals play an active role in this constant negotiation of moral boundaries, and are far from innocent themselves.

The two Little Golden Book adaptations of Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo* (1899) are examples of the problematic revision of a picture book in order to avoid racial stereotyping. Bannerman's original, writes Jan Susina, 'has the unenviable reputation as the most racist text in the history of

children's literature'. (*Voices of the Other*: 237) Since the publication of the original there have been many adaptations, some of which were more overtly racist than the original and others that tried to rewrite the story to tone down the racist elements. The first Little Golden Book adaptation already made an effort to depict the characters less stereotypically racialized as in the original by making the context more Indian. However, the title and the names of the human characters remained the same. In the second adaptation, both the names and the title have been altered to reflect a more authentic Indian atmosphere. However, the question remains whether the revisions of this story can influence its ideology.

The Little Golden Books collection of stories from around the world are an attempt at retelling animal stories from around the world as well as giving the reader biological information about the animals. This combination of fact and fiction is appealing, but it is also problematic. By characterizing the stories as fiction and contrasting it with science-based facts, it discredits the knowledge that was embedded within the stories. In doing so, it reinforces a western worldview, and contrary to what we may have expected, these tales from around the world turn out to be another example of cultural imperialism.

A canine Robinsonade: The Sailor Dog

The Sailor Dog appeared in 1953, shortly after Margaret Wise Brown's death on November 13, 1952. The protagonist, Scuppers, is a humanized dog. He is described as a capable and resourceful sailor, who, because of his birth at sea, is destined to long for life aboard a ship. Like *Mister Dog*, the story is inspired by events in her personal life. It was an eight-year-old boy, Austin Clarke, who came up with the idea for the protagonist and told the author how she should describe him. (Marcus, 1992: 285) The illustrations by Garth Williams follow a similar style as *Mister Dog*. The color scheme, the type of dog and how the dog is portrayed are comparable to Wise-Brown's earlier dog book. They both display an appealing mix of dogness and humanness. Their physique is doglike in the sense that they have paws instead of hands, and have doglike proportions, even if they occasionally choose to walk on their hind legs and dress in human clothes.

There is an interesting contrast between their appearance when sleeping and waking. When Scuppers is awake, he is conscious of himself as a sailor, and aware of the importance of clothes. Not all other dog in the society Scuppers lives in feel the same need to dress, and their nudity goes

unquestioned by the other dogs. In his sleep, however, without his clothes, Scuppers is all dog. His posture and expression are doglike, as is his uncontroversial nakedness.



Figure 14: Scuppers, the sailor dog

Inspired perhaps by Crispin's Crispian, Scuppers, too, is a self-made dog. His independence, however, does not come naturally to him: when stranded on a desert island with a broken ship, he needs to build a shelter for himself. It takes a dream to make him realize that if he can build a house, he should also be able to repair his own ship. With this new confidence in his own ability he sets to work, and succeeds. He needed this boost of confidence, this moment of inspiration, in order to realize the extent of his own potential. This learning process, with the crucial insight coming to him in his sleep, is reminiscent of the way inspiration comes to artists. Just as *Mister Dog* can be read with Margaret Wise-Brown's search for independence in mind, as Marcus suggested, we can read *The Sailor Dog* as a testimony to her reaching maturity and confidence in herself as an artist. At the end of the story, Scuppers achieves what he set out to do, and has truly become a sailor:

And here he is where he wanted to be – a sailor sailing the deep green sea.

That Scuppers fully embraces his identity and is aware of his own potential and agency is expressed in his song, with which the book ends. It goes:

I am Scuppers the Sailor Dog –
I'm Scuppers the Sailor Dog –
I can sail in a gale
right over a whale
under full sail
in a fog.

I am Scuppers the Sailor Dog –
I'm Scuppers the Sailor Dog –
with a shake and a snort
I can sail into port
under full sail
in a fog.

As a canine Robinsonade this is a powerful and empowering story. But if we ask ourselves if there are other consequences of the choice for a dog as the protagonist we encounter various complexities.

The Robinsonade, characterized by the protagonist's solitude and isolation, might benefit from a canine protagonist. In a picture book for young readers, these motifs might be more easily mediated by an (adult) animal than by a human, since animals do not necessarily require social bonds. For Scuppers, family ties are not as important as they would be for human beings, and concerns about loneliness can be avoided. In real life, pets are often kept in isolation, and their social needs are not always respected, so why should they be in books?

In *The Sailor Dog*, there are certain omissions in either text or image that have interesting consequences for the ideological content of the story. *The Sailor Dog* has a fascinating opening: the first image shows a dog in a Macintosh holding the wheel of the ship while around him a storm is raging. The text below the picture reads: 'Born in the teeth of a gale, the sailor was a dog. Scuppers was his name'. Rather confusingly, the story continues saying that Scuppers then moved to a farm, where he grew up, after which he returns to the sea. The question then becomes: who is the dog on the first page? Is it Scuppers' father steering the ship, while his mother gives birth inside the vessel? Or is it a flash-forward to some point in the future where Scuppers himself is sailing the ship? The reader has no way of telling what happened to Scuppers' parents and why they were at sea in the first place.

The opening sentence emphasizes that Scuppers is a dog, and not a human being, but still he is highly anthropomorphized. So is the society he lives in: although it is populated by dogs, these behave in a decisively human fashion (they drive cars, wear clothes, walk on their hind legs). The anthropomorphized Scuppers mirrors an idealized masculinity in which independence and ingenuity are virtues. When Scuppers later returns to sea, he apparently also

deliberately chooses a life of solitude. He has no companions, even though the pictures are filled with other dogs, some inviting him to join them.

The shipwreck and Scupper's subsequent stranding on a desert island underpin the connection to the genre of the Robinsonade. Among the wreckage is a toolbox, which allows Scuppers to build a house on the beach. Only later in a dream, does he realize that if he can build a house, he can also fix the hole in the ship – something the reader might already have realized. After the ship is repaired, Scuppers sails to a foreign land where he needs to buy clothes, since his old ones are worn. Although all the other dogs are dressed in exotic clothing, reminiscent of Eastern clothes, there is an Army and Navy store selling tropical uniforms. The colonial context is undeniable, and *The Sailor Dog* naturalizes it. The dog is an appropriate species for this kind of naturalization, since it addresses culturally cultivated presumptions that determine even the child reader's perception. In western societies, stories we tell about dogs testify of our admiration for their loyalty, for the way they protect 'their' families, and their devotion and obedience. Their assets are often described in militaristic vocabulary, and relationships with 'man's best friend' often have a command-and-obey structure. Also, pet keeping cannot be separated from the issue of ownership.

At the same time as Scuppers serves to naturalize ideology, he is also presented as someone who has emancipated himself. The absence of humans in the story's universe and his status as an adult make him independent, something that doesn't happen when the protagonists are pets. Moreover, *The Sailor Dog's* connection to the genre of the Robinsonade deepens the degree of anthropomorphism, and with it the naturalization of ideological stances regarding masculinity, militarism and colonialism. The adult world is idealized and the dog becomes a vehicle through which colonial power relations are reproduced.

Encountering human and nonhuman others in The Little Trapper

The Little Trapper (1950), written by Kathryn and Byron Jackson and illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren, depicts and problematizes intercultural and interspecies interactions. These meetings take place within a context of play, from the perspective of the protagonist, but the concept of play is problematized and the reader is challenged to question the validity of the boy's claim to play when not all parties are informed of the playful nature of their interactions. What makes this story uniquely interesting is the intersection of hunting, killing, intercultural power relations and gender roles.

The cover immediately shows us that exertion of power over animals is central to this story, as a little redheaded boy is lifting a rabbit by the ears. Although the boy is Caucasian, he is dressed in clothing that is distinctly

non-European: a leather shirt, moccasins and a raccoon hat are reminiscent of Native American clothing but also of the clothes that hunters and trappers used to wear.

The title page introduces the main characters: the four corners of the page show illustrations of the boy we recognize from the cover, a fox, a bear cub and a little dark-haired girl, also dressed in Native American clothing. The first page then shows how the little boy confidently walks through the woods, holding a large rifle in his right hand. The narrative starts as follows:

One day Dan put on his fluffy coonskin cap and took his real gun and ran out of the stockade and out of the clearing, into the deep woods. "I'm a trapper," he said. "I'm going to get a bearskin and a deerskin and a whole brace of rabbit skins. And when I meet the little Indian, she'll say: 'Hurray for Dan, the brave trapper!'"

As the boy states his intentions, it is clear that the story immediately explores the implications of play and make-belief by confusing the reader regarding what is real and what isn't. The sizeable rifle, taller than the boy himself, gives the overall image a comic effect. That the reader may not want to take little Dan's comments on killing animals too seriously is explained when we turn the page:

Just then a baby rabbit hopped across the path. Dan stopped and aimed his gun at it. But the rabbit sat up, looked right at Dan, and smiled. "Hello!" it called. "What are you playing? Can I play, too?" The rabbit was so soft and small that Dan didn't feel like shooting it just then.

When the rabbit asks if he can join the game, his appearance and behavior make the boy abandon his plan to shoot it. The rabbit, by addressing the boy directly and presenting himself as a person, even a possible playmate, has crossed a line. And by asking Dan if he can join the game, the rabbit assumes that, even though he does not understand the nature of Dan's game, it must be play.

But he has also violated the rules of the game, which frustrates the boy because it forces him to think about the nature of what he is pretending to be. The reader may suspect that Dan didn't count on actually meeting a rabbit, that it was the unbroken illusion of the game that was his objective. So when a real rabbit enters the game, and, even worse, addresses the boy, the illusion is shattered and the game is over. Or is it?

The text describes the boy's emotional state as 'vexed', and he sends the rabbit on his way with the words: 'Go home before something bad happens to you'. The rabbit, not understanding what that bad thing might be, walks away, but as the reader will soon find out, he keeps following Dan. At that point, the girl enters the story:

Just then Dan heard a rustling sound behind him. He turned and saw the little Indian girl crouched in the bushes. She was laughing at him. "Tee-hee-hee," she laughed. "You don't look like much of a hunter!" Dan looked unhappy.

Just as the rabbit's behavior disrupted his fantasy, the girl's reaction frustrates him because it does not meet Dan's expectations. What is more, she actively challenges Dan's identity as a hunter:

"Why didn't you shoot that rabbit?" said the little Indian. "Rabbit skins make nice soft mittens." "Rabbit skins make nice soft rabbits, too," Dan said.

Dan's initial reluctance to kill the rabbit quickly transforms into an attitude of condescending superiority when the girl questions his hunting skills. When she challenges him, he can no longer be the hero in his own fantasy, but is forced to make a real decision. What started out as play has now turned into a situation where his masculinity is threatened, and he blames the girl for it. The character of the male hero has a central place in western fiction, and his superiority is based on his rationality. In *Deconstructing the Hero* (1997) Margery Hourihan describes how rationality and a sense of moral superiority participate in the hero myth that permeates Western culture:

In the post-colonial world the assumption of Western cultural superiority endures as is evident from the widespread acceptance of the role of the West, and especially of the United States, as international peace-keeper and moral guardian, and it is the rational and scientific basis of western culture which is seen as accounting for both its economic and its supposed moral preeminence. The racism, inequity and violence which disfigure American life, the ruthless consumerism and the moral deficiencies of the economic rationalism which drives Western policies are perceived as merely external sores upon an inner purity, the pure superiority which the hero myth inscribes. And the myth dominates contemporary popular culture in the West, both for children and adults. (31)

Children's texts often use animals as spokespersons to mediate this ideology. In *The Little Trapper*, the animals are not passive victims, instead, they support this ideal of rational superiority by beating the boy at his own game. And in doing so, they reinforce a tradition that values rationalism and mastery. What is tragic about this story is that Dan aspires to become the young hunting colonialist, but is conflicted about actually committing acts of violence. The anthropomorphized animals offer him a way out of this dilemma, but the fox takes advantage of the boy's weakness.

Hourihan writes about the 'motif of the good animal, the natural leader who brings reason and order to his fellows in the wilderness, saving them from evil dangers' (32) when she discusses the *Babar* stories and *The Lion King* as examples of this doctrine of reason in children's culture. In *The*

Tawny, Scrawny Lion, the rabbit fulfills this function when he saves his fellows from the lion by his cunning. But, as we have seen, the fish is not among his fellows. In the rabbit's universe, the fish is the other whose killing is not considered a crime, whose death is not mourned and who will not be missed because he wasn't noticed in the first place. The fish was not among the animals who could discuss their problem and who could appoint a spokesperson to negotiate with the lion. The fish can be killed because he is not included into the community of rational, speaking subjects. This is another example of how animal characters can reinforce colonial power structures by naturalizing them. Houhihan writes:

The use of animals as the characters in such children's stories implies that the dominance of reason and those who bestow it is a universal principle, a 'law of nature', part of the process of evolution, not merely a matter of human politics. (32)

In *The Little Trapper*, we find no 'good animals', but there are some very cunning ones. The fox, an animal that in many stories is associated with a self-centered kind of intelligence lives up to his status as trickster. He fools the little boy, who is too preoccupied, and perhaps too naïve to notice. From the onset, it is clear that Dan wants to impress the girl, and in his eyes, the appropriate way to achieve his goal is by killing and skinning animals. The idea that this is the kind of activity that will endear him to the Indigenous girl is in itself proof of a colonialist attitude, since it presupposes that her culture is the more primitive one. Dan's reaction to her statement that rabbits make nice soft mittens confirms this. He criticizes her view of the animal as a source for fur, while only seconds ago he was playing at being a trapper and offering her the animal skins to impress her.

Play here makes all the difference. It can be thought of as a mitigating circumstance, justifying Dan's actions – he did not really want to kill the animals, after all. So when Dan is confronted with the opinion of the girl, he seems to abandon the mode of play. He admits to the girl that he is 'not really a hunter', but when she then asks him what he is, if not a hunter, he answers:

"I'm a great trapper!"

"I'm a great trapper," said Dan again. "I trap deer and bears and foxes. I'm going to trap some today."

"Are you?" asked the little Indian in a respectful voice.

"Will you give me one for a fox-fur pillow?"

"Certainly!" the little trapper promised, and he walked off feeling very important.

When he sets out to place his fox traps, he meets 'a furry red animal with a white tummy and black ears'. The reader can identify the animal in the illustration as a fox, but Dan, who has never seen a fox, doesn't recognize the

creature. The fox, taking advantage of the situation, learns from Dan how traps are set and when Dan goes to inspect the other four, the fox sabotages the biggest trap, designed for the biggest fox. The fox shares his intentions with the reader:

As soon as the little trapper had gone, the fox went to the trap and very cautiously moved it forward two steps. He covered it with small branches and a mouthful of moss.

“There!” he laughed. “Now we’ll see who catches who! Maybe the trapper will get trapped.”

In the meantime, Dan is busy with his other traps, which contain a deer, a porcupine and a bear. All plea with him to set them free, and he does, since he wanted to catch foxes, and a deer, porcupine and a sticky bear covered in honey won’t make good pillows. When he returns to the big trap, he sees the fox, and now the other animals identify him as a fox. Excited, Dan walks towards him and falls into his own trap. The fox, content that his trick has worked, is not planning to release Dan any time soon, but the other animals feel sorry for the boy. Unable to convince the fox, the little bear then calls his mother, who is imposing enough to make the fox obey her. But still, Dan won’t stop crying:

”Boo-hoo-hoo. I’m not a good trapper,” he sobbed.

“And I didn’t catch a fox! When I meet that little Indian girl, she’ll laugh at me again!”

The animals, gathered around the sobbing boy, try to comfort him, but nothing can console him, until the fox offers to pretend to be a pillow for the girl. As the fox makes his offer, we see him standing on his hind legs, holding his front legs behind his back, as the text states:

He pushed out his little white chest proudly while all the other animals smiled and nodded and looked at him as if he were a hero.

“You’re a very kind fox,” observed Dan, “and a very fluffy one.”

As the animals happily observe a grateful Dan taking the fox by his paw, the fox is thinking ‘that the little Indian’s father keeps lots and lots of nice, fat, tame chickens.’

So the trickster wins in the end, and the boy gets to pretend that he is a trapper without having to kill any animals. Both are winners, but at the expense of the Indian girl and her family. So even though there are many moments where the boy shows compassion with the animals he has caught, there will be real victims. The girl’s interests don’t weigh as heavy as the boy’s, and as the reader is encouraged to take pleasure in the foxes cunning solution, the interests of the girl’s family are not even considered.

This story is set within a settler society context, which has consequences for the way the reader is invited to react to the ideology reflected in them. Bradford writes that:

Language is the primary mode through which colonizers and colonized encounter one another, and it is the principle means whereby relations of power are challenged and altered. The language of children's books performs and embodies ideologies of all kinds, since children's texts purposively intervene in children's lives to propose ways of being in the world. Settler society texts for children thus constitute an important and influential body of postcolonial works that construct ideas and values about colonization, about postcolonial cultures, and about individual and national identities. (6)

This argument can easily be extrapolated to include the visual dimension of the picture book. Images can be powerful mediators of ideology, and in *The Little Trapper* we find traces of it both in relation to race and species. The involvement of an element of play creates a certain fluidity of identity for the male protagonist. It means that he does not have to justify every intention or action, since there is always the game to hide behind if the situation becomes precarious.

One of the ways colonial attitudes are promoted in and through *The Little Trapper* is the fact that the protagonist's perspective is that of the white male wannabe-hunter. The Indigenous girl is objectified in that she is a catalyzer, but has no active role in the narrative. We only know her through how the white boy describes her to us. We do not have access to her thoughts and the motivations behind her words and actions. And what is more, she comes to represent someone the boy wants to impress by means of primitive, violent actions.

When she speaks and questions him (both his identity and skills as a hunter), Dan responds by informing her that her understanding of the situation is incorrect: first of all, she fails to see the nature of his activity as a game. Second, he points out how her sense of morality is not as advanced as his, since rabbits, to him, are more than their fur. Rabbits have a value in and of themselves, so the boy appears to claim. His compassion and empathy, which lead him to abandon his violent plans, now become the foundation for degrading another human being.

We can also see how ideals of masculinity come into play in this situation. The boy struggles with his decision NOT to kill the rabbit, and the narrator feels obliged to add the words 'just now', indicating that there may be a moment when the boy will follow through. This story shows how intricate the web of gender based expectations are in relation to the hunting and killing of animals, and how species, gender, age and race intersect in a complex negotiation of power through play.

Rewriting colonialism: The Boy and the Tigers.

The two Little Golden Book adaptations of Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo* (1899) are examples of the problematic revision of a picture book in order to avoid racial stereotyping. Bannerman's original, writes Jan Susina, 'has the unenviable reputation as the most racist text in the history of children's literature'. (*Voices of the Other*: 237) Since the publication of the original there have been many adaptations, some of which were more overtly racist than the original and others that tried to rewrite the story to tone down the racist elements. The first Little Golden Book adaptation already made an effort to depict the characters less stereotypically racialized as the original by making the context more Indian. However, the title and the names of the human characters remained the same. In the second adaptation, both the names and the title have been altered to reflect a more authentic Indian atmosphere. However, the question remains whether the revisions of this story can change its ideology.

Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo* has become a problematic picture book because of its stereotypical representation of black people. The interaction with the tigers, too, can be read as an expression of the inferiority of the colonized nonwhite protagonist:

As a text written by a white European in India at the end of the nineteenth century featuring Indian characters, Bannerman's *Sambo* reflects these cultural assumptions and represents a colonial children's text. Bannerman's tigers fit comfortably with Rudyard Kipling's more famous *Shere Khan*, who threatens to destroy Mowgli in the *Jungle Book* (1894), and Bannerman shares some of his imperialistic aims. [...] Bannerman's *Sambo* participates in the British imperialist assumption that Indians, as well as Africans, ought to be civilized into European habits and customs and that such natives were culturally inferior to the English. (*Voices of the Other*: 240-241)

The first Little Golden Book adaptation dates from 1948 and is illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren. This book has made few alterations to Bannerman's text, but the illustrations make an effort to locate the story in India. In spite of this, the clothing *Sambo* wear is a mixture of European and Indian attire. When *Sambo* receives these clothes, this can be read as in initiation into civilization, but the confrontation with the wild tigers threatens *Sambo*'s promotion on the colonial ladder. The accompanying images of a naked *Sambo* form a stark contrast with the white masculine hero we encounter in colonial hunting tales:

The helpless *Sambo* who must strip in order to save himself is a striking example of a feminized nonwhite hero.' (*Voices of the Other*: 241)

Susina describes how Sambo is the opposite of the white colonialist hunter: his actions are not described as heroic and he does not reach manhood by defeating the tigers. (241-242) Little Sambo is not the hunter, but the intended prey, but he escapes because he uses his wit rather than his physical strength. In one sense, Susina claims, Sambo can be linked to the figure of the trickster. But Sambo's victory does not result from his own actions and rational decisions, as is the case in adventure stories with white heroes. Rather, he is lucky that the vain tigers start fighting amongst themselves and in doing so cause their own destruction. However, the tigers never really disappear, but their stripes remain visible in the butter and the pancakes that are consumed by the family. In the conventions of children's literature, we often are what we eat, and by consuming the wild animals the dark-skinned, racialized family ingests the primitive, aggressive wildness of the tigers. Sambo is tainted by this wildness, as the pancakes are.

The second Little Golden Book adaptation was published in 2004 and illustrated by Valeria Petrone. This version changed the title and the offensive names of the protagonists. Sambo's new name is Little Rajani, and his parents are called Ramita and Kapaali. The illustrations to this story are, more than Tenggren's images, culturally appropriate. Rajani's mother Ramita wears a sari and both father Kapaali and Rajani himself wear turbans. Also, the cut of little Rajani's new clothing is much more in line with Indian clothing. Another important difference is that Rajani is saved the embarrassment of being totally naked: he still wears his underwear and the turban.

Even though these adaptations considerably reduce the racism that was still present in Tenggren's illustrations – there were, for example, still traces of blackface in his depictions of Sambo's parents – *The Boy and the Tigers* remains a problematic book. The boy's interaction with the tigers and the significance of the food event are responsible for this.

An exploration of diversity through animal stories? Tales from around the world.

In this section I will briefly discuss two Little Golden Books with retellings of tales from different parts of the world. *How the Zebra Got Its Stripes* (2002), by Justine and Ron Fontes and illustrated by Peter Grosshauer, is a narrative that mimics a television interview. On the left page we see a Caucasian man with a red moustache, wearing a blue and white striped suit and a top hat in the same colors. He stands at a watering hole in what appears to be the African savanna, with an ostrich, a gazelle and a giraffe accompanying

him. In the background, we see a herd of zebras. The text addresses the reader directly in the sensation style of the television reporter:

”Greetings, nature lovers! I’m Professor Linus Pinstripe on the trail of a mystery: How did the zebra get its stripes?”

“Im here at a local watering hole on the plains of Africa with some talkative creatures that say they know the answer. Please tell us what you know, Giraffe.”

Then, the giraffe starts telling his story. The illustrations are clearly framed in what resembled thought bubbles. When the giraffe finishes his story, the Ostrich comments that ‘That is not the story my grandpa told me!’ and he continues to narrate his own version of the story. After the Ostrich, the Gazelle takes over and shares his story with the readers. The lion is the fourth animal to show up and tell his version, and by the time he is finished there is no one left to argue with him, since ‘they had all sneaked away’. But, the text asks the reader: ‘How do YOU think the zebra got its stripes?’ The book then continues with an ‘objective’ narrator who gives us the story of western science, this time without the thought bubbles, but with white men to guide the reader to knowledge.

The text states that ‘No one really knows how the zebra got its stripes – or why!’, discrediting the animals’ stories as mere myth or make-believe. So, although this book claims to be narrating tales from around the world, it ultimately defends a western ideology. All explanations but the one offered by science – which is, in this case not an answer at all, but the admittance of a sheer lack of knowledge – are discredited. This is a reiteration of the rhetoric of cultural imperialism as Houhihan describes it. The story also relies heavily on anthropocentrism to further this ideology. The use of animal narrators who tell the stories and an omniscient (supposedly human) narrator who mediates the scientific knowledge. The different, conflicting versions of the animals and their dispute form a contrast with the human narrator’s objective language. In the presence of the white man who organizes the narrative we encounter another instance of a Eurocentric authority figure. Ultimately, we can only trust the white man to be in a position to judge the truth claims of the animals, and they all fail the test.

How the Camel got its Hump (2001) is also written by Justine and Ron Fontes, and the illustrations are by Keiko Motoyama. The narrator of this story presents herself as Shari Zodd, who knows ‘a thousand and one tales!’. Dressed in harem trousers, tunic and a veil, she represents the exotic other. The room she stands in, however, is filled with cultural artefacts that symbolize western knowledge: books, paintings, and statues. They all contain information about the camel, which Shari will share with the reader:

Today I will tell you some camel tales, for the camel is a most amazing animal. Every part of its body is just right for life in the hot, cold, windy, and

dry, dry, dry desert. But no part of the camel is more amazing than its hump! How did the camel get its hump? Listen, and I will tell you.

Shari tells the reader about Aesop's version of the tale, she then shares a Chinese story, then one with unspecified origins and she finishes with the story as it was told by Rudyard Kipling. These tales are, as in *How the Zebra got its Stripes*, followed by two pages devoted to 'scientific knowledge', focusing on the camel's anatomy. Interestingly, the text resembles advertising language when it praises the camel's body as 'perfect for its desert home. Each camel comes with these fantastic features!' The camel's body is not only subjected to scientific objectification, it is also presented as a commodity. The final page explains the word 'HA-RUMP (camel attitude)':

Camels are hardworking, helpful animals. They can also be smelly, and sometimes they spit on or bite their handlers.

Camels often groan when they are being loaded or unloaded, and they are famous for being grouchy.

The image below these words shows a camel being loaded by his handler. The anthropomorphic language in this section combined with the skeptical expression on the animal's face should make the reader aware that the camel himself may not be that pleased with his casting as a beast of burden. The intersecting discourses of fiction, science, commercialism and animal psychology construct the identity of the camel, and in this sense this story is more respectful in its attitude to both the animal as the colonial other.

Conclusions

In this dissertation I have attempted to analyze how commercial picture books can function as repositories of certain culturally accepted ideas about human-animal relationships. I focused my analysis around clusters of books that express particularly interesting relationships, situations, or dilemmas. As it turned out, most of these books were published in the first two decades of the Little Golden Books. This could be a coincidence, but in my opinion it also reflects the particular artistic climate that could give rise to these books. The spirit of innovation that surrounded the early years of the Little Golden Books, as well as the international influences of their illustrators and authors contributed to the particular charisma of these early books. This climate also has consequences for the representation of the animals. The diverse cultural backgrounds of the artists and authors involved in the creation of the early Little Golden Books in particular, shines through in their work. These people brought their stories and their ideas about animals with them, which finds expression in the texts and images of The Little Golden Books.

As many of the Little Golden Books discussed in this dissertation reveal, even merchandise books contain many layers of meaning. Fictional animals, even if they are anthropomorphized to a high degree, carry with them the cultural histories crafted by the human societies they are part of. It is therefore impossible to consider them in a vacuum – and adopting an anthropocentric perspective is such a vacuum. These animals also remind us that the human-animal boundary is not an absolute divide. The picture book is a blurry, messy space where animals of different species meet, interact, and acquire meaning through acts of representation and interpretation.

I argue that the Little Golden Books display connections to middle class lifestyle and values on several levels, which has consequences for the ideology that is reflected in the individual books. The models for interspecies interactions that these books offer their readers do not deviate from the middle class ideals of child rearing; they are grounded in what Grier has termed the ‘domestic ethic of kindness’. Since the ethic of kindness is still a common aspect of middle class upbringing, this may also be the reason why there are no spectacular changes in the type of human-animal interactions and relationships between the early books and the more recent ones. Interactions with animals in The Little Golden Books are predominantly aimed at fostering empathy and encouraging a caring attitude towards animals, pets in particular.

But at the same time as children are encouraged to be kind and considerate towards their pets, and to treat them in ways that respect their species-specific needs, they are also asked to discipline them and to socialize them into good members of the household. In this respect, the domestication of pets mirrors the domestication of the child. Such messages hinge on the assumption of a high level of identity between the human child and the animal. The balance between otherness and identity is fragile and is negotiated in each of the Little Golden Books discussed in this dissertation.

Anthropomorphism is a key component of the animal representations in this series, and it serves a number of functions. A common explanation of the popularity of anthropomorphic animal characters is that can eliminate the need to specify the character's age, class, gender or ethnicity. Although this can be the case, species itself can take over the function of creating difference and social hierarchies, while simultaneously naturalizing them. It is important to stress the workings of speciesism in picture books, because species difference is fundamental to other categories of (inter-human) difference.

The varying degrees of anthropomorphism also influence how the reader relates to real animals. Since picture books form an important part of the reader's socialization process, there is an ethical component involved when animals are represented. Again, the balancing act between respecting an animal's otherness and understanding the similarities between different species is critical. The use of critical literacy can be an effective starting point to interrogate the stories from different perspectives. This strategy can be particularly fruitful in cases where we encounter animals that display different degrees of anthropomorphism. Asking the reader to adopt the animal perspective, for example, can encourage her to consider a non-anthropocentric point of view.

The interplay of image and text can complicate the message of the picture book. When this happens, this tends to reflect tensions on a deeper, cultural level. Sometimes, the images convey a message that the text cannot explicitly address. When the book has an implicit controversial message, these moments of discrepancy become particularly significant. The analysis of *The Tawny, Scrawny Lion* demonstrated how the fish is the only animal whose death is depicted and who is being consumed in front of the reader. While the text seems indifferent to the death of the fish, and only refers to its identity as a food item, the images imply that the fish once was a living creature, too. The animal's eyes are crossed out, which is a pictorial convention used to signal that a character is not conscious or alive. Here it also indicates the act of the erasure of an animal's subjectivity.

In this dissertation I wanted to draw attention to relatively minor events such as this one, since they occur in many commercial picture books, and even though they seem innocent at first glance, they reveal how biased our culture is with regard to certain types of animal suffering. It is through such

small incidents that tend to go unnoticed that young readers are gradually familiarized with the ideology of anthropocentrism; this creates the conditions that make it easier to take animal suffering for granted.

There are, however, commercial picture books that question certain aspects of our behavior towards animals. In some of these texts, animal agency is most effectively expressed on the level of the images. This was the case in Richard Scarry's Christmas story, where the goose actively distances herself from her role as a food item on the table, and instead claims her place as a family member at the dinner table. In spite of the obvious differences between the species, she manages to establish a respectful relationship. That this personal victory for the goose then goes at the expense of another animal shows once again how deeply engrained habits like meat eating are. The possibility of extending their compassion to other birds is not mentioned, which highlights one of the ways in which children's books can be simultaneously unorthodox and conservative, especially when it comes to the representation of food events.

Such complexities can be found in many of the picture books that I have discussed in this dissertation. The three chapters focus on different context in which human-animal interactions and relationships are constructed in these books. I have tried to capture those situations that, when they are analyzed critically, are most likely to influence readers' conceptualization of their relationships with non-human animals.

Pets and domestic spaces

The first chapter of this dissertation discussed domesticated animals, pets, and their interactions with human characters. The first case study analyzed a number of Little Golden Books with canine protagonists, the second one discusses the representation of cats. The discussion of canine protagonists focused on how picture books can mediate and encourage species difference. In most cases, the way this difference is depicted reinforces species hierarchy such as it exists within an anthropocentric frame of thought. In addition, adult-child hierarchies can be reflected and reinforced through the depictions of the fictional animals.

One of the interesting aspects of this chapter is the observation that the whenever there are issues touching on socialization and power, the animals are implicated in the adult-child hierarchy. Not as stand-ins for children, but as creatures that occupy a similar position of subordination and dependence in Western culture. This makes them deserving of care and consideration, and there is ample attention for that aspect of human-animal interaction in the Little Golden Books discussed in this dissertation. However, it also puts pressure on both animals and children to learn to ignore certain instincts and

control certain impulses in order to become functional members of a family unit and ultimate of society.

And here animals and human children diverge: whereas children can learn to become fully socialized members of human society, animals are not given a similar opportunity. They are at risk of becoming instrumental in the education and socialization of the human child – in the narrative as well as in real life. Unless the narrative challenges the reader to question the position of animals in human societies: this can occur overtly by means of using the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, such as in *Topsy, Turvy Circus*. Or a critical attitude can be encouraged more discreetly, by pointing out that animals have species-specific needs that may differ from our own, and that may require us to adjust our expectations of the relationship. This happens in stories such as *My Kitten*.

The case study that focused on cats demonstrated how, in the depiction of cats, other aspects of the interspecies relationship are emphasized than in the stories with dog protagonists. Living with cats requires a different set of skills and expectations than living with dogs. The Little Golden Books that depict relationships with pet cats invite a reading strategy that highlights empathy and compassion.

In this chapter we have seen two effects of the use of anthropomorphism in picture books. On the one hand, it can encourage readers to think of species difference terms of species hierarchy, where the human is always implicitly highest in rank. The cultural history of the species and the lived relationships people have with their pets influence the representations to a large extent. Pethood has many faces, and ‘dogness’ seems to invite readings that focus on socialization through dominance.

On the other hand, anthropomorphism can be used as an empathy-enhancing mechanism. The focus, in that case, is not on difference but on identity, on that what unites us in spite of our differences. In the cat stories, however, empathy relies not only on anthropomorphism. Instead, there is a fine balance between identity and difference that the reader needs to comprehend. Anthropomorphism, seen through this lens, is a narrative technique that stimulates the reader’s imagination and encourages cross-species empathy.

The anthropomorphized cats in these picture books encourage readers to use their imagination in order to envision what it is like to belong to a different species. By using our imagination, we are encouraged to develop our empathy so that it can encompass non-human animals as well as humans. Indirectly, this opens up discourses of inter-human otherness. *The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse* is perhaps the most obvious example of how anthropomorphism can be employed to achieve a sense of cross-species community. It addresses issues of belonging and overcoming fear of difference that are relevant for young readers. However, the complexity of the word-image interaction makes that the reader can never be entirely sure that nurture has triumphed over nature.

The possibility of living in a multi-species community is also addressed in *My Little Golden Book* about cats. This story represents grandmother's house as a space where cats and humans can live together harmoniously, as long as species difference is acknowledged and negotiated appropriately. The combination of factual language and pictorial narrative to provide the reader with knowledge as well as a source of empathy and compassion.

An active imagination is a requirement in order to develop empathy, and sometimes this means that we have to curb our behavior and expectations to allow otherness and difference as a component of friendship. *My Kitten* shows how, sometimes, people have to apologize to their pets. It points out that there is a risk of anthropomorphizing them too much: a cat is not a toy, is not a puppet, is not a child. And living in multi-species community is not easy, it requires negotiations and we sometimes make mistakes. Children do not always live in playful harmony with the animals in their home. Animals can resist, and in their resistance they exercise agency, which has to be respected for friendship to flourish. This forms a contrast to the dog stories from the previous case study, which emphasized the active, disciplining engagement of the child in the education and socialization of the dog. Anthropomorphism, as it is employed and interpreted in this case study, highlights that interspecies friendships are always predicated on the negotiation of difference and identity.

Wild and domesticated spaces and species

Chapter two moves away from the domestic spaces that form the setting for most of the Little Golden Books discussed in the first chapter, and focuses on issues of wildness and domestication. A study of the contrast between wild and domestic animals in the Little Golden Books shows that in many instances where animals are depicted more or less realistically, that is, with a low degree of anthropomorphism, these animals frequently belong to domesticated species. Pets or farm animals, for example, are routinely depicted with a low degree of visual anthropomorphism: they do not speak human language, are not dressed in human clothes and their bodies are not altered in order to resemble human bodies. According to Noske 'It is the domesticated animal, more than any other, that has come to represent the animal for us.' (2) This could be the reason why these animals are often allowed to remain more animal-like in their appearance. They are easy to recognize because they occupy spaces close to home.

By contrast, when we are confronted with exotic animals, they are often humanized to a higher degree. This can happen in various ways. It can be subtle, for example by only accentuating the animals' neotenous traits (big

eyes, big heads, soft, rounded lines, plump bodies). Or it can be more pronounced, when the animals are dressed up in human clothes, are bipedal, have hands instead of hooves/paws, speak a human language or operate human technology. We may wonder what the reason behind this difference could be. Does the otherness of the wild animal require an act of anthropomorphizing to facilitate identification or empathy in the reader? The complexity and the often conflicting views on the place of animals in relation to human societies find a reflection in picture books. This happens on several levels: that of the text, that of the image and in the way words and images interact. Gaps of meaning or conflicting messages in text and images can indicate complex cultural issues.

Narratives of domestication find their way into picture books, and children are often given an active role in the process of taming wild or feral animals. Especially in horse stories, the bond between the child and the horse is presented as more profound than any relationship that can exist between horses and their adult owners or riders. The act of taming a 'difficult' horse socializes the young protagonists into a society that uses animals for labor (and food, but that is not addressed in these picture books).

Other stories in this chapter focused on animals that belong to species that are not domesticated but are nonetheless asked to function in human society. These stories highlight other aspects of anthropomorphism: it can be used as a source of entertainment and to promote certain ideas. The entertainment industry has long known that animals that imitate human behavior are a source of amusement, as the story of J. Fred Muggs demonstrates. In the picture book, the introduction of the chimpanzee's young human companion stresses this resemblance, and uses it to justify the humanization of the ape.

Organizations such as the Advertising Council also use animals to further their messages: to engender empathy and captivate the attention of (young) audiences. Emotional engagement can initiate cross-species compassion, as in *Topsy Turvy Circus*, which explores the power imbalance that lies at the core of the animal entertainment industry. But it can also mask questionable ideological purposes. The fictionalization of animal celebrities has an added value in this process because it allows for a higher degree of anthropomorphism. By transforming them into characters in the picture book, anthropomorphizing them becomes less problematic. The real animals that are implicated by these stories become entangled in a web of symbolical meanings that does influence their daily lives. In Smokey Bear's case, anthropomorphism's prime function can be to highlight the similarities between human and animal, and stress the importance of imitating the good example set by the animal. Simultaneously, this naturalizes the conservation effort – which, as we have seen, is not always in the ecosystem's best interest.

Anthropomorphism and ethics

These ethical considerations are further explored in the third chapter, which demonstrates how an analysis of anthropomorphism helps to unlock the ethical dimension of the picture books, and it does so, mainly, by putting into question where the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman run. Again, anthropomorphism plays a pivotal role in this process. Precisely because the animal protagonists are anthropomorphized, they can provide us with insights regarding the very nature of the human-animal relationship, and the moral implications that follow from depicting species in terms of difference and hierarchy. The hybridity of these creatures confuses strict species boundaries, and this creates possibilities for the identification of fundamental frictions in our thinking about the human-nonhuman animal binary.

Visual and verbal anthropomorphism may uphold an anthropocentric worldview, while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between the human and the animal. What we have seen is how the representation of species difference in these texts is not purely a matter of biological classification. Nor is it a simple case of metaphorical imagery. In an intricate constellation of constantly shifting meaning, speciesist discourse informs the reader's possible interpretations of these narratives. Ideologically, species becomes the concept that motivates thinking in terms of difference and social hierarchies.

Anthropomorphic characters defy essentialist ideas about subjectivity, animal agency, and human superiority - while at the same time, their bodies are inscribed with attributes of speciesism. These animals become interesting because their very form challenges the nature-culture divide. Their bodies are meeting places of the natural and the cultural, and they cannot be considered separately without losing significant information. Anthropomorphism, therefore, is not a straightforward projection of human properties onto fictional animals. It is complex, confuses boundaries, and can't be resolved by solely relying on dichotomies.

Picture books can set up animals as colonial others, and as such they suffer the same fate as their human counterparts. They can also play a role in mediating cultural imperialism, something which is more likely to happen when the animals are anthropomorphized. I suggest that critical literacy, which originated in the field of postcolonial criticism, can inspire those of us who work with animal representations in children's literature to develop reading strategies that enable readers to meaningfully discuss animality and humanity. Since critical literacy helps readers to identify power relations in a text, without directing them towards acquiescence, it can be a helpful tool to investigate how commercial picture books construct human-animal relations.

Open questions

In this dissertation I have not explored how critical literacy can practically be applied in the classroom. This would be an excellent starting point for further research, especially in combination with reader response theory and educational theories that take into consideration how children learn to read words and images. As mentioned earlier, there are four dimensions to critical literacy according to Van Sluys, Lewison and Flint (2002):

- Disrupting the commonplace
- Considering multiple viewpoints
- Focusing on the sociopolitical
- Taking action

Using critical literacy in order to familiarize readers with the fact that each text contains different points of view, but that the text does not always value them equally, can be a good starting point to discuss picture books and the animal characters in them. When interacting with young readers, we may ask them to identify the role of each animal in the narrative and to examine the interactions between the different species, including humans. Such conversation can, for example, focus on discussing and questioning whose point of view is the dominant point of view, and why. It is also valuable to train readers to look for contradictions in the text and the images that might be interesting to explore further, as they may reveal controversies in society. Examples of concrete questions that may come up are:

- Why do the characters in this picture book think that it is okay to eat a fish, but not okay to eat a zebra? And do we as readers feel the same?
- Why do we keep pets? Is it always nice to be a pet?
- When and for whom is it allowed to eat other animals?
- Can we justify keeping animals for entertainment, education, research, competition or pleasure? Are there any benefits for the animals?

With this in mind we have a good starting point for a conversation that eventually leads to an evaluation of real life interactions with animals. Asking and discussing such questions may be disruptive, since the answers may contradict or question young people's lifestyles. On the other hand, being made familiar with the power of visual and verbal narrative early on in life will assist them in becoming well-informed about their life choices, which always have consequences for other living creatures.

Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling undersöker de visuella och verbala representationerna av djur i ett antal kommersiella bilderböcker för barn. De analyserade bilderböckerna utgör ett urval ur serien *The Little Golden Books*. De första tolv böckerna i serien utgavs i USA 1942 och finns fortfarande i tryck. Samtidigt publiceras kontinuerligt nya böcker. Eftersom dessa populära bilderböcker har haft en omfattande läsekrets redan från början och att böckerna i serien utmärks av en uniform estetik, kan en komparativ analys ge fördjupad kunskap om de återkommande relationerna mellan människor och djur.

Barnlitteraturen kan diskuteras utifrån olika idéer om makt. Djur blir politiska varelser, inte enbart genom att fungera på ett didaktiskt plan, utan också genom att varje representation av ett djur skriver fram idéer och antaganden om relationer mellan människan och djuret. Genom att använda ett teoretiskt ramverk baserat på HAS (Human-Animal Studies), och mer specifikt även litterära djurstudier, analyserar denna avhandling representationen av interaktioner och relationer mellan människor och djur i olika sammanhang.

Innan uppkomsten av HAS, var antropocentriska och humanistiska tolkningar av djurens närvaro i barnlitteratur vanliga. En del av min metod är att ifrågasätta hur skillnader och hierarkier mellan arter konstrueras verbalt, visuellt och genom interaktionen mellan ord och bild. Utifrån detta kan jag diskutera konsekvenser för läsarens konceptualisering av relationerna mellan människor och djur. I barnlitteraturen korsas ofta speciesism och ageism, till exempel när yngre barn sammanliknas med (unga) djur eller när djur presenteras som stand-ins för yngre barn. Avhandlingen utforskar mekanismerna bakom representationer av speciesism i bilderböckerna.

Syftet är att analysera hur kommersiella bilderböcker såsom *The Little Golden Books* har potential att forma unga läsares tankar kring mänsklighet och djuriskhet, artskillnader och hierarkier samt möjligheter till interaktioner mellan arter. Den socialiserande egenskap som är ett viktigt element i barnlitteratur bidrar till att bilderböckerna kan forma läsarnas attityder från tidig ålder. Hur djuren är representerade riktar in läsaren mot en specifik ideologi. I västvärlden är denna ideologi primärt antropocentrisk. I västerländska kulturer ser man normalt barn och djur som naturliga allierade, och som sådana blir de ofta gestaltade som en motsats till vuxen kultur.

Avhandlingen består av 3 kapitel med en kulturanalytisk inledning om *Little Golden Books* och bokseriens historia i diskussion med tidigare forsk-

ning. Den identifierar på vilka sätt konservativa tendenser aktiveras av bilderböckerna, och betonar samtidigt att dessa kan förvandlas till ett estetiskt område där antropocentrism kan utmanas. De "case studies" som utvecklas i avhandlingen visar hur även "osofistikerade" bilderböcker innehåller intressanta drag av djur-relaterad ideologi som fordrar djupare analys för att få en förståelse. De visuella och verbala dimensionerna av bilderböckerna visar att berättelserna verkar inom i en kulturell kontext som kan frilägga djurens betydelse. En återkommande tematik är antropomorfismens funktion och den roll den spelar för värderingen av djur i böckerna. Jag är speciellt intresserad av hur bilderböckerna gestaltar olika grader av antropomorfism. Det ger en analytisk potential för att utmana gränser mellan arter och för att utmana dikotomin mellan människor och djur.

Illustrations

Figure 1: *Poes Pinkie (1953)*

Schmidt, Annie M. G. 1953. *Poes Pinkie*. Illustrated by A.M. Provensen. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.

Figure 2: *Dr. Penny Patterson interacting with Koko*

Koko's Kitten. Copyright 1985. The Gorilla Foundation.

Figure 3: *J. Fred Muggs having breakfast*

Shapiro, Irwin. 1955. *J. Fred Muggs*. Illustrated by Edwin Schmidt. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 4: *The Ugly Dachshund (1966)*

Memling, Carl. 1966. *The Ugly Dachshund*. Illustrated by Mel Crawford. New York: Golden Press.

Figure 5: *Mister Dog*

Wise Brown, Margaret. 1952. *Mister Dog. The Dog Who Belonged to Himself*. Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 6: *The Miggs family at the dinner table.*

Norton, Miriam. 1951. *The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse*. Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 7: *Mickey and his toy mouse.*

Norton, Miriam. 1951. *The Kitten Who Thought He Was a Mouse*. Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 8: *Topsy Turvy Circus (1953)*

Duplaix, Georges. 1953. *Topsy Turvy Circus*. Illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 9: *Topsy Turvy Circus (1953)*

Duplaix, Georges. 1953. *Topsy Turvy Circus*. Illustrated by Gustaf Tenggren. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Figure 10: *The 'real Smokey' in the Washington Zoo.*
Smokeybear.com, December 2016

Figure 11: *Poster from the 1943 campaign*
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Figure 12: *The Disney characters in 1944*
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Figure 13: *The first poster featuring the character of Smokey the Bear, 1944.*
Smokeybear.com, December 2016

Figure 14: *Scuppers, the sailor dog*
Wise Brown, Margaret. 1953. *The Sailor Dog*. Illustrated by Garth Williams.
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