

A STUDY OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Whilst an accepted area of investigation in most other English speaking countries, indigenous children's literature is a relatively new area of academic study in South Africa. Traditionally, South Africa children's literature has been targeted for a white middle class audience. In addition, most of the fiction for children that was available in South Africa, with the exception of fiction in Afrikaans, tended to be imported children's literature, which meant that there was little by way of indigenous children's literature being produced. However, since the mid-1970s there has been a considerable increase in the local production of children's literature, much of which in the last five years has been intended for a wider and more comprehensive audience and market.

This study considers various issues relevant to the field of children's literature in South Africa, through both traditional means of research as well as through a series of interviews with people involved in the field itself. The focus of this dissertation is a sociological study of the process whereby children's literature is disseminated in South Africa. International theories of children's literature are briefly considered in so far as they relate to indigenous children's literature. Of particular interest to this study are current thoughts about racial and gender stereotypes in children's literature, as well as the recently developed theory of 'anti-bias' children's literature.

The manner in which people's attitudes to and about children's literature are shaped is explored in detail. Traditional methods of publishing and distributing children's literature, as well as the current and uniquely South African award system are considered. The need to broaden the scope of current publishing methods is highlighted and the ways in which publishers foresee themselves doing this is considered. The limitations of current methods of distribution are highlighted, and some more innovative approaches, some of which are currently being used in other parts of Southern Africa, are suggested. The gap between the 'black' and the 'white' markets are considered, and possible methods of overcoming this

divide are considered. The indigenous award system is considered in relation to international award systems, and criticisms of the South African award system are discussed. The issue of whether or not children should read indigenous children's literature is considered. The debate about this issue centres around a belief in the importance of children having something with which to identify when they read, as opposed to a belief in the culturally and ideologically isolating effects of providing children with mainly indigenous children's literature to read. Finally, the current belief in children's literature as a means of bridging gaps in South African society is considered through a study of three socially aware genres – namely, folktales, historical fiction and socially aware youth fiction. By way of conclusion, some of the issues raised in the body of this study are highlighted and discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Various theorists argue that social norms are reflected in the types of literature produced for children. This tendency to use children's literature as a means of conveying social norms and practices is common because children, it is argued, are particularly sensitive to outside influences such as literature, television and the media. Further, children are seen as being dependants who are in need of guidance and advice from well intentioned adults. If one accepts that children's literature does to a certain degree reveal aspects of society, then one needs to consider how these norms are revealed. Children's literature reveals various aspects of society at two levels: at one level, children's literature can be said to reflect and project the ideals of a society, as well as a notion of what the society itself would be like under ideal circumstances; at a second and subconscious level, children's literature, when critically examined reveals the 'darker' aspects of the society, that is the assumptions and inherent prejudices that govern norms and behaviour in the society. Whilst a close reading of a specific text will be revealing, also of importance in understanding how children's literature is affected by the society that produces it is the status of children's literature itself, within a specific society. Attitudes towards children's literature reveal how important children and education are perceived to be, and a consideration of distribution practices reveals much about the class and social structure of a society. In South Africa, a study of children's literature, especially given that South Africa has been in a state of political flux and is currently undergoing radical political changes, will reveal aspects of the field and of the society that are worth exploring in some detail.

As a genre, children's literature has existed all over the world since the 1700s. Folktales gathered in the early 1800s in Europe were reworked for children, and moralistic, improving tales have existed for children since the time of the Puritans. As an area of academic study, critical texts have been in existence since the late 1800s, and in more recent times the field has achieved popular as well as academic recognition in England and in

America. Much of the research done in the field of children's literature has been closely allied to educational and psychological research. This type of research has examined the relationship between children's attitudes to literature and to the society in which they live, as well as children's reactions to specific stories. Bibliotherapy – a means of counselling children psychologically using books related to the problems that the child is faced with (for example death or divorce) – is a frequently cited offshoot to the field. As the area of studies of children's literature becomes larger, so has there been an increase in critical and theoretical studies of children's literature. In South Africa, studies of the area are becoming increasingly common and the field is gaining recognition, both publicly and academically. Of particular interest to people studying the field in South Africa are studies which examine children's literature – both individual texts and the advent of the field itself – in its social context. Frequently in South Africa, children's literature is seen as a both social reflector and social commentator. This belief in children's literature as a reflector of social norms and beliefs holds true for both individual texts as well as for the various 'structures' (distribution, publishing, library policies, education departments) that surround the field itself. A study of the structures themselves reveal the status of the field in a country by revealing who the market is perceived to be, as well as disclosing what limitations, in terms of buyers or even political limitations, publishers perceive themselves to be working within.

In the nineteenth century, that is at its very roots, children's literature was seen as a 'moral' force, as a means of teaching and informing children about the society in which they lived. Originally, children's stories set out with the stated intention of providing children with a model of acceptable behaviour as well as with a notion of how a society should function. Charles Kingsley's The Waterbabies, with its characters such as 'Mrs Do-as-you-would-be done-to' amongst others, and its moralising plot, is just one such example of an overtly didactic tale intended to provide children with a notion of how they ought to conduct themselves. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, children were expected to read books for self-improvement rather than for pleasure. Even when these early stories were not overtly improving, they frequently took the form of tales with a moral or a lesson that

could be derived from the plot. Dixon (1977: 70) argues that the moral and ideological content of children's literature can be traced to its origins, saying:

Since literature written specially for children begins with the Puritans, and therefore with the final consolidation of capitalism, most children's literature has the effect of indoctrinating children with a capitalist ideology.

As such, early children's literature focused on the bourgeois way of life and projected a negative or patronising view of peasants and working class people. Literature for children affirmed the status quo, and was in no way intended to be subversive. Alison Lurie (1990: 19-31) in her study of subversive children's literature does, however, argue that by the early 1900s, some children's literature (she argues the 'better' works) had begun to question or at least to mock the status quo. By and large however, because children's literature is 'written, published, reviewed and often sold by people with a middle class upbringing', it tends to be inherently conservative and middle class in its outlook (Dixon 1977: 70).

Early collections of folktales, especially those edited by the Frenchman Charles Perrault, frequently ended with a verse, summarising or encapsulating the 'moral' of the tale – thereby ensuring that the child was exposed to the tales' intentions (Zipes 1989: 119-134). Interesting to note about folktales is that they began as frequently subversive peasant oral tales and were sanitised and absorbed into middle class culture and then reworked in order to enable Perrault to uphold middle class and aristocratic values and standards over mere peasant ones. Whilst the approaches of Bruno Bettelheim (1978) and Jack Zipes (1983) to the fairytale genre are very different (Bettelheim is a Freudian analyst using fairytales in his work with disturbed children and Zipes is a Marxist social theorist), both scholars agree that fairytales or folktales serve a specific function within a society; namely to provide the child reader with a model of socially acceptable behaviour. Fairytales are seen to be a way of transmitting the ideology and beliefs of the specific culture to its younger and therefore uninitiated members. Folktales are an easily defined genre which constitute one of the most widely read types of children's literature (in various personal interviews, booksellers and librarians have indicated that folktales of all types are the most

frequently bought or borrowed children's genre). Whilst today they are seen as 'entertaining' rather than as 'informative', it is worth remembering that the original purpose of the genre was to instruct children in the norms of their society and that the values that they uphold still have the potential to affect a child's outlook on life (consider how the 'Cinderella' complex might affect a little girl, or the 'brave hunter' a little boy).

Even when the nineteenth-century child was not reading an obviously didactic fable, she or he was probably reading a book which through various means upheld the norms and the ideals of her society. One of the most obvious sub-genres in which this happened was the type of literature that grew up around the ideals of 'Empire'. In Imperialism and Popular Culture (J.M. Mackenzie 1986), the effects of imperial ideology on, for example, children's literature are discussed. Books which idealised the British way of life – with its mission to guide the lesser, unenlightened race, with its inherent misogyny and its class consciousness – and which were written by, amongst others, Sir Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, J.G. Ballard and G.A. Henty, abounded. The effect of such texts was to establish a feeling of inherent and unreasoned superiority in their Anglo-Saxon readers, whilst at the same time undermining any self-definition or pride in readers who were 'the colonised'.

In more recent times, there has been a shift away from these blatantly biased and didactic texts towards texts which are apparently without any explicit political messages and intended to be entertaining rather than instructive. However, despite this shift, children's literature still has a 'moral' tone to it. The 'moral' tone that children's literature has currently, is created by publishers and buyers who select texts that are perceived as being 'acceptable' or 'good' books for children. Whilst no publisher or bookseller whom I interviewed in the course of researching this thesis would openly state that they were attempting to select books that reflected an ideal image of society, the criteria used to select children's books indicate that they have a clear idea of what types of books children 'ought' to read. Booksellers like Anne Greenwell (1993) and Lynne Wilson (1993) select books that have 'universal appeal' and which fulfil the emotional needs of a child at various stages.

Books for children, they argue, should have a clear plot with an understandable time sequence in which positive characteristics are highlighted and emphasised and where, in the end, 'good' triumphs over 'evil'. Finally, books for children are expected to be free of harmful stereotyping or biases. These notions of what constitutes a 'good' book – even though the criteria are apparently not overtly didactic – effectively reinforce the values and norms of the society that has produced both the books and the selectors. In some ways this apparent lack of awareness of how criteria and standards are created is more harmful than overt attempts to shape how a child thinks through exposing her to didactic propagandist texts. More dangerous because these standards of selection are being imposed without concern for or awareness of their underlying implications and it is therefore more difficult to alert selectors and writers to the values and norms that they are thrusting on the young readers. Beverly Jansen (1988: 89), in a paper delivered at a 1987 conference on children's literature made the following points about how literature can entrench the values of a society, unless a conscious effort is made to constantly question the values and ideas that are being perpetrated through the text.

All writers are deeply rooted in their present situation; are bound to their past by memory and linked to the future by vision of insight. Literature mirrors the values of a particular society, and unless writers consciously want to change the thinking of the people who make up the society, those faulty values which have been there for generations will continue.

Children's literature through its inherently didactic nature has been involved in the transmission of a dominant culture in that it reflects social values and norms. Literature is seen as a reflector of social values, and studies of children's literature have been used to great effect to reveal some of the preconceptions that a society has about itself. Bob Dixon in the preface to his seminal study on how children's literature contributes to the formation of ideas and ideologies in children, makes the following statement: 'Anyone interested in how ideas – political ideas in the broadest and most important sense – are fostered cannot

afford to neglect children's literature' (1977: xv). Phil Goodall, quoted in Gillian Klein (1985:10), makes the following observation about children's literature:

Children's literature is a form of mass socialisation into language and modes of representing the world and is probably second only to television in its power as a medium of learning the rules and expectations of society.

Further, Dixon argues that children's literature needs to be studied and considered critically because '[m]uch of the material in children's books is anti-social, if not anti-human and is more likely to stunt and warp young people than help them grow' (1977: xv). Dixon in his study argues that most children's books transmit ideas to children at a sub-conscious level and that these ideas are of vital importance in the formation of the child's ideological identity – shaping how the child perceives race, gender, class as well as political ideologies. Three important studies by Bob Dixon (1977), Roy Preisweik (1980) and Gillian Klein (1985) consider in detail the powerful influence that children's books can have on their readers. Children's books are seen as affecting children's outlooks on society and their place therein at both a conscious and an unconscious level. In his preface, Dixon (1977: xiv) raises a series of questions that he suggests should be considered when reading works of children's fiction. These questions are important to consider because of the formative potential of children's literature.

What are the attitudes, values and opinions found in most popular fiction that young people read? how will these contribute to the ideas and beliefs that children form during their impressionable years? what picture of the world is presented to children through literature?

The aspect of children's literature considered by these three writers is an area in which psychological studies of children's responses to children's literature become particularly important. Notions of identity and of the emergence of sexist and racist prejudices in young children are of particular interest, especially within a South African context. One role that the literature examined by Dixon and Preisweik assumes is to condition young readers to the role that society has shaped for them. The assumption of a role frequently requires its

subject to modify her behaviour (in the case of 'making a girl into a woman') or to reject his background, heritage in favour of a western notion of 'civilisation' (in the case of asserting western or white norms and standards). Dixon (1977) makes this point particularly forcefully:

The attitudes and values expressed in the kind of literature [considered in Dixon's study] lead quite naturally to ... self-rejection. When such warped concepts are presented through the powerful medium of literature and reinforced by the child's environment and through other media – not forgetting geography and history – it isn't difficult to understand how [self-rejection and alienation can happen]. At the very least, a black child can find little to identify with in literature and little that's recognisable as his or her own culture. Looking into literature, for such children, is like looking into a mirror and either not seeing your face reflected back or, worse, seeing a distorted mask. Research done on the foundations of racial attitudes in both black and white children ... show that the patterns of racism – the deprivation of cultural identity; the creation of self-rejection; the relegation to sub-human status – are everywhere and always the same (Dixon 1977: 118).

The literature these works consider is children's literature that does not have an overt project, literature which is not overtly attempting to provide the reader with a particular vision of the world. The studies focus on some of the sub-conscious messages that children are exposed to when reading an 'ordinary' book, subliminal messages that the society that produces these books is projecting onto its children. The writers of these three studies perceive children's literature as having the potential to form children's social outlook in a potentially harmful or anti-social way. Arguing that children's literature has the power to influence the way in which children think, they also argue that it is possible to change children's outlooks and ideas for the better.

The effects of literature which transmits limiting ideas to children – be these ideas racist or sexist in origin – are to negatively affect the child's outlook. 'Gradually and in time, an oppressed people come to believe in the inferiority attributed to them by their

oppressors' (Dixon 1977: 65). Their self-image of inferiority is 'internalised', becomes a 'truth' and is subsequently very difficult to displace. Although it is a contentious issue, it can be argued that in a South African context, it is important to encourage the production of indigenous literature that is African-centred and that promotes African values and standards rather than to continue the importing of exotic literature that has different sets of values that an African (a child born in Africa, not necessarily a black child) child might find alienating. Bankole Omotoso (1980: 46-51) writing about children's books in an African context makes the following observations about the impact of imported literature on an African child reader. Whilst Omotoso is speaking specifically of the effects of race on a black African child as well as about the alienation of a black child's vernacular language and the imposition of a colonial medium (English or French), the points that he makes about imposing a value system that is alien to African children holds true for other issues such as gender or class, and can be argued to be true for white African children as well.

By importing books the racial stereotypes of Europe are imposed on children's minds. This is facilitated by the medium of language. African children cannot help but absorb some of the prejudices against themselves inherent in that language and experience [to which they are exposed through literature and education].

Import[ed books] invariably reproduces the European stereotypes, and no critical analysis of their intrinsic value system is made before they are [distributed]. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the notion is put over of a universal value system which is or should be true for all races. Once this 'universal' is accepted, the values contained in children's languages and primary experiences are ignored to their detriment (Omotoso 1980: 46-51).

Many people who work with children and children's literature argue that to attribute such power – power to distort a child's self-image and to inculcate prejudices in a young mind – to children's literature is unrealistic and unnecessarily alarmist. To quote Dixon 'Many people [including many of teachers] are reluctant to admit that small children are affected by racism and are more reluctant still to admit that racist attitudes can be

transmitted via literature' (1977: 118). Gillian Klein raises this frequently expressed reservation and counters it by arguing that a young child exposed to a school medium that teaches her to accept what is presented in print as 'truth' and which discourages children from questioning what they are taught is predisposed to accept the attitudes and prejudices that she encounters in books as 'true' representations of reality. 'Each time a student uses a book to find out or to check an item of knowledge, the importance and the authority of the printed word is also being reinforced' (Klein 1985: 11).

It is out of studies such as those undertaken by Dixon and Preisweik that the latest trend in children's literature has evolved. This trend is a complex response to multi-cultural, minority-sensitive and self-conscious societies by producers of children's literature and it has been termed 'anti-bias material'. Anti-bias writings are books produced with a specific goal in mind, that is, to 'correct' an outlook and to create a more equal society in the future through the production of 'self-consciously correct' reading matter. Once again, children's literature is being invested with the power to change a society by exposing children to more positive images, images which are different from the ones with which they are acquainted, for example images of working women, domesticated men and otherwise empowered minorities. Part of the problem with disseminating anti-bias material is first that unless it becomes official policy to supply schools with anti-bias readers, it will reach a limited audience of readers, most of whom will in all likelihood be politically enlightened already; and second, that however influential the message of an anti-bias text might be, a child's home environment is still stronger and more influential. This active attempt to redress imbalances in society is a return to the didactic and moralistic type of children's literature that was produced in previous years and as such suffers from many of the same shortcomings, namely that it is frequently obviously 'didactic' and written for a purpose, and as such might have a poor plot or unengaging style. The anti-bias literature is commonly produced for young children in the form of pre-school ABCs as well as early readers, because this is an area of children's literature which is particularly full of biased stereotypes – for example depicting women as domestically centred and men as the work

force. Dixon (1977: 95) comments on the nature of literature intended for this age group as follows:

Children's literature, especially that intended for very small children, gives rise to particularly difficult problems as it more often works on a symbolic and unconscious level. It is difficult to combat racism instilled in this way by argument, as small children aren't able to cope with the necessary ideas. Its only possible to combat such racism effectively through literature which embodies civilised attitudes carried out at the same emotional and symbolic level.

As Dixon notes, it is difficult to actively and explicitly attack the stereotypes prevalent in children's literature, and thus literature which embodies 'civilised ideas' (in itself a suspect notion) is required.

It is not always possible to produce suitable anti-bias literature for children, and frequently the type of anti-bias material produced is ideologically suspect in itself – embodying perhaps the unconsidered 'civilised and civilising ideas' of a group of writers. This is in itself as potentially harmful as the unconsidered stereotyped literature that the field attacks. Recognising this potential shortcoming in the area of anti-bias literature, Gillian Klein (1985) suggests a number of strategies for combating stereotypes and bias in children's literature. In a chapter entitled 'Strategies for Combat 1: Sanitise or Sensitise?' Klein (1985: 108 – 122) considers way of sensitively handling existing material. She argues that it is impractical as well as impossible to remove or to obliterate all children's literature which contains biased material. This she argues is impractical because, first if all biased material were removed there would be very little material left for children to read (the cost of books would make replacing such texts with 'desirable' ones prohibitively high); and second impossible because deciding what makes a book 'biased' is a culturally specific, value based judgement which would in itself be biased or suspect. This makes sanitising children's reading matter a contradictory task. However, bias urgently needs to be combated at all levels of society, and especially where it affects children. This leaves the option of educating or 'sensitising' children to issues in books that they read and material

that they encounter. Children could be taught, through, the example of their teachers, to be aware of and to challenge biases and stereotypes as they encounter them (Klein 1983:113). This would involve a process of demystifying print and challenging the media (Klein 1983:115-16). Such a process would change the approach of teaching children, empowering them to criticise and to question their environment, rather than passively accepting images and stereotypes presented to them through print and media as indisputable truths. This of course would be unsettling to a conservative country, producing, as it would, children equipped to challenge not only the ideas set out in books, but also the ideologies of political leaders.

The second strategy for combating bias in children's literature involves a consideration of how involved adults 'ought' to buy books for children. Klein considers what selection criteria ought to be practised when buying new stock in a chapter entitled 'Censorship or Selection' (1985: 123- 40). The role of adults in the selection of children's literature is primary: 'as consumers, children are largely powerless. ... the adult purchaser, whether individual or institutional, makes the primary selections. A responsibility not to be shirked.' (Phil Goodall [1982] quoted in Klein 1985: 124).

Censoring books that are biased is seen as short-sighted on the grounds that it is unrealistic to provide children with an idealised bias-free world, one which in no way reflects the reality of the world in which they live – which is inherently biased and prejudiced (Klein 1983: 123-124). In addition, as already noted, there are no unbiased books. What remains is for adults involved in book buying to select books which are as free of bias as is possible, recognising both the responsibility and the limitations of this task. The process of selecting books for children thus becomes a process of evaluating available materials, which leads to a conscious awareness of the aims of the publishers themselves as well as an awareness of what the needs of the children themselves are perceived to be. Selectors are therefore forced to consider their own criteria, which are some times unthought out, for selecting children's reading materials. The bottom line in terms of producing, selecting and reading children's literature that is politically progressive becomes

thus an issue of awareness on the part of the selectors, the producers and ultimately the readers. This awareness revolves not only around issues within the texts themselves, but also around issues of how material is presented and taught as well as how the recipients themselves respond to the material. It is both an internal as well as an external sensitivity that needs to be cultivated.

Children's literature has the potential to influence the way in which children think, to shape their concept of the world, to influence to formation of their political and social outlooks. Children's literature, it has been argued, can fundamentally affect the way in which a society is shaped. However, literature of any description does not stand in isolation, but is intrinsically dependent on the structures that surround, support and promote it. Unless children's literature is freely accessible to all children, as well as being actively promoted and encouraged, it will have a very small role to play in the shaping of a society. However important the nature of specific texts is, it is the actual status of the children's literature itself that is of cardinal importance. How children's literature is perceived and promoted and how books come to be disseminated affect far more radically than the content of the texts themselves what kinds of ideas are spread to the children of a country. If children's books are inaccessible to the vast majority of children, whether they are inaccessible because of shortages or cost or language or literacy levels, then the field is useless as a political or an ideological tool. The process of writing a text and getting the same text read is complex, involving as it does value judgements made by publishers, reviewers and buyers. Whether a book is judged suitable for publication depends on the attitudes of people who are involved in the production and dissemination of children's literature, and it depends on what they perceive the aims and purposes of children's literature to be. Distribution tactics, which determine who gets to read the book; the targeting of a specific market, which in an African context revolves around issues such as cost, languages, levels of learning and literacy; as well as the official structures created to bolster and support the field which would include awards, book clubs, reviews and so on are entirely dependent on the outlook of the people involved in the creation of children's

literature in South Africa. Indeed the status of children's literature as well as the availability of children's literature to all the children of a country is an ideological issue in its own right and needs to be considered as such.

An important question to consider is how do these various theories developed in Europe or America relate to children's literature in South Africa? Historically, South Africa is divided politically, economically, socially, linguistically, culturally and so on. Indeed, much of the past history of South Africa has been a history of official attempts to further split and divide the country and prevent social or political unity from coming about. With recent political events moving South Africa towards a more unified state, children's literature is being touted by many of the people who work in with children's literature itself as well as by parents and teachers, as being a potentially unifying force. This belief ties in with idea that children are the 'hope' of the 'new' South Africa. This tendency to see children as a saving force is also strong in contemporary advertising campaigns (consider the Shell petrol advertisements). Children's literature has or is assumed to have an important political role to play in shaping the future South Africa and is as such worth considering in some detail, especially with regards to the ideological messages being transmitted to young South Africans through both the types of books produced as well as the structures surrounding the availability of the books themselves.

This study will not only consider the issue of children's literature as a social reflector but will also examine the status of children's literature in South Africa. Children's literature is both too broad and too 'new' to hope to provide any definitive answers or theories about it, and I therefore hope to raise some questions and issues about the field itself. Given that I believe that the structures surrounding the field itself are as important as any individual text, much of this thesis will focus on the sociology of children's literature in South Africa, rather than on close readings of selected texts. My study is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter I will consider the recent emergence of indigenous children's literature and possible reasons for this as well as the attitudes of various people involved in the production of children's literature towards it. Of significance here is that the ideologies

of those involved in the area of production are exposed; that is, the unstated projects of those working in the field become apparent to the reader. The second and third chapters will consider the distribution of children's literature in South Africa. Of significance here is that distribution reveals the nature of the perceived target market in South Africa. This affects what types of books get to be published and where they are distributed. Market demands affect what types of books are produced, but equally, production of books is influenced by what the market is perceived to be by the publishing houses themselves. Who publishers, distributors and buyers perceive the current market to be and how they see it changing in the future, reveals the future of children's literature in South Africa. Changes might include radical shifts in distribution tactics as well as the cutting of costs and the producing of texts in a variety of vernacular languages. The fourth chapter will be a consideration of the various awards in South Africa for children's literature. Awards are significant because they are a means of publicly affirming the emergence and importance of the field. They are a means of noting and encouraging books that are marketable and that fulfil certain functions and they reveal what is seen as desirable in the field of children's literature. The final chapter will comment on how some genres perform social commentary, and how they can be seen as being corrective, as trying to make amends for some of the effects of South Africa's Apartheid past. The theories I have been examining will be considered in a South African context and the social significance of children's literature in South Africa will be discussed. By way of conclusion, I will comment on some issues that have arisen in the course of this study, and which seem to be of special significance to the South African context and ultimately would be worth investigating further.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIGENOUS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The attitudes of the reading public towards any given genre or field of literature are shaped by various kinds of critical input. Few people read books unguided, and it is the role of the critic to select and to guide the reading tastes and attitudes of the general public. Literary criticism has two distinct and important roles: first it is intended to serve as a guide to available literature, selecting, grading and commenting on what is available; and second through this process of selection and assessment the critic serves to delineate and to define a specific field of literature, as well as to bring the field to the public's awareness. Through the intervention of the critic, the general reading public become aware of and accepting of the nascence of a new field of study; this fuels interest in the field which in turn encourages the growth and the expansion of the field.

Who and what are the critics in the field of South African children's literature? As any quick glance at the body of critical literature available will reveal, there are few critical texts, and for the most part these indigenous critical texts are in Afrikaans rather than in English. The function, as well as the scarcity, of indigenous critical texts needs to be considered and explored. Critical material also exists in the form of book reviews, published in newspapers and magazines. Finally in the case of children's literature especially, the people involved in the process of disseminating children's literature to the reading public, namely the booksellers and librarians assume – or are forced to assume – a critical and advisory function.

In this chapter I will explore various attitudes towards children's literature as they are expressed by various critical sources. The aims and approaches of existing critical texts will be examined, as will various book reviews. The importance of both these mediums in bringing to the fore the existence of the area of indigenous children's literature will be considered. In addition publicity attracting things such as book clubs, newsletters and

conferences will be examined. Finally, the role of booksellers and librarians in the creation and the promotion of indigenous children's literature will be explored.

John Hall (1979) in his discussion of the means through which literary texts come to be distributed, considers the critic to be a mediator between the means by which books come before the public (publishing amongst other means) and the way in which available literature is selected (for example sold or reviewed). The 'critic as reviewer occupies a role which tries to influence selection' (110). However, the role of the critic is more complex than is suggested by the above statement: critics do far more than influence selection, especially in the field of children's literature.

Hall argues that historically there are three 'modes' of criticism which shape modern critical undertakings. These three modes are what he terms the 'legislative' mode, which refers to the attempt by a critic to influence the creation of a text; the 'theoretical' mode, which is a broad attempt to consider literature within a broad context; and the 'descriptive' mode, which Hall argues is the current dominant mode of criticism and which 'is about one thing, a given text to which critic and reader may appeal equally for confirmation' (111).

These various 'modes' broadly suggest some of the functions of a critic. Legislative criticism produces an aesthetic standard of literary creation, thus determining what kinds of texts 'ought' to be produced by praising and censoring texts, and thereby creating a 'hierarchy' of literary standards. Theoretical criticism is an essentially academic preserve and its practitioners are concerned, amongst other things, with the historical context of a text, as well as the text's 'social function' (115), and thus consider a text from within a theoretical paradigm. Practitioners of 'descriptive criticism' refer solely to a particular text, examining it in isolation and apparently without any informing critical standards. This apparent isolation from external standards is extremely suspect because any critic has a set of informing critical standards, which are implicit and inform her understanding of a text, and are thus more dangerous, because unstated and often unconsidered, than they would have been had they been explicitly stated. A lack of overt critical guidelines makes it difficult to question and decode a critical text. Within the context of children's literature,

the presence of unstated although powerful critical standards are indicated by phrases such as 'a good book' which has 'universal appeal' or appeals to 'the child within us all'.

Considering the history of literary criticism, Hall comments on the importance of the rise of periodicals (in the seventeenth century in Britain) which resulted in a wider number of people coming into contact with both literature and its accompaniment, criticism. Increasing literacy in Britain resulted in a larger reading public, which did not necessarily prove however to be readers of 'great' or erudite literature; rather as literacy increase so did various forms of 'popular' literature. These historical circumstances have influenced the nature of literary criticism through out the Western world, in that 'critics ... began to see them selves as defenders of a beleaguered elite culture' (114). Thus the roles that literary critics has assigned themselves are tempered with this implicit notion of upholding and preserving a notion of 'culture', and literary criticism has become 'very elitist' with only certain types of literature being considered worthy of consideration by a critic (116). Hall sees this as a critic neglecting his duty, which should be to provide guidance about any kind of literature (116). In recent times criticism of children's literature has moved from being a popular service – in the sense that critics sought to help people make 'informed' choices about children's books – to being an academic undertaking which is seeking to delineate and define children's literature. Hall argues that despite the various roles open to and assumed by critics and the wide range of critical approaches, 'criticism does not create great literature' (112). Criticism rather is the force that serves to order and to comment upon existing literature, and in more recent times serves to bring a particular genre of literature or writer to the reading public's notice.

Children's literature had its nascence as a field in the nineteenth century, when various books were produced for children, often in the form of 'moral' tomes intended to 'improve' and 'guide' their readers (Charles Kingsley's The Waterbabies is often cited as one such book). Once born, the field grew rapidly with numerous books being produced for children, books both exemplary and educational as well as entertaining and recreational, as well as the advent of publishers who sought out and encouraged writers of children's books

(John Newberry was the first publisher to publish exclusively children's literature in England in the late nineteenth century). As books written specifically for children became available, so reviews and criticisms of these books came into existence.

Whilst the purpose of this chapter is not to provide a detailed consideration of the history of or the current trends in international criticism of children's literature, it is important to be aware of some of the main features of these trends, because they do inform and form a basis for current developments in the field of criticism of South African children's literature. One of the most useful overviews of the development of international criticism of children's books in English is provided by Peter Hunt (editor) in Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism (1990). Hunt sets out a collection of seminal (as he sees them) essays and reviews that deal with children's literature and seeks through this means to provide the reader with an overview of literary criticism of children's literature. Hunt in his introduction comments that children's literature is 'a species of literature whose boundaries are very hazy', which 'cannot be defined by textual characteristics either of style or content' and whose 'primary audience' the 'child-reader' is elusive (1). Also important to note is that children's literature is 'an outsider to the academic world' which does not fit neatly into any 'subject category' (1). Despite these loose boundaries, Hunt argues that the field of children's literature has been in existence since the end of the eighteenth century, albeit in a 'populist form', and currently occupies the position of a 'culturally formative' and educationally crucial literary sub-group (2). Perhaps more than any other literary form, children's literature reflects 'society as it wishes to be, as it wishes to be seen and as it unconsciously reveals itself to be' (2).

As an area of academic study, 'the criticism of children's literature has become a coherent discipline only as children's literature itself has emerged as a coherent field of study' (Hunt, 1990: 2). I shall consider possible parallels in the development of a field of specifically South African literary criticism which can be seen to have emerged in response to the development of a genuinely indigenous kind of children's literature. There exists a body of critical literature anthologised in 1976 by Lance Salway of nineteenth century

commentary on children's literature, but this criticism tends to take the form of guiding and recommending rather than of defining and delineating a field, unlike the more recent post-1900s criticism, which has tended to be of a more theoretical and defining nature. Today there exists a definite split in the types of criticism of children's literature: there is criticism written with an academic audience in mind and criticism written with the intention of providing the reader with a guide to what is available and what is 'good' in the area of children's literature. Consider Stuart Hannabus' (1981) comment on the nature of book reviews:

some criticism is very navel-contemplating, hieratic, self-consciously aware of other cognoscenti and all too little aware of needs of the expectant and modest reader wanting help. Such modest readers ... [want] the best advise quickly and [are] eager to acquire the most effective books for the children in their care.

Hannabus' comment on the nature of reviews is also revealing in its use of the phrase 'effective books for the children in their care', indicating as it does the fact that children's literature is tied more firmly to educational needs than to leisure time needs (consider the possibility of describing an adult novel as being an effective book for a person's needs).

Hunt argues that it is only really after 1945 that the criticism of children's literature has developed 'in a recognisably conventional direction' that has 'paralleled academic criticism' (1990: 3). Within this group of critics there is a three way split over how the criticism is undertaken and what its purpose should be (1990: 3). One group of critics are concerned with the history and the development of the field of children's literature (see for example, Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Pritchard, 1984, Oxford Companion to Children's Literature), the second and third groups of critics are concerned with current texts but are divisible according to whether the main focus of their concerns are the reader (see Morag Styles et al, 1992, After Alice.) or the text itself (see Margaret and Michael Rustin, 1987, Narratives of Love and Loss). As more recognition is awarded to the field of children's literature so has it become an increasingly acceptable area of academic study, seen as an

inter-disciplinary field which unites the practices of literary studies with concerns such as child development, sociology and education.

Despite its slow acceptance by the academic world, the study of children's literature is still a fraught and an ill defined area of study. Many of its practitioners are defensive, believing that an important aspect of their work revolves around justifying their choice of topic. Historically, critics of children's literature have been regarded as 'eccentric' (Hunt 1990: 4), and it can be argued that this defensiveness will remain until critical equality is accorded children's literature within the field of academic literary studies; that is, to quote Hunt, until 'no one questions the right of ... Farjeon to stand beside Wordsworth' (Hunt 1990: 4).

Considering the effects that some of these challenges have had on the field of children's literature, Hunt (1990) notes three features of critical studies of children's literature that have resulted from these pressures. Reacting to their exclusion from mainstream academia, many practitioners in the field of children's literature studies have become 'anti-intellectual', writing about children's books in a manner that has been influenced more by developments in the field of 'popular culture studies' than by any serious theoretical studies. Their writing tends to be colloquial and descriptive, intended for consumption by the broader public rather than intended for consumption by academics. The field of children's literature studies thus tends to be accessible to a wider range of people than is usual in academic areas of study (Hunt 1990: 4). A further result of its exclusion from any one academic field has resulted in children's literature developing in to a multi-disciplinary field, with practitioners from diverse areas of study such as sociology, library science, fine arts, politics, education as well as from literature departments (Hunt 1990: 5). The third response to pressures imposed upon the field by outside pressures is a negative one: the field of children's literature has attracted some 'lax thinking or "soft" research' which has 'downgraded [the field of children's literature as a whole] by association' (Hunt 1990: 5). As Hunt (1990: 5) notes:

There is a fine line between informality and casualness, and between enthusiasm and sloppiness. Anti-intellectualism has produced much so-called criticism which is simply impressionistic and populist in the worst sense.

How then can this discussion of the development of and the features of international children's literature be applied to studies of children's literature in South Africa? Important to remember is that even as critics and writers of children's literature in South Africa set out to create and to affirm an indigenous South African tradition, the precedent for much of what is produced, especially with regard to critical material, is derived from Euro-American sources. Many of the challenges facing international critics of children's literature – for example the issue of academic recognition – are faced by people working with children's literature in South Africa. Further it can be deduced that the critical practices and shortcomings commented on by both Hall and Hunt apply to a certain extent to critical work undertaken in the South African context, and that therefore the South African field of critical studies of children's literature will benefit from a consideration in these broad and international terms.

Much as children's literature written in Afrikaans became prominent before children's literature in English became well known, so is there evidence that children's literature in Afrikaans received recognition (see the later chapter on publishers) and attracted critical studies, before any critical material was produced in English. From the early 1960s onwards, libraries and publishers throughout South Africa began to compile lists of suitable books for children – books in both Afrikaans and in English. Basic Children's Books: A List for a South African Library (produced by the Cape Town City Libraries in 1966) is one such catalogue which lists suitable books for children. The list contains references to both Afrikaans and English children's books, but the English language books are largely imported books, whereas Afrikaans language books are locally produced. This points to one of the most important features of the history of English language children's books in South Africa, namely that until recently there was little need or demand for 'indigenous' children's books in English. Books could be imported from

Europe or America to fulfil the needs of the reading child relatively easily and cheaply, and until the 1970s there was apparently little awareness of the possible alienation that a child raised in Africa reading imported and unfamiliar literature might feel.

With this in mind, it is interesting to notice that the preponderance of criticism written about children's literature in South Africa before 1980 revolved around descriptions of books that were available and recommendations as to what a library, school or parent ought to buy their child. In the South African Library, there are numerous catalogues produced by publishers listing what has been available in South Africa over the years, as well as giving lists of recommended books; see for example, the Juta's catalogue entitled A List of Books Especially Suitable for Children in the Union of South Africa and in Rhodesia from 1966. In keeping with texts having advisory rather than critical motives, are such works as the various Afrikaans source books by Elsa Steenberg Kinderverhale van Ses tot Twaalf (1979) or My Kind en Sy Boek (1979), or the more recent C. Lohann's Afrikaanse Kinderboekgids (1985). English language equivalents include A. Chamber's Introducing Books to Children (1973), J.E. Case's Literature and the Young Child (1984), and M.A. Paulin's Creative Uses of Children's literature (1982).

Following Hall's critical distinctions, all the texts listed above exist as advisory or 'descriptive' critical texts, rather than 'theoretical' criticisms (see Hall's distinctions above). They are intended to provide guidance about available literature and, rather than critically assess this body of material, provide a guideline for ways of introducing children to books. With this aim and intention, these critical texts fall into the area of educational or psychological criticism, rather than into the area of actual literary criticism of children's books. The books that they focus on are not specifically South African children's books, but include imported as well as translated books. Thus whilst critical texts have been produced in South Africa for some time, there has until recently been no academic theoretical criticism that has focused specifically on indigenous children's literature.

Although indigenous children's literature was being written in English, little by way of criticism was being written. One of the most important moves towards the creation a

field of criticism of indigenous children's literature was Jay Heale's Young Africa Booklist published in 1985 and updated in 1990. Heale set out to catalogue and to describe and assess all children's books written in English that have been locally produced in South Africa. This was the first attempt made in South Africa to assemble a list of indigenous children's literature. Currently ISKEMUS in Stellenbosch are working on a complete catalogue of indigenous children's literature, but Heale's updated list remains to date the most accessible inventory of available children's literature.

The creating of a list of indigenous children's literature, the founding of Bookchat, the first critical and reviewing publication specifically about children's literature in South Africa, and the organising of a conference about children's literature in South Africa all of which took place between 1985 and 1988, can be seen as the events which lead to the recognition of indigenous children's literature as a specific field of critical enquiry. The first critical text to begin the process of assessing and criticising children's literature in a genuinely literary manner was the 1986 production Doer-Land-y/Far Far Away, edited by Marianne Holscher and published by the South African National Gallery in Cape Town. This publication consists of a collection of essays focusing on specifically South African books and examining issues that arise from their production. It contains for example an essay on illustrated books, as well as an article on children's books in English. It does not, however, attempt to contextualise or to understand why indigenous children's literature came into existence in South Africa, nor does it attempt a study of the history of the field.

Also produced in 1986 is Companion to South African English Literature (compiled by David Adey et al), a volume that attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of literature published in South Africa in which children's literature gets a brief mention. The focus of the entry on children's literature is on the field's development and growth and its historical status, rather than on any attempt to assess the field critically. It is worth considering because it is the first attempt at ordering the field historically. The compilers comment on the colonial and English tone of much that has been written in South Africa for children in English, and through their focus, highlight the important role that folktales, in

their various forms, play in the emerging canon of children's literature (Adey 1986: 51). This highlighting of the colonial English tradition is important because it focuses the reader on the origins and nature of the children's literature in English in South Africa; as well as noting that it is the assimilation of folktales in to the body of children's literature in English that heralded the nascence of truly indigenous children's literature in South Africa. As with many other overviews of children's literature, the commentary on the various books mentioned is anecdotal rather than critical; for example, titles and content summaries of various collections of folktale type stories are given, without any reflection on the process of assimilation and adaptation that has taken place. When the Companion to South African English Literature was published in 1986, there was already a recognition of local publishers who had 'begun to encourage children's literature with a markedly indigenous flavour' (Adey 1986: 52). This awareness in 1986 of a move to produce literary texts with an indigenous flavour is a recognition of the beginnings of a new trend in types of texts being written for children after 1976. There are no critical texts cited for further reading, a reflection of the fact that in 1986 very few critical texts existed in South Africa that focused specifically on indigenous children's literature.

By 1990, critics of children's literature in South Africa were attempting to provide historical studies of indigenous children's literature. Until then, studies of children's literature had been anecdotal and discursive, and it was not until attempts were made to study the history – that is the development and the roots – of the field, that a fuller understanding of the field could come about. Whilst historical studies are limited in that they seldom explore the sociological or psychological dimensions of the field, they are useful in that they clarify writers' and readers' notions of the roots and the aspirations of the field itself. An historical overview of a literary field, an attempt to trace the field's roots, reveals to the reader how the field has come to be understood as well as how the field has been presented by literary critics. As with all historical undertakings, an historical consideration of a literary field cannot be seen as factual or unbiased, but must be seen as a construction, produced in a certain manner in order to serve certain ends. In the words of

John Tosh 'the word history carries two meanings ... it refers to both what actually happened in the past and to the representation of that past in the work of historians' (1984: vii). Tosh's differentiation between actual and representation holds as true for historical studies of literature as it does for any other historical study, and it is interesting to note how the history of children's literature in South Africa is being written at the current moment. Interesting and important because how children's literature is presented affects how people perceive and understand the field and this understanding affects people's attitudes towards the field.

There are two recently produced critical texts that set out to assess the historical development of indigenous children's literature. The texts have different aims and intentions, but their historical understanding of the field is remarkably similar and, given that these two texts are amongst the first to provide historical overviews of the field, it can be imagined that they will be influential in the formation of readers' attitudes towards the history of children's literature in South Africa.

Shirley Davies in Reading Roundabout: A Review of South African Children's Literature (1992) sets out to provide 'information on South African children's books ... [which] will be of assistance to librarians, teachers and parents' (from the preface). She argues that although children should be encouraged to read widely, their early introduction

should be to books reflecting their own society and environment. ... In our South African multi-cultural society ... children's books can be a means of bridging differences and highlighting similarities between the cultures. Children will then learn that all people have the same need for love, security, recognition and opportunities for growth and development (preface).

Davies stresses in her preface the universal nature of human beings ('all people have the same needs') as well as the fact that South Africa is a multi-cultural society. These premises she goes on to underline throughout the rest of her 'review'. As she states, Reading Roundabout is intended to be a reference text and a guide for teachers; as such it is, potentially, a highly influential book that sets out to provide a means of understanding

and of ordering the field of children's literature in South Africa. Davies arranges texts by theme (out of seven categories, four revolve around 'realistic' stories, and there is no chapter on 'social' themes) and provides assessments (she lays out her criteria of assessment) of each text as well as suggesting 'activities' to undertake which revolve around the various texts.

Most important for the purpose of this chapter, Davies provides a chapter called 'An Outline of the Development of Children's Literature in South Africa'. The chapter begins as follows:

South African children's literature is multifaceted, reflecting the interaction of many different races and cultures. Among the indigenous people there were the San,... the Khoi, the Nguni, the Sotho, the Xhosa, the Zulu who spoke in expressive tongues and had a gift for story telling although their languages lacked a written form. The first European people to discover and settle in Africa ... contributed their own cultures, languages and literature (Davies 1992: 31).

Davies goes on to comment that interchanges of ideas were limited because of the 'linguistic diversity' that existed and that the process of interaction was hampered through 'unhappy historical conflict', that is, wars, conflict and the general experience of colonisation (Davies 1992: 31). Despite this inauspicious beginning (not considered in much detail) Davies suggests that it is only now

after three centuries [that] South African writers are ... developing local themes and drawing on ideas from the various cultural groups. There are however still limitations on readership because of the diverse language groups (Davies 1992: 31-32).

Davies then goes on to discuss folktales and fables that have been assimilated into South African literature, as if this is proof of the field being multi-cultural and interactive. Davies does not attempt to consider the implications of language diversity or of the imposition of colonial culture on children's literature in South Africa. Neither, presumably because her

study is focused on English language children's literature, does Davies consider any children's literature in black languages. Thus the reader is left with the impression that South African children's literature is multifaceted, reflecting the input of all South African cultures through the medium of folktales, and universally suitable for all South African children. There is no discussion of the split in the reading public in South Africa, or of unequal literacy levels, and the reader is lulled into a false sense of security which suggests that despite historical inequalities or conflicts in South Africa, the current trend as expressed through children's literature is towards reconciliation and the creation of a united, if multi-cultural, South Africa.

Elwyn Jenkins's Children of the Sun (1993) has no intention of fulfilling the role of an advisory or teaching hand book, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive study of the field (Jenkins 1993: 6). Rather Jenkins' book is billed in the blurb as 'a pioneering study of South African children's literature in English'. Like Davies, Jenkins' study is divided up according to genres and categories. It includes a chapter on folktales, as well as chapters on 'Liberal History' and 'Race and Social Issues'. Jenkins' introduction begins as follows:

The history of South African children's books written in English mirrors the interaction of South Africa's peoples, and their relationship with the land. ... Curiosity led to some of the very first books being versions of the folktales of the indigenous inhabitants. ... The twentieth century has seen many more changes, with a dramatic increase in the rate of change in the past twenty five years – an increase matched by an upsurge in the publication of children's books (Jenkins 1993: 1).

Like Davies, Jenkins underscores the notion that the history of children's literature is a history of interaction and again like Davies he identifies folktales as the first example of this interaction. Importantly, Jenkins considers the recent upsurge in the publication of children's literature and links it to (political) changes in South Africa, commenting that at the end of the twentieth century writers in South Africa 'continue the tradition of creating a South African literature' (Jenkins 1993: 1). Jenkins goes on to comment that children's

literature is being produced by both black and white writers and that there is a sensitivity in the writing which reflects changing ideologies and attitudes and reveals a 'desire to confess and make reparation for what colonialism did to the indigenous people' (Jenkins 1993: 2). Thus whilst not as simplistic as Davies, Jenkins also reveals children's literature as having two roles to fulfil: it is both a means of uniting a fractured country, as well as a reflection of South African society as it currently stands (Jenkins 1993: 6).

In terms of shaping peoples attitudes towards the field of children's literature in South Africa, Davies and Jenkins provide important texts, Davies because of the text's potential as a teaching handbook and Jenkins because of his position as a pioneer in the field of English language children's literature. The message that these two books delivers is surprisingly similar: children's literature is historically a record of interaction amongst people in South Africa (whether this interaction was happy or not is not explored in much detail) and today reflects this interaction in its multifaceted nature. Furthermore, children's literature can be seen as a healing force, as a means of patching up violent interaction and destructive conflict and of – to use Jenkins' word – reparation.

Thus critical texts are important in shaping peoples attitudes towards a literary field. The existence of critical texts points to a general recognition of the existence and importance of a field. In South Africa, recognition of the field of children's literature became especially strong in the mid 1970s with an up surge in both the number of literary texts and critical texts being written. This increase in recognition could be seen as a response to education and political crises of the 1970s. The sudden focus through critical texts on children's literature could be seen as a general recognition of the importance of education in South African context, rather than as an expression of the desire to encourage literature. This hypothesis, namely a belief in the importance education, is reflected in the fact that the majority of the buying of children's literature is done by schools and libraries, rather than by the general public. Currently, publishers focus on the educational market and libraries are seen as educational rather than recreational centres. Given this scenario, it is

not that surprising that the majority of critical texts on South African children's books have fallen into the category of advisory guides rather than critical texts.

Critical texts are for the most part the preserve of specialists and are read by few people not directly involved in a given field. This is as true of the area of children's literature as of any other field of literary studies. Conferences, like critical texts, are seen as the preserve of specialists – either academic or in the case of children's literature people involved in the field: teachers, librarians, parents and so on. Children's literature in South Africa has been the focus of two conferences since the late 1980s. Both were organised by Isabel Cilliers of the University of the Western Cape and the second called 'Towards more Understanding' was a sequel to the first, called 'Towards Understanding'. These conferences are important to consider in that they involve a large number of people involved in the field of children's literature and thus give the researcher insight into the attitudes of people who are of cardinal importance in the field. In addition, like written critical material, through the publication of papers as well as through discussions and interactions, the attitudes and approaches to the field of children's literature in South Africa are shaped.

The title of the first national symposium on children's literature which took place in 1987 is in itself revealing: 'Towards Understanding: Children's Literature for Southern Africa'. The aims of the collected papers (and therefore also presumably of the conference itself) are set out by Cilliers as follows:

to stimulate an interest in children's literature which can contribute towards children understanding themselves better; towards understanding each other better; towards understanding their environment and circumstances better; and above all to contribute towards inter human understanding among all the children of Southern Africa (Cilliers 1987: ix).

Perhaps the most important feature of the conference as a whole was its intention, at a crucial time in the development of the field in South Africa, to stimulate an increase in interest in the field amongst both children and adults. That an interest already existed is

apparent from the fact that there were people with papers and ideas to contribute to the conference at all and the staging of a conference served to focus people's interest on the field. Again, as Davies and Jenkins suggest, children's literature is presented as a means of understanding and ordering South African culture – children will 'understand each other better'. The conference was conducted in English and in Afrikaans, and no papers were translated (that is the collected papers are in a mixture of English and Afrikaans); there were, however, no papers in any vernacular languages.

Rather than consider the papers in any detail – a process that would take too much time – I will consider some of the published offerings as well as some of the contributors themselves. The conference papers are divided into six subsections, each of which focuses on a different aspect in the field of children's literature. The first section, containing essays by, amongst others, John Degenaar (a Stellenbosch political philosophy professor) and Elsabe Steenberg (an editor's advisor and critic in the area of children's literature) focuses on fantasy and imagination in relation to children's literature. The second and third sections focus on the main theme of the conference that is 'towards inter human understanding', and have essays by various librarians and critics of children's literature like Andree-Jeanne Totemeyer and Hilda Grobelaar. The fourth section contains essays by writers (Jenny Seed, Alba Boucher) and focuses on the process of producing a children's book in South Africa and the final sections, written by librarians and teachers are an attempt to discuss ways in which children can be introduced to books, as well as what children can hope to receive from books.

The papers are mixed in their focus: a number of papers focus on children's literature in general, others focus specifically on children's literature in South Africa, either in the form of a paper dealing with indigenous children's literature or in the form of a paper which focused for example on South African children and their experience of libraries. The most encouraging feature of the conference at this stage seems to have been its focus on the role and status of children's literature in South Africa, especially in relation to less privileged groups. There is an informative paper by Andree-Jeanne Totemeyer entitled

'Towards Interracial Understanding Through South African Children's and Youth Literature', as well as a paper by Benjamin Leshoai entitled 'Critical Dimensions: Reflections on the Changing Role of the Importance of Children's Literature in South Africa'.

Perhaps the most notable thing about the papers from this 1987 conference is how children's literature is seen to have a positive, enhancing and role. There is a suggestion that children's literature can make a difference: it is seen as a means of communication, as means of healing differences and especially of enhancing similarities. Above all there is a concerted effort to address the problems and interests of all South African children with papers that focus on issues such as the black child and his reading needs (Manana Nhlanhla), as well as more esoteric papers like 'Understanding Little Red Riding Hood (Johan Degenaar).

The papers from the 1992 'Towards More Understanding' conference have not yet been published, and comments on the material are derived from my personal notes. The conference was, to quote Jane Rosenthal, 'a white cultural event' in that the participants were overwhelmingly white and female (1992, Review 'Future of Children's Literature Looks Precarious': 8). Amongst those attending both as speakers and as listeners were publishers, librarians, teachers, writers and other interested parties. As with the first conference, there were a vast number of papers delivered and panel discussions held. There seemed however to be a split in the nature of the material delivered, a split between those people speaking to an audience whom they assumed were literate (see the papers for example by June Sacks ['Violence in children's books'], Johan Degenaar ['Imagination and Myth'] and Jonathan Shapiro ['Comics are literature too']) and those who were addressing the far more fundamental issue of literacy and creating a book culture (see papers by Archie Dick ['Orality and Literacy'], by MM Muladzi ['Libraries and Literacy'] and David Brindley on ['Creating a Reading Tradition'] for examples). Just as the lecture material was divided so were the panel discussions, with speakers often addressing issues that were seen as irrelevant or uninteresting by other panel members or by members of the audience (the

panel discussion entitled 'Introducing children to books in libraries' was an example of the fraught and divided outlooks of both the audience and the participants). In addition to these panel discussions, there were talks by writers as there had been at the first conference.

Whilst this duality was disruptive it was important and informative in that it served, unintentionally perhaps, to highlight one of the most important aspects of children's literature in South Africa today, namely that there exists an enormous divide between privileged and less privileged children in terms of the knowledge of and expectations of books. It also served to highlight a major difference in the approaches of people involved in the field of children's literature. Currently there would appear to be two approaches to the field (though this is an impression and would probably be denied by people if questioned). One method is largely European in its approach in that it assumes that all readers are literate and have access to libraries and books and come from a family that reads or are at least literate. The other approach is concerned with fundamental issues within the South African post-apartheid system – such as inequality, language issues, racial representations of characters – and ways of addressing and correcting these imbalances. Whilst both approaches have their merits, it is easy to understand that it is difficult to accommodate such widely differing approaches on one platform without some confusion.

Conferences and written critical texts remain for the most part the preserve of academics and people directly involved in a field, intimidating to the general buying public. However, the general public are exposed to the attitudes of critics through other mediums such as, most notably in the area of literature, book reviews and talks. What is reviewed, and where and when that review is placed, falls under the discretion of the newspaper or magazine editors. Publishers can do very little to ensure that a book is reviewed by a newspaper, so in order to attract the attention of potential reviewers send out upwards of a hundred copies of each new children's book published, in the hopes that it will be reviewed (Louise Steyn, 1993). The reviewing of books has a number of functions. First and most obviously it is the way in which the alleged merits and demerits of a newly published book are assessed. It provides feedback and commentary for both the publisher and the writer.

Second, it provides information for the potential buyer of the book and therefore serves as a form of advertising, either encouraging or discouraging the purchasing of the book. These two functions rely on descriptive reviews in which the critic assesses the text in isolation. A third function of books reviews might be seen to be based on theoretical criticism, whereby a book is assessed in terms of its relation to other books in the genre and to its role in its place of origin. Such self-reflective criticism contributes towards forming a literary canon, as well as forming the attitudes of the general reading public in regard to the field.

Reviewing of children's literature displays all these features, along with another and more consequential feature: there is in fact very little reviewing of children's literature done in South Africa. The only newspaper that regularly reviews children's literature is the Book Supplement to the Weekly Mail. This paucity of reviews is indicative of the low status attached to children's literature in South Africa, though there are few reviews of any books, which is a point worth considering in itself. The majority of book reviews are placed in weekend newspapers and in the recreational sections of the paper. For the most part, reviews of children's books are descriptive notices rather than analytical or contextual reviews. They consist of a book's title, a writer and publisher's name, and frequently the reviewers' personal opinion of the book in question (see by way of example, reviews in the Cape Times or the Natal Witness). Frequently these descriptive notices and longer reviews as well are of a mix of local and imported books, with no distinction between them having been drawn. As such they reveal very little about the books in question, and serve as a showcase in which newly published books are brought to the public's attention without any extensive analysis having taken place. An important exception to note is the magazine Bookchat, produced by Jay Heale since 1978. Bookchat is the only magazine published in South Africa devoted to reviewing children's books and to producing feature articles about the field of children's literature both locally and internationally, and as such it fulfils a very important role, setting standards for other reviews and emphasising the coherence and importance of the field. Unfortunately the magazine – which is read by most librarians, teachers, booksellers and publishers whom I interviewed – is only available on subscription,

which makes it expensive for underprivileged children as well as making it necessary for potential subscribers to know of the magazine's existence before they can subscribe.

A further notable exception to this standard of reviewing is the reviewing techniques of The Weekly Mail, which is distributed throughout South Africa and has thus a potentially large readership. Once a month The Weekly Mail publishes a book review section, in which a variety of books, local and imported, adult and children's, are reviewed. This once monthly supplement is evidence of The Weekly Mail's commitment to literature in South Africa, and their decision to review children's literature – both local and imported – seriously is a recognition of the importance of the field. In addition to descriptive reviews of children's books, The Weekly Mail produces theoretical reviews and articles on children's literature in South Africa, often written by writers of children's literature, or by other people involved in the field. This use of 'experts' further serves to emphasize that the field is a serious one which needs to be accepted as such.

Even when 'merely' reviewing children's books, the Weekly Mail's reviewers have attempted to draw the readers' attention to issues in the books being reviewed that make them important and different. In Jane Rosenthal's review of two youth literature books she draws attention to the social issues that they confront in the title of her review piece 'Action and Aids from Sanlam gold winners' (Weekly Mail, 1992). In her review she contextualises the youth novel genre saying that 'it is no longer considered derogatory to call a novel derivative', and then commenting on the way in which South African youth fiction is following in the steps of American youth literature (Weekly Mail 1992: 7). Pat Schwartz in her review of some five youth novels entitled 'SA writing for youngsters has come a long way' (Weekly Mail 1992) considers the development of youth literature in South Africa, arguing that the field has 'come a long way' in that where as not long ago there was very little available with which children could identify, there is now an abundance of fiction available which has accessible South African settings and characters (Weekly Mail 1992:6). Schwartz then goes on to discuss a variety of youth novels, all the time making cross references to the various points that each novel makes. Whilst the reviews referred to above

are of English language books, the Weekly Mail does review children's literature in Afrikaans, as Jane Rosenthal's review of Daar is Spore op die Maan by Eleanor Baker shows ('Heavy issues dealt with delicately' in Weekly Mail 1992). When reviews of imported books are undertaken, they are usually examined in relation to a local book with a similar theme, as the-reviewing of Jealous Jools and Dominique by Sam McBratney and The Man who Snarled at Flowers by Tony Spencer-Smith by Jane Rosenthal shows ('Two widely different views of the future' in The Weekly Mail 1992).

Apart from descriptive reviews, the Weekly Mail also has theoretical and contextualising articles about issues related to children's literature. 'Anger can be part of your story' is an interview in an article about award winning writer Diane Case (Jane Rosenthal Weekly Mail 1992) and 'Germany's lesson for SA youth literature' by Karen Chubb (Weekly Mail 1992) is a consideration of the potential role that youth literature might have to play in a country undergoing a radical political transition. 'Children chose the tales they want to hear' by Portia Maurice is a review of the groundbreaking and educationally important 'Little Library' series of books by READ (Weekly Mail 1992).

A final review related function that the Weekly Mail undertakes is to keep its readers informed about what children's and youth books have won awards recently, as well as commenting on prizes in general and any conferences that might be forthcoming. 'Big prize money is going to books for youngsters' by Barbara Ludman (1992) is a consideration of trends amongst publishers in the area of creating prizes for youth fiction which focuses on the growing move towards recognising and making awards to youth fiction written in black languages (Weekly Mail 1992). Alex Dodd wrote a feature on the then forthcoming children's literature conference entitled 'Focus on writing for youngsters' (Weekly Mail 1992) which was followed up by the already mentioned post conference discussion by Jane Rosenthal.

Two further methods of creating attitudes towards, as well as an awareness of children's literature, in the general buying public are through book clubs and radio talks. Radio talks in the area of children's literature are few and far between. Apart from being

poorly publicised, the majority of such talks fall under such programmes as ‘Woman’s Hour’ (as a recent talk by Jay Heale did) which are aired at mid-morning. This time slot successfully targets any person – usually a woman – who happens to be at home and equally successfully eliminates any working person who might be interested in listening to the talk. The timing of such programmes is noteworthy in terms of what it reveals about the assumed audience of talks about children’s literature; namely, that the people who are interested in the field are available during the daytime, are English or Afrikaans speakers (I have been unable to trace any talks on children’s literature in vernacular languages) and are women. There is a tacit assumption that children’s literature is of special interest to women, probably because they are seen as mothers.

South Africa has a number of book clubs in existence. In Europe and America, they are a popular money and time saving device, and are widely advertised in many magazines. Book clubs function as follows: a person subscribes to the club and then receives either a prepacked parcel of books or is free to choose a number of books at a reduced price. The Weekly Mail in their May 1993 edition of ‘Review/Books’ published a feature on children’s book clubs in South Africa by Barbara Ludman entitled ‘Kid’s Books Join the Club’. The motivating features for having children’s book clubs are seen as follows: the clubs can help parents discover appropriate and enjoyable books for their children; belonging to a club can be financially advantageous; and in South Africa with its complicated system of marketing books, book clubs can be seen as a successful means of getting books to children without having to do business with booksellers. To quote Audrey Hitchcock (‘Kid’s Books Join the Club’:1): ‘Parents do not take their children into bookshops. Children’s books will not move unless someone goes out and moves them. You have to go out and motivate’.

Hitchcock aims to cater for all ages of children in her book club, from birth to teenagers, and intends to supply parents with a newsletter containing ‘advice on how to share books and book-related activities with their children’ with each package. South Africa currently has a number of book clubs, but most of them supply imported literature (as the ‘Grolier’ club of Disney book club fame does) rather than local literature. This emphasis on

imported literature rather than local literature tends to suggest that imported literature is 'better' or at least somehow 'more accessible' than local literature. Recognising this tendency, many book clubs are starting to include an increasing number of locally produced books in their packages. Michael Jacklin who runs the enormously successful 'Knowledge Unlimited', which currently has five book clubs catering to various age and language groups affirms that although currently most of his stock is imported, he is constantly on the lookout for 'good African stories' to produce for distribution in South Africa (2). One of the most recent book clubs formed is 'Best Books' which is run by Gerry and Lesley Beake and by Jay Heale. A mail-order company, Best Books provides a selection of books, a good number of which are locally produced. Commenting on the functions of a book club Heale sees it as a good idea for people who live out of reach of a good bookshop; as being a means of ensuring that there are books in the home at all times; as financially advantageous as well as a means of getting children 'hooked on books' (Weekly Mail 1993: 2). The ultimate point of book clubs says Heale, 'is to promote an informed awareness of children's literature' (Weekly Mail 1993: 2), thereby underlining the potential that book clubs have to form and inform that reading attitudes of buyers of children's books:

The main buyers of children's books are libraries and educational departments whose attitudes towards children's literature, reflected in what they buy and in what quantities they buy the books in, are considered in later chapters. The attitudes of booksellers and of librarians do, however, influence the attitudes of the general buying public – who constitute about 5% of the total buying market – as well as the attitudes of book borrowers. Booksellers and librarians might be described as 'hands on' critics, because it often falls on them to advise buyers or borrowers – parents, involved adults, schools – about the merits or demerits of books. Naturally what gets to be recommended has already undergone a process of selection by the booksellers or libraries involved, and the types of books available to the public will not be every book that has been published or that is available in South Africa.

The role of booksellers and librarians in South Africa is seen to be 'finding the book that suits the child reader' (Anne Greenwell Observatory Bookshop 1993: interview). This puts a great deal of responsibility on the shoulders of the bookseller, but the role of advisor and facilitator is seen by most booksellers and librarians to be theirs (Lynne Wilson, Cedric Callaghan, Rosie Bennett and Elizabeth de Roubaix 1993: interviews). According to the people interviewed most book buyers – for the most part adults, children seldom buy books – and borrowers – again mostly parents, although there is a move towards allowing children freedom to choose what they want to borrow – usually consult the booksellers or librarians for advice as to what is worth reading. Many libraries in addition to the librarian's personal advice have catalogues of recommended literature which borrowers are free to consult. Whilst booksellers and librarians willingly give advice, Greenwell argues that it is the responsibility of the parents to introduce children to books, either through bookshops or through libraries. She argues that despite high levels of illiteracy in South Africa, it is still possible for semi-literate parents to share books with their children, and that one of the main responsibilities of educators in the future will be to target these people in order to draw them into the process of exposing children to books.

One of the single biggest problems in terms of people's attitudes towards books is that reading is associated with education rather than with recreation. Libraries are viewed primarily as centres of learning and indeed in many less privileged and rural areas of South Africa, libraries run literacy programmes for adults and children (Elizabeth de Roubaix, Cedric Callaghan 1993: interviews). Even in bookshops 'people buy books for the wrong reasons', because reading is seen as educationally important and because teachers pressure children to read, rather than because children want to read or because reading is seen as pleasurable and enjoyable (Lynne Wilson 1993: interview). In terms of changing buyers' attitudes, Wilson argues that 'we need to get to the point where literature is perceived as not solely educational'. Important to realise in terms of children's literature is the simple fact that for the most part the buyers and selectors of books are adults who tend to have

conservative choices and outlooks. Few children are considered able to make their own choices – partly because of the potential cost of a mistaken or unwise choice.

How this will be achieved is debatable, but it will depend in part on making books and bookshops and libraries both more accessible to children on both an emotional and a physical level, as well as more relevant to their needs. Many booksellers recognise that bookshops are intimidating for children, with their adult layout and the constantly reaffirmed command ‘not to touch anything’. Libraries likewise have an imposing facade, with a further threat of ‘punishment’ hanging over a child who damages a borrowed book. Wilson suggests that a first step towards demystifying bookshops and helping children to make their own choices would be to scale bookshops down in size and to provide young browsers with chairs and tables to relax at. Libraries try to draw children into libraries through holiday projects and story sessions, again attempting to move the choice of what to read from the adults in charge to the children themselves. However, changes to library and bookshop layouts are not likely to be immediately forthcoming because in terms of profit margins, children’s books are not very profitable. Children’s books constitute between about ten and twenty percent of the total turnover of an average bookshop that stocks children’s books.

A final point to consider in terms of attitudes towards children’s literature in South Africa is the attitudes of librarians and booksellers towards indigenous South African children’s literature itself. As has been noted indigenous children’s literature is a rapidly growing field in South Africa and one that has in the past twenty or so years come into being. Reasons for this recent and rapid growth are numerous, ranging from economic factors to a belief in the importance of a South African literary tradition. As the field has grown, so has it spawned its supporters and its detractors. Indeed there exists in South Africa amongst people who work within the genre two very decided opinions about the pros and cons of indigenous children’s literature. People who support the expansion and encouragement of the field believe that it is important because of what it reveals to children about the nature of their own society. By contrast those who believe that it is limiting to

promote one form of literature over another argue that the active promotion of indigenous children's literature, that is recommending and prescribing it over imported literature is isolationist and potentially harmful.

Those people who believe that it is vitally important for children to read indigenous South African literature base their arguments on the grounds that it is important for kids to have books that reflect their world view and their situation. They argue that as books reflect increasingly familiar situations and characters, so the books themselves as well as the act of reading will become more familiar and less alien (Brian Prehn of READ 1993: interview). Having familiar books will give children a sense of their origins, bearing out one of the social functions of books and stories, which is to familiarise children with their own environment and society's norms (Bettelheim 1978: 3-6). Lynne Wilson of Youngbooks buys and encourages parents to buy indigenous children's literature for their children for just these reasons, arguing that literature 'is a means of communication, a way of transmitting culture and a means of expressing one's personal identity' and for these reasons it is very important for children to read indigenous stories. Equally committed to encouraging the buying and reading of indigenous children's literature is Elizabeth Roubaix (of the Cape Provincial Library Services) who argues that indigenous literature fills a gap in a child's emotional development, which imported literature cannot hope to do, by presenting the child with an image of the world with which she is familiar. Despite their enthusiasm for the field, both Wilson and Roubaix recognise that frequently children avoid indigenous literature for two possible reasons, one it is 'too close to the bone, too real' for children to be able to cope with (Wilson 1993: interview) and second because there is an inherent belief, often acquired from adults, that South African stuff is second rate and does not compare with imported literature.

As there are people who support and believe in the active encouragement of indigenous children's literature, so are there people who believe it to be a bad thing. Two vehement detractors are Anne Greenwell (1993: interview) and Rosie Bennett (1993: interview), and their reasons for opposing the active encouragement of indigenous

children's literature over imported literature are similar: both people believe that the encouragement of indigenous literature will be isolationist and both see this a limiting and potentially indicative of a nationalist stance. Bennett's (1993: interview) response to the question of whether or not children ought to read indigenous children's literature was as follows:

A contentious question, but the short answer is no ... Children need to read books which deal with issues that are pertinent to them at that time. They need books which are psychologically right from their maturity level and which deal with things in which they are interested. If they could be written by South Africans, it would be wonderful, but we also have to realise that that is another way of increasing our insulation. At least by reading these other books they have an idea of some other countries. ... [children] absorb something ... At least if they read about [other children] it will give them some perception of the whole world ... and they will realise that people are in essence the same. ... Where there are good South African books let's read them, and increasingly there are more and more.

Anne Greenwell's (1993: interview) response to the same question was far more scathing. She argued that suggesting that children (specifically black children) could not relate to Western books was a suspect statement 'can't or are not allowed to relate to' was how she rephrased the question. She suggested that the question of relating to a book or not be considered in its historical context. This argument often develops in a post independence, nationalistic African country. Greenwell sees it as a 'politically correct guilt trip' and a political ploy, and argues that it is isolationist and is intended to instil 'the right attitude in young readers', so as to extend official control over them (note how much faith she places in the strength of the written word). A further argument that Greenwell uses against indigenous children's literature is that often the standard of the newly produced literature is very poor because so much of it has been quickly produced and is the result of 'political ideology' rather than a 'natural development'.

However supporters and detractors of the field might feel, most people agree that indigenous children's literature is a young and rapidly expanding field. Being a young field, most people (booksellers, publishers) are willing to believe that it does not at this stage compare with imported literature. They recognise that in many instances the field is being artificially promoted and has gained prominence for a number of reasons, some of which are the result of external economic pressures like the weakening Rand or international sanctions. Despite this recognition of the field's weaknesses, it would seem that it is here to stay and that for the most part is seen in a positive and encouraging light.

PUBLISHING INDIGENOUS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Before it is possible to discuss the kinds of books produced in a country, it is necessary to consider how books come to be produced in the first place. In any country there is a considerable process that has to be embarked upon between the writing of a book and the final publication and distribution of a text. South Africa has a particularly complex method of publication and distribution because of first the pressure of competition with imported texts, and second the peculiar nature of the South African buying market at both institutional and private levels.

John Hall in The Sociology of Literature (1979: 101) refers to the concept of 'gatekeepers', 'whose role is that of selecting the type of communication that the audience is to receive'. Gatekeepers within mass communications exercise their power and influence in two areas. The first area is in the realm of publishing where 'publishers can prevent manuscripts [from] reaching the market' (1979: 101), and the second area is the area of post-publication influence where the fate of a published book 'depends in part upon critics, libraries, distributors and ... censors' (1979: 101). In keeping with Hall's perceptions of two distinct areas of influence, this examination of the distribution and dissemination of children's literature in South Africa will focus in detail upon, first, the role of publishers in South Africa – undoubtedly a rich area of research – and, second, upon the distribution and marketing of published children's books in South Africa (see following chapter). Although Hall's study focuses on adult British and American fiction, many of the points that he raises are of importance and relevance to the situation of children's literature in our own country, and will be explored as they become germane to the discussion.

In comparison with such countries as America and England, South Africa produces very little children's literature. Jay Heale in Bookchat Newsletter (1992: number 108) gives some interesting statistics about the nature of book publication in South Africa. The most

immediately striking feature of Heale's statistics is that he lists figures for English and Afrikaans language books published, but nowhere are children's books published in vernacular languages mentioned. This reflects on the lack of children's books produced in vernacular languages, as well as the fact that it was not until recently that any publishing house would have considered publishing in the vernacular; Maskew Miller Longman is the first major publishing house to inaugurate a publishing 'line' in vernacular languages (Dada 1993: interview). Despite the fact that Heale gives published figures for both fiction and non-fiction children's books, he does not mention the publishing house Via Afrika which publishes a range of vernacular language books both fiction and non-fiction, aimed at a broad age readership. Heale's figures are current to 1992, and library statistics about the nature of children's books purchased in 1991-92 indicate that some children's books in 'African Languages' were purchased in those years (Annual Report 1991/92 Cape Town City libraries: 17), so Heale's failure to mention these (in my opinion) important figures is a telling oversight (suggesting that these books are of no real importance in the field of children's fiction), especially given the enormous amount of credibility that Heale has in the field of South African children's literature.

Heale gives the following figures for the number of children's books published in South Africa as follows: in 1990 a total of 172 books were published of which 76 were written in Afrikaans and 96 were written in English; in 1991 a diminished total of 145 books were published of which 72 were written in Afrikaans and 73 (a considerable reduction in number) were written in English. Focusing on the production of children's books in English, Heale notes that the number of fiction books published increased rapidly from 18 published in 1982 to 100 published in 1987. Thereafter the number has been declining with only 65 English-language fiction books for children being produced in 1991. This decrease in number can be seen as a direct result of the weakening Rand which makes it difficult to produce books cheaply in South Africa (printing paper is expensive and imported, and accounts for some 45% of the total production cost of a book making small print runs, which are typical of South African productions, see below, economically

unviable). It is interesting to note that in the figures quoted there are more English language books produced than Afrikaans language books (in 1990 there were 76 to 96). This finding is unexpected as it would be supposed that Afrikaans would be fostered and encouraged in South Africa amongst publishers. The increased number of English-language books can be accounted for through the existence of numerous small and 'unofficial' publishing houses like 'African Sun Press (3 books published in 1990 -91) and 'Buchu books' (2 books published in 1990-91) which publish irregularly and in English. No comparable publishing houses exist for books or writers in either Afrikaans or Vernacular languages. If the figures given for more established 'official' publishing houses are considered, the following points emerge: the six most prolific (in South African terms) publishers, namely HAUM-Daan Retief, Tafelberg, Human & Rousseau, JP van der Walt, De Jager-HAUM and Varia, are all subsidiaries of the government supported Nasionale Pers. All these publishers produce both English and Afrikaans-language books, and all the publishers listed produced more books in Afrikaans than in English, indicating that Afrikaans language children's books are encouraged in official channels. The other seventeen publishers listed by Heale publish predominantly English language children's books, in considerably smaller quantities than the Nasionale Pers publishers, for example HAUM-Daan Retief (the most prolific Nasionale Pers publisher) produced a total of 77 books in 1990-91 as compared to Maskew Miller Longman (the most prolific unaffiliated publishing house) which produced a total of 13 books in 1990-91. The total number of books imported into South Africa and retailed is unfortunately unavailable, given that there are numerous suppliers of children's books (of what kind is left unspecified – for example, colouring in books are classed as children's literature by some suppliers) who do not belong to an 'umbrella' organisation. The distribution of imported children's literature by publishers such as Tafelberg and Maskew Miller Longman will be considered under the section on marketing.

The supply and publication of indigenous children's books in South Africa reflects the market demand for books. Publishing is ultimately a profit centred, market related industry 'and inherently speculative' (Hall 1979: 102). Publishers produce only what they

can hope to sell. Given this fact, it is important to consider who the publishing industry's market is, before one considers what types of books are produced by publishers. Jay Heale (Bookchat Newsletter, no. 108, 1992: 4) makes the following statement about the publishing industry in South Africa:

The future of South African children's book publishing industry depends totally on decisions taken in education. If our future government sets up an Education Department which considers that books are important, then they will have to make funds available to buy those books. If school libraries and school classrooms have sufficient encouragement to buy books, then books will be published. At present, our children's book publishing is in a state of economic despair. The public library system is the only large customer for local books, and now state funding of libraries is shrinking. Model C schools have to fund their own libraries, so one can guess their buying will be hesitant. Individual parents buying books for their children make up less than five percent of a book's sales.

The market that Heale picks out is two fold: the 'educational system' which in the South Africa is complex and fractured, as well as having an uncertain and speculative future; and 'public libraries' which are also surrounded by a myriad of problems and divisions. Hall (1979: 103-4) comments on the nature of the publishing market as follows:

Escarpit (1966) has shown that publishing is increasingly dependent on 'functional' books, about a quarter of current book production being for the school audience. Such captive audiences are important here [because of their predictability] which contrasts poorly with the independent [fiction] reading public; it is not hard to see that strong arguments encourage publishers to specialise in these newer and safer areas.

The public who buy children's books, are for the most part white middle-class English speakers (Lynn Wilson 1993: interview), are of little importance in terms relation to the overall book buying market because they purchase less than five percent of published books. Publishers therefore attempt to produce books that will appeal to libraries and

educational departments, all of which are to a greater or less extent 'official' institutions (and are sometimes even directly funded by the government), and are therefore likely to be conservative in outlook.

The attitudes of publishers to the types of books that they produce are a useful way into a discussion of the production and dissemination of children's literature in South Africa. Most publishers belong to the Publishing Association of South Africa (PASA), which acts as a trade watchdog. Within PASA, publishers in South Africa are divided into two categories: publishers who fall under the Nasionale Pers group which encompass publishers like Tafelberg and Via Afrika, and other independent publishers such as Struik and Maskew Miller Longman. As space does not allow a detailed discussion of every publisher in South Africa that produces children's literature's policy, I will focus in detail on two important publishers from the Nasionale Pers group, Human & Rousseau and Via Afrika (the publishing policies of Tafelberg, an important producer of youth literature, will be considered in detail in the chapter on award winning texts); and three independent publishers, Maskew Miller Longman (one of the biggest educational publishers); Struik (a publisher that is considering publishing children's literature and which has a clearly thought out policy); and Songololo Books (a small David Philip subsidiary which has a publishing Manifesto that details the publishing house's publishing policy). In discussing these publishers I will consider what type of books they publish, who they perceive their market as being and what role they see themselves as having in the South African book industry.

The Nasionale Pers was founded in 1915 with clearly specified ideals which have adapted over time. When I requested information about the Nasionale Pers I was given a glossy in-house brochure called the Naspers 90, which had been produced to celebrate the seventy-fifth year of the group's publishing life. This brochure provides detailed information about the company's history, its subsidiaries, its marketing methods and especially about its policies and its publishing ideals, for the Nasionale Pers is nothing if not idealistic. Founded in 1915 by a 'small but important group of Afrikaner nationalists ... [who were] idealists from the ranks of the Afrikaner elite' the establishment of the Nasionale Pers was seen as

the herald of 'a new era in which the Afrikaner nation with its language, literature, art and science could express itself fully' (Naspers 90: 8). The origins of the *Nasionale Pers* was therefore Afrikaner nationalist and intended explicitly to encourage the growth of Afrikaans as a language through the medium of printed materials – books, newspapers and magazines – as this quotation reveals:

The Afrikaans book was as important for the advent of Afrikaans culture as the newspaper or magazine. ... [*Nasionale Pers*] resolved to further develop the Afrikaner's desire to read in his new language through the provision of a growing stream of books by South African authors (Naspers 1990: 24).

In accordance with the idealistic aspirations of the Afrikaner academics who founded the *Nasionale Pers*, the early books that were published by the press had to 'educate and orientate the Afrikaner on every level of nationalism' (Naspers 1990: 25). However, the *Nasionale Pers* diversified rapidly and 'currently six of its twelve magazines and an increasing percentage of its books appear in English. Through its publishing firm *Via Afrika* it is a growing force in black education, African languages and English' (Naspers 1990: 7).

The number of books published in the various South African languages is given as follows (figures valid for 1990): out of a total of 1316 titles, some 700 (54%) were published in Afrikaans, 396 (30%) were published in English and 215 (16%) were in various Black languages. Some 10 million of its own publications were sold by *Nasionale Pers* (and the reader of these figures has to remember that they are figures for both adult and children's fiction and non-fiction books).

The *Nasionale Pers* is aware of its important role in South Africa, stating that its publications 'issued in Afrikaans, English and nine African languages ... wield an influence over the length and breadth of the country and they serve all languages and cultural groups' (Naspers 1990: 6). The brochure contains the following statement which is cited as a 1990 ideal: 'the frame work within which [the *Nasionale Pers*] operates remains Afrikaans-national' (Naspers 1990: 8), a statement which is contradicted by the following statement that 'we serve South Africa in its wide variety. ... and the thrust of our publications is to

unite all the peoples of our country so that South Africa can reach its full potential' (Naspers 1990: 9). Despite these idealistic assertions the following statement is contained in the Nasionale Pers's credo: 'we want a South Africa in which cultural diversity is recognised in a cultural system' (Naspers 1990: 3). In other words this credo upholds the aims of apartheid. However this credo was compiled in 1986 and the Nasionale Pers's attitudes might have changed somewhat (although the Naspers 90 brochure was given to me without comment in 1993).

One of the chief aims of the Nasionale Pers is to publish marketable books and to furnish good quality printing (Naspers 1990: 7). This aim is made somewhat simpler through the existence for the various publishing houses of a protective umbrella in the form of the Pers itself. In South Africa the various Nasionale Pers subsidiaries 'undertake the printing, publishing and distributing of the largest collection of publications ... in South Africa' (Naspers 1990: 6). In 1989 the company had a total turnover of R544 441 000, of which R206 289 021, or 38%, was spent on materials for printing (ink, paper etc.) (Naspers 1990: 7). With such funds at its disposal, small wonder that it is a publishing giant.

The relationship of the group's various subsidiaries is spelt out as follows by the managing director of the Nasionale Pers:

These publishers are not less independent today than before their incorporation; on the contrary they enjoy greater freedom – the freedom also of financial stability. It is not prescribed to them what they should publish or what not. Our publishers are as autonomous as our editors. It is only expected of them to act within the spirit of the Nasionale Pers – and that is a critical, compelling, searching spirit which in our era throws its full weight behind the pursuit of a fuller South African society, a freer society in which there is no discrimination against any citizen of our country on the grounds of race, colour or creed' (Naspers 1990: 25).

Despite this avowal of independence, publishers within the Nasionale Pers do have certain limitations imposed upon them. For example, not all publishers belonging to the group publish children's literature, and those that do, do not necessarily publish in all South

African languages, nor do they produce books for all age groups. What types of books each publishing house produces is controlled and co-ordinated by the Nasionale Pers itself. Via Afrika is the only black language publisher in the Nasionale Pers group and this fact prevents other Nasionale Pers group publishers from producing books for the black market. In some ways this selectivity limits the publishers, but in another important way it protects the publishers within the group from rivalry and competition, and directs the energy and focus of the publisher into a specific direction (certain publishers within the group have become 'specialist' publishers, for example Via Afrika is the black language publisher and Tafelberg has a monopoly on 'youth literature' within the group). Given this specialisation, few specialist editors are needed in any one specific publishing house, and any manuscript that is received by one publisher which cannot be produced for what ever reason would be passed onto another publisher within the umbrella group. Considering that there are many publishers within the group, the money saving practice of 'co-productions' is easily and frequently undertaken. 'Co-production' is the practice of producing one book – usually an illustrated children's book – in a variety of languages. Given of the high cost of publishing books when print runs are small (the average print run size in South Africa is about fifteen hundred copies of a book) and the high cost of producing colour illustrated books, co-productions enable a larger number of books to be printed at a time, with the final text in what ever language being inserted by a specific publishing house. In addition, because many co-productions take place within the Nasionale Pers group, the printing rights only have to be bought once, a further cost saving device. Human & Rousseau and Via Afrika frequently run co-productions, producing books in Afrikaans, English and a number of Vernacular Black languages.

Alida Potgieter of Human & Rousseau (1993: interview) says that Human & Rousseau has been publishing children's literature in South Africa since the late 1960s. Initially, in keeping with the National Party's desire to promote Afrikaans, Human & Rousseau published exclusively Afrikaans language children's literature, but since the early 1980s the publishing house has been publishing children's literature in English. The decision

to begin publishing in English was the result of there being 'a gap in the market' for indigenous English language children's books. Why there was a gap is unclear, but the weakening Rand made imported literature expensive and from the late 1970s onwards there has been a trend towards encouraging indigenous English language literature for children. Of the books published, some are co-productions with other publishing houses (see above) and most are simultaneously produced in both English and Afrikaans. Human and Rousseau does not publish children's literature in any black languages and cannot see itself doing so in the future, this is because vernacular publishing within the Nasionale Pers group falls under the auspices of Via Afrika, rather than because Potgieter does not see a future for African language children's books in South Africa. Unlike many other South African publishers, Human & Rousseau does not publish any school text books nor does it produce any textbooks (although this might be a feature of the age group for which Human & Rousseau publish – the pre-teens – a group for whom no literature is prescribed at school). Not surprisingly, Human & Rousseau does not export any of the children's literature that they produce.

Via Afrika was founded in 1947, and has been publishing children's books in vernacular languages since 1953 (E.R. Arnold 1993: interview). It was the first South African publisher to publish commercially in black languages, and belonging as it does to the Nasionale Pers publishing group, it is interesting to consider possible reasons for this. The Nasionale Pers Brochure (Naspers, 1990: 26) describes the origins of Via Afrika as follows:

Via Afrika was founded to provide the individual needs of the black educational market. Till now the emphasis has been on publications for primary, secondary and tertiary education. More attention is already being given to special needs such as literacy programmes specially also for adults, and as a new education policy for a new dispensation become clearer, products will be created to supply the new needs.

Focusing as it did on educational material, Via Afrika's publishing program enabled the Nationalist government to supervise the types of books being produced for and fed into black schools and colleges, serving to further the aims of 'Bantu Education' in the years of Nationalist supremacy. As stated, Via Afrika was initially an educational publisher, and even today much of what it produces is educational or 'para-educational', although it does produce a certain amount of children's fiction in vernacular languages. With the demise of the mission schools and the establishing of colour specific government managed educational departments it is possible that the National Party wished to have some control over the types of text books and children's literature being produced for consumption in black schools (the press was intended to 'provide for the needs' of the black educational market, needs as perceived by the government). Currently Via Afrika only produces fiction in vernacular languages, although co-productions with Tafelberg and Human & Rousseau are undertaken in order to cut production costs. In addition, Via Afrika has many sub-groups (for example, Via Afrika (Transkei) and Via Afrika (Lebowa), all homelands, however) that produce and market children's books in vernacular languages throughout Africa. The sub-groups are all operated separately and, interestingly enough, 51% of the shares of these associated publishing companies are owned by the local residents of the areas. Indeed the Via Afrika 'project', according to Arnold, is summed up in the publisher's name – that is a publisher that produces literature 'throughout Africa'. In this trans-African project, Via Afrika's co-producer is Acacia books, a small and apparently independent publishing house that publishes primarily in English.

Having briefly considered the languages in which and the ages for which the above ✱ publishers publish, the question of what criteria are used when selecting books for production arises. Arnold of Via Afrika puts the issue bluntly: the output and the production of books is determined by the market (E. Arnold 1993: interview). And the various Provincial libraries are the main buyers of Via Afrika publications, buying as they do about three hundred copies of each book for distribution- so anything that is produced has to be of interest to, as well as approved of by, the libraries. Publishers are forced to

consider the interests of libraries when producing books because the South African children's literature market in other areas is as yet not very well developed – in fact there is little being done at present to encourage the development of another, probably black, market.

As has already been noted, Via Afrika is primarily an educational publisher, publishing text books as well as fiction with an educational market in mind. Children's fiction is produced in vernacular languages because of a perceived belief that children learn to read better and more quickly in their mother tongue until they are at standard three or four level. Via Afrika is one of the few publishers in South Africa that is attempting to address the problem of illiteracy amongst black adults in south Africa and which is also attempting to aid the creation of a 'reading culture' amongst black people. Via Afrika's commitment to producing children's fiction in black languages, arguing that reading is more pleasurable for children when it is seen as recreation rather than work (the difference between reading in your home language and reading in another language in which you are not fluent), is complemented by a series of adult readers (in English and in Afrikaans) aimed at the newly literate. This it is believed will encourage parents to support and encourage their children's reading habits. Few publishers who publish for the black market recognise or attempt to tackle the problem of an absence of a reading culture and the almost institutionalised illiteracy that exists as a result of the National Party's apartheid policy. In addition to encouraging adults to read, Via Afrika also runs writers workshops and liaises with various writers groups throughout Southern Africa. The purpose of these interactions with writers is twofold: on the one hand, editors from Via Afrika are able to work towards 'writer education', especially of black writers, which it is hoped will result in more 'authentic' literature being written for South African black children; and second, it enables editors to gather information as to what kinds of literature and in what languages are wanted by readers in the black community.

As with all publishing houses in South Africa at this moment in time (pre-1994 election with the resultant economic uncertainty) Via Afrika is also making publishing plans

for the future. Arnold comments that the possibility exists that in the 'new South Africa', vernacular languages will be taught in white schools where currently only English and Afrikaans are being taught, and this possibility would open up new and bigger markets for Via Afrika publications. Arnold is not the only publisher to foresee this possibility, as will be discussed below in connection with both Struik and Maskew Miller Longman. In terms of future publishing policy, Arnold foresees there being three languages taught in schools in the future ('the ANC is keen on three languages for people') and he argues that Afrikaans will survive in the 'new South Africa' because it is so widely spoken (Via Afrika was advised by 'Learning Press' students, who are consulted about the nature of Via Afrika publications, to retain Afrikaans in their adult publications). Considering future publishing in South Africa, Arnold observed that if the education policy changes then Via Afrika will extend itself to producing literature in English and Afrikaans, ironic when one considers that publishers who published in either English or Afrikaans exclusively are now considering publishing in vernacular languages.

When one considers the apparently hard-line attitude of E.R. Arnold of Via Afrika towards the selection of children's books – namely that any book published by Via Afrika must be marketable and therefore profitable – it comes as something of a surprise to discover that the other Nasionale Pers publishers considered here do not primarily focus on the marketability of books when considering what features of a book makes it publishable. Both Louise Steyn of Tafelberg and Alida Potgieter of Human & Rousseau look at more intangible features of the books – what makes the books 'good enough' to warrant publishing them. Whilst this is an apparently less mercenary method of selecting books, it can be an almost equally dangerous method of book selection, because notions of what makes a book a 'good book' are often not very clearly understood and are based on familiarity with certain aspects of a text, as well as with certain 'cultural norms'. This notion of 'good books', and the attitudes of people who deal with books to certain texts will be considered in more detail elsewhere.

Alida Potgieter of Human & Rousseau states that it is impossible to 'give guidelines' about what makes a manuscript publishable (1993: interview). She does however state that in a publishable manuscript will be a story written from the child's point of view with no adult (and often moralistic) voice-over, it will have a strong story line and be free from the time distortions that often form an aspect of adult literature. Being an editor at a South African publishing house, Potgieter would favour books that have a South African 'flavour', which might be achieved through the setting and the subject matter. This preference for a South African flavour might be waived in the case of Afrikaans books, where there is an already limited selection available. English language readers might reasonably be expected to derive international flavour from the wealth of imported books available. Potgieter emphasises, however, that an editor cannot be prescriptive when considering manuscripts for publication (although a cynic might argue that any form of selection leads to prescriptiveness, because writers will select a possible publisher having considered the types of books – age, language, stylistic and ideological content – that any individual publisher produces).

So much for the aims of publishers sheltering under the umbrella of the Nasionale Pers. Within South Africa there are numerous 'non-official' publishing houses, some of which are small and short-lived, some of which were established with ideological intentions in mind and some of which constitute the major competition for the Nasionale Pers group. Almost as a fact of their existence outside of the official Nasionale Pers structure, some of these publishing houses are more subversive and more questioning of the South African status quo than any Nasionale Pers publisher can ever be, and most of these publishers have a credo or publishing manifesto. Many of these non-official publishing houses were founding members of the Publishing Association of South Africa (PASA), which is a non-racial, non-sexist union of South African publishers. Many Nasionale Pers publishers are currently members of PASA, indicative perhaps of the changing attitudes within the Nasionale Pers group.

The three independent publishers that I want to discuss are Songololo Books, Struik and Maskew Miller Longman, three very different publishers with very different aims and aspirations. Songololo Books was established in 1989 as the children's book division of David Philip Publishers, with the intention of maintaining the approach of its parent company. Until June 1992 it was headed by Niki Daly, a writer and an illustrator of award winning children's books, who recognised the need for children's books that were relevant to the South African situation. Songololo Books has very clear aims and intentions which are laid out in a mission statement. Some of its main aims are as follows:

Songololo Books aims to encourage and engage the very best writing and illustrating talent in South Africa [in order to] produce children's books which reflect the creative spirit of writers and illustrators who are sensitive to and responsive to the needs of our children. Songololo Books will strive to play a major role in introducing children to one another's culture through stories of city and rural life, African fantasy and other aspects which make Africa exciting and different. Songololo Books will be uncompromisingly South African yet strive to be unusual and interesting enough to delight readers elsewhere. We aim to create a booklist respectful of children's rights and free of sexism and racism as well as books which enrich the imagination of children ... books which may be regarded as gifts of love.

All in all an idealistic statement that assumes responsibility for what it publishes, asserts that books are a means of education and can make a difference, and argues for the importance of a specifically South African literature for children. Whilst the full implications of this mission statement will be considered in a chapter which will focus on attitudes towards children's literature, it is the purpose of this chapter to consider the immediate implications of this statement in the practical, if mundane, area of book production. Songololo Books which was founded by Niki Daly is currently headed by Kobie Swart to whom I spoke in June 1993. She is the sole editor, although she does work with Marie Philip on some of the projects, and her publishing activities are curtailed by a limited budget, as would be

expected in publishing house that is as small and as specialised as David Philip/Songololo Books is. Songololo books publish 'about three books every year, but the books that are published are very specific'. They are illustrated children's books intended to be for very young readers, which aim to be 'about the South African situation' and intend to present it in a 'non-biased' manner. Swart comments that so few books are published because of financial problems and financial limitations. Many of the books are produced as co-productions with various local (Via Afrika, amongst others) and international (Puffin) publishers. Considering means of overcoming these financial pressures, Swart expressed a willingness to consider publishing cheaper books but emphasised that the philosophy of Songololo Books is to produce a few books of a high standard. Swart discussed various means of cutting the costs of production and commented that Songololo Books would consider producing cheaper books in black and white rather than in colour, so that they could be afforded by parents and teachers as well as by various sponsors at school level. She did emphasise^e that whilst paper is the most expensive part of any book production process, it would be impractical in the long term to use low quality paper because children's books take such a battering at the hands of child readers that they would have to be replaced at a high cost. (She likened a well read children's book to an edible paper sandwich – dog-eared and smear^{ed} with children's food).

Given the financial constraints under which Songololo Books operates, the selection of books for publication is fairly strict. Swart says that no books are solicited and that currently Songololo Books is 'waiting for them to come to us'. She sees about fifteen possible manuscripts a month out of which three per year have to be selected for publication. The philosophy of 'waiting for books to come to us' is a result of early practises at Songololo Books. When the press was first established, Niki Daly, even then a well known and recognised writer for children, ran various workshops to promote the writing of children's books of a certain kind. Daly's workshops were also a recognition of the fact that South Africa is not 'a culture that produces good children's literature', and that some thing has to be done to educate potential writers of children's literature. Today

Songololo Books is perceived as being a publisher that produces certain kinds of books and as a result writers who are writing children's literature that is relevant to the South African situation send manuscripts to Songololo Books.

Kobie Swart bases much of her selection of manuscripts on her understanding of the market – a story has to be marketable and it is important to realise that South African libraries (the main buyers of children's literature) buy 'just about every children's book written in Afrikaans, but are more selective when it comes to English children's literature, because of the wider choice available' Ultimately, however, Swart hopes that the books produced by Songololo Books will appeal to 'just about everybody' in South Africa, although she recognises that in sectors of the black market it is 'not a priority to buy books if you're unemployed'. Given her far reaching desire to promote books to the whole of South Africa, Swart recognises that innovative marketing devices will need to be employed (see below) and that the wide spread problem of illiteracy in South Africa will have to be combated – an area where she feels that the innovative action of a project like READ is worth considering as a model for the future.

With all the limitations placed on her by sparse funds as well as by the numerous issues specific to the South African children's literature market, selection of books to publish is indeed 'difficult'. Kobie Swart is one of the few editors to agree that what gets selected for publication is very subjective and depends to a greater or lesser degree on the editors involved. This of course places the editor in a position of great responsibility, and the reputation of Songololo Books is directly affected by her choice of manuscripts. The criteria that Swart uses are a practical reflection of Songololo Books' manifesto. Swart selects books that have a Southern African setting and that are specifically relevant to South Africa. She avoids books which present a 'sanitised view of black people in South Africa' and instead chooses books that reflect life in the city as well as 'cross-cultural' stories. One of the main criteria for any illustrated children's story in the making is that it be 'visual'. Swart concludes her statements about how she selects manuscripts by saying that its a 'feeling you get after a while that a story will work or it won't' which emphasises the

essentially subjective role that editors have to play in the selection of 'suitable' manuscripts. Although Songololo Books does not actively commission children's books, Swart observes that the highly specific selection process that takes place before a manuscript is chosen for publication is in effect a type of commissioning because people will only send a specific type of manuscript to Songololo Books.

Of the independent publishers to whom I spoke, Songololo Books is probably the most idealistic, aiming to publish books that serve a social function. Maskew Miller Longman, whilst producing what might be termed socially relevant literature for South African children, is far more obviously motivated by practical measures. From the very beginning of my interview with her in June 1993, Fatima Dada emphasised that Maskew Miller Longman is 'primarily an educational publisher', and that any literature published by the company 'is geared to the setwork prescription market'. Unlike most of the other publishers to whom I spoke and who see libraries as the main buyers of their various books, Maskew Miller Longman focuses on the educational system. This focus is reflected in the publisher's approach towards commissioning books, which is done through the offering of two awards for youth literature. One award-based publishing line is the well known 'Young Africa' imprint which was created in the mid-80s and the other is a recently created line which intends to solicit manuscripts in nine black languages which have been written by black writers. Dada comments that Maskew Miller Longman foresees a viable market for youth literature in vernacular languages in South Africa in the future under a new dispensation. Maskew Miller Longman only publishes youth fiction because this is where there is a market for prescribed school setworks. No education department has ever prescribed a setwork for children's at a pre-senior school level. Any children's fiction that Maskew Miller Longman publishes takes the form of supplementary readers for young children which are school related. An important source of income for Maskew Miller Longman and one which might affect their publishing policy (for example they might avoid producing school readers which are generally imported) is that they represent the interests of various overseas publishers. This interaction with overseas publishers has resulted in the

rights to some 'Young Africa' series books being sold in about 'six or eight countries outside of South Africa ... where they are being translated into other languages'. These exported books are holding their own in terms of competition with other books in the countries to which they have been exported. Although which manuscripts are selected for publication depends to a large extent on whether they are marketable (in the case of Maskew Miller Longman, likely to become networks), Dada has strict criteria as to the types of manuscripts that she selects for publication. As seems to be the case with most South African publishers of children's literature, one of the main criteria for a book is that it is original material with a distinctly indigenous and South African feel, as well as a strong storyline and structure (although what is understood as a 'strong storyline' is not clarified). Commenting on the themes of the books that have been published by Maskew Miller Longman in the past, Dada says that up until 1990 'most of the books were very politically orientated' and that the judging panels favoured 'books with a message'. Currently there is a shift in the type of material received as well as in the type of material that is winning prizes, and youth fiction seems to be 'moving away from retrospective, negative material to a far more positive kind of material', material that is more 'social commentary' rather than social criticism. Dada attributes this change in the type of material to the changing political climate and the new 'mood of optimism' in South Africa at present. Dada emphasises that Maskew Miller Longman rejects all manuscripts that rely on 'formula type stories' as well as any story that has stereotypes in it. The goal of Maskew Miller Longman is to publish good fiction for South African youth readers, before they publish fiction intended for the network market, which in the past has relied upon conservative books of a 'formula type' genre. This goal (the desire to publish fiction that is first of a high standard) is not seen by Dada as being in any way incompatible with Maskew Miller Longman's method of soliciting manuscripts through competitions, and Dada emphasises that despite the high quality of the books published by Maskew Miller Longman, many of them have not 'done very well on the commercial market because the South African buying market is not very big'.

Although Maskew Miller Longman's main market is the educational school setwork market, Dada would have liked the 'Young Africa' imprint series to have been bought in what she terms the 'main market' – which encompasses parents buying for their children, bookshops (which do in some cases keep a limited 'Young Africa' stock), libraries (who do buy some 'Young Africa' series books, although not enough to be a financially viable market for the publishing house) and so on. Dada emphasises, however, that widespread buying by the public as well as by institutions like libraries doesn't really happen in South Africa. One of the main reasons for this not happening is that English language books in South Africa have to compete with all imported English language literature and as a result for whatever reason, little indigenous English language literature is bought in the 'main market'. It is because of these factors that Maskew Miller Longman has targeted the prescription market, where Dada says the various 'Young Africa' books that have been prescribed have been very much enjoyed by the children and have been, in many cases, represcribed. There is little doubt that Maskew Miller Longman is one of the most successful independent publishing houses in South Africa (it is the most prolific producer of children's books after the Nasionale Pers group), and it is undoubtedly one of the more innovative publishers. Maskew Miller Longman was one of the earliest publishers to institute an award system as a way of soliciting manuscripts (begun in the early 1980s, the 'Young Africa' award was discontinued and then reinstated in 1987), and there is no doubt that the decision of the editors to begin a series of books aimed at a potential black market will be followed by other publishing houses.

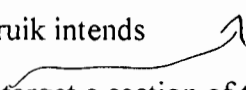
Struik publishers does not currently publish children's fiction; however, when I interviewed Marje Hemp, Struik's children's book editor in June 1993, she told me that Struik is planning to begin publishing children's literature in late 1993 or early 1994 because of a perceived gap in the market. What makes Struik worth examining in a chapter on publishers and what they publish is that the editors at Struik have very clear notions of what they expect to do and to find in the field of children's literature. Unlike other

publishers who have evolved a policy, Struik (like Songololo Books) intends to begin producing children's books with a very clear project in mind.

As of 1993 or 1994 Struik intends to launch a range of children's fiction books in English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Xhosa, the languages that are seen as the most important languages by the Struik editors. Hemp comments that Struik would like to expand its range of children's fiction so as to publish in more vernacular languages, but is prevented from doing so because there is a problem with the distribution of books to black people in South Africa which would make this course of action unwise at present. Considering the thorny issue of black children and books Hemp says that Struik works closely with READ, who distribute books in black schools, but says that this is not a possible channel for black language books, because READ need English language books for the schools that they serve.

Recognising that South Africans who are not English speaking are frequently at a disadvantage in terms of both money and a reading background (the ubiquitous 'reading culture'), Struik is interest^{ed} in producing other types of reading material, perhaps for example an educational magazine for children written in a variety of languages. Marje Hemp imagines that Struik will be prescriptive when it comes to soliciting and selecting manuscripts for Struik's new children's literature range. She comments as follows to explain in what areas and how Struik will be prescriptive: 'we are saying we have a series aimed at a specific audience', this series will be collections of short stories for the 'new South Africa' and the format for the stories is quite specific. Struik does not intend to wait for manuscripts to arrive, but have decided on a specific route to follow in order to attract manuscripts that 'fit the bill'. The problem that Struik has is publicising their intentions and attracting suitable writers. The editors will approach known writers for manuscripts as well as go to writers' forums to workshop possible stories and the publishing house will probably offer an award for good manuscripts. A medium sized publisher, Struik is able to combine the techniques of both a large publisher (awards) as well as a small publisher (hands on editor intervention through workshops). As with all publishers, Struik intends to

be very discriminating and aim to keep to a high international standard in the types of manuscripts that they eventually select for publication.

Currently, Struik supplies a lot of books – all non-fiction at this stage – to libraries and through consultations with librarians believe themselves to be in touch with the needs of South African children. Much as a non-fiction book is published only if it is marketable, so will the potential market for fiction books be thoroughly researched before any book is published. This intention is in keeping with the practises of most publishers, all of whom are constantly aware of the demands and fancies of the book buying market. The editors at Struik are obviously aware of trends in the fiction publishing market and have used what they know of the field to draw up a plan of attack that combines the approaches of the more successful publishers in South Africa. As with some of the more socially aware publishers, Struik intends  to target a section of the black market for their new fiction range with authentic black language literature. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Struik approach to publishing children's fiction is the fact that Hemp readily admits that she, as a Struik editor, will be prescriptive about the kind of fiction that she wants. This prescriptiveness can be seen as limiting and chaining the freedom of any creative writer involved in the Struik project. It can also be recognised for what it probably is: an attempt to create, under considerable pressure, some kind of indigenous literature for South African children that is not Eurocentric, or written to a formula.

Publishers, obviously, play one of the most important roles in the complicated process of book dissemination in South Africa, and it is interesting to consider some of the less obvious ways in which they contribute to the dissemination of a specific type of children's literature in South Africa. Once a publishing house has become established, it becomes known for producing certain types of texts. When I set about investigating various publishers I was left with distinct impressions as to the nature of various publishers after I had spoken to people involved in the book trade. For example Songololo Books is perceived as a politically prescriptive publishing house which is intent on producing books

that reflect an accurate as well as a hopeful picture of the South African situation. By contrast, publishers who fall under the Nasionale Pers group umbrella are seen – perhaps unfairly – as being ‘more conservative’ than other independent publishers would be. As a publisher becomes known for a certain ‘type’ of manuscript, it is likely that they are sent other manuscripts that are of a similar ‘type’, and this trend would serve to reinforce any preconceptions on the part of the buyers as to the type of publisher they are.

In South Africa, publishers publish in the main either for the setwork educational market, or for the library system. As both these institutions are somewhat conservative, publishers become prescriptive, even though most of the publishers to whom I spoke denied this emphatically. By prescriptive I do not mean to imply that publishers send out a list or requirements or a book formula, but that publishers produce fiction that is felt to be marketable and viable; as Hall notes, publishers are inherently speculative and are run as profit making organisations. Publishers as well as being prescriptive also act as ‘censors’, eliminating manuscripts that are seen as unviable and selecting material that will appeal to their buyers – who are, as already noted, in the main inherently conservative institutions. In a country that is experiencing a degree of economic stability, it might be possible for a publishing house to publish a certain number of ‘risky text’. In South Africa, however, where there is a great degree of economic uncertainty in the publishing field – not only are there obvious economic pressures, but there are also pressures such as uncertainty about the educational system and concern about library subsidies which will directly affect the publishing world – publishers are becoming increasingly conservative in terms of what type of books they produce (a comment made by a number of booksellers whom I interviewed in 1993). This conservativeness, if one accepts the notion that literature is to a degree a reflector of a society’s self-image, will influence the attitudes of both children and adults involved in the field of children’s literature.

Hall considers the role publishers play in book selection to be a reflection of both the publisher’s perception of their role as a publishers, as well as a reflection of how publishers perceive ‘culture’ itself (Hall 1979: 104). Most publishers in South Africa see

themselves as actively encouraging the growth of children's literature in South Africa through publishing lines and awards. In addition many publishers, particularly the smaller and independent publishers, see themselves as actively participating in the creation, through literature, of a 'new South Africa'. Both Swart and Hemp comment that their role as editors includes making relevant and pertinent literature available to children in a changing South Africa. Related to the notion that publishers perceive themselves as having an active role to play in the production of a certain type of literature, is the active role that the publishers discussed play in writers' forums and workshops. The publishers are actively involved in the generating of literature in South Africa, and it can be deduced that this involvement is intended to 'train' writer's to produce marketable literature for specific publishing houses, thereby increasing the pool of marketable manuscripts.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Whatever role that they assume for themselves, be it promoters of relevant children's literature or upholders of literary standards, publishers are limited by the demands of the market: ultimately, publishers publish material that will sell. Most realistic publishers are fully aware of this fact, as the following quotations from interviews illustrate: 'Provincial libraries are the main buyers of Via Afrika's publications ... The output and production [of Via Afrika] is determined by the needs of the market' (E.R. Arnold of Via Afrika 1993: interview); and 'Any literature [that Maskew Miller Longman publishes] is geared to the prescription market' (Fatima Dada of Maskew Miller Longman 1993: interview). Market demands are a far more efficient 'gatekeeper' and censor than any artificially imposed means of control, be they imposed by publishers themselves or by concerned buyers. When considering the means by which books are produced, it is salutary to remember that the market ultimately determines what kinds of books are published.

The process of marketing books in South Africa is an interesting one, highlighting as it does some of the cardinal features of the South African book industry. The distribution of books relies on some kind of actual marketing system being used by booksellers in order to get books from publishers to buyers. In the case of South Africa, the buyers are schools and libraries and to a lesser extent, the public. All publishers have a marketing and sales division. The size and extent of this division depends upon the size of the publishing house itself. The giant Nasionale Pers group has a specific marketing division, entirely separate from any of the publishing houses, which markets all the books produced within the group. Each publisher within the Nasionale Pers has a specific group of representatives representing their interests throughout South Africa, in both black and white areas if appropriate, and some of the publishers who produce children's literature have representatives who take their books directly to the various education departments.

Nasionale Pers also represents the interests of various international book publishers concerns within South Africa, thus extending their markets and influence. Elsa Wolfaard of THR marketing (the Tafelberg and Human & Rousseau marketing division) describes the process of marketing books as follows (1993: interview):

Even though THR is part of a large national concern and is relatively well funded, they have limited marketing personnel (a total of five people country wide) which inevitably limits range of booksellers that THR can approach. None the less the THR marketing representatives travel all over the various provinces, funded by the publishers that they represent. Every month, marketers do a 'subscription' to the booksellers in their areas (both where they live as well as in areas to which they travel). The marketing team are given a file with a cover and a book information sheet, as well as with recommended price. This marketing takes place about one month before the book is actually published, so this is pre-publication publicity and advance information which is provided by the publisher. The marketing team use various marketing strategies to sell the books and these would include, for example, emphasis on black characters and anti-bias material or a focus on sports theme and so on. These 'subscriptions' sell limited numbers of each book to the various booksellers. What is bought is determined by the booksellers personal whims. The budget for advertising children's books is very small indeed and is paid for by the publishers themselves. Advertisements are sent to various newspapers and magazines when a book is published and about one hundred and twenty copies of each book publishers are sent out to various newspapers and magazines (black language as well as English and Afrikaans) for their reviewers to consider. Sending out copies of books to publishers does not however ensure that the book will be reviewed – indeed as a consideration of reviews of children's books will show, very few children's books are reviewed at all.

THR is part of a much larger group of publishers, Nasionale Pers which is a national concern with offices and representatives through out South Africa. Smaller publishers are

disadvantaged in terms of marketing by a lack of resources for advertising and marketing. Like THR, smaller publishers also send representatives to various bookshops on a monthly basis (sometimes on a less than monthly basis), but unlike THR they have to be even more selective about which booksellers they send their representatives to. In addition because of their size, they frequently do not have national distributors (for example Raven Press only has a Johannesburg office), which makes distributing to the whole of South Africa difficult. This is partly overcome by smaller publishers joining together to employ a marketing team as well as by sending out numerous pamphlets and brochures to various bookshops and institutions (Kobie Swart 1993: interview). Despite their various strategies, there is no doubt that the marketing strategies of smaller publishers are less successful than that of the publishers who fall under the Nasionale Pers umbrella.

Publishers submit pre-publication information to various booksellers through their marketing personnel, and the booksellers then buy a limited number of books based on the information that they have received. Once the booksellers have bought books from the various publishers, the booksellers submit their purchases to the main libraries once a week. Books bought from booksellers by the libraries are often the main source of funds that a bookshop receives, and most of their buying is done with the library market in mind. At intervals during the year, the booksellers also submit books to schools and to the education departments. On average, booksellers see publishers representatives two or three times a week (Lynn Wilson and Toni Dalling 1993: interviews). By submitting so frequently, booksellers ensure that the libraries see everything that has been published recently, although what the booksellers show to the libraries has undergone fairly specific pre-selection by the booksellers themselves. In order to overcome this pre-selection, many publishers submit lists of books directly to the libraries themselves. Once they have seen what is available from the publishers, the libraries then submit orders to the booksellers for quantities of books, which the booksellers then order from the publishers. The reason for this time consuming and expensive process (booksellers take a cut) ordering through booksellers rather than directly from the publishers, is that publishers have an agreement

with booksellers to protect them by not supplying directly to libraries and educational departments. This is because selling to large organisations is the booksellers 'bread and butter' (Elsa Wolfaard 1993: interview), and without this protection booksellers would be forced out of business because the buying public, their other market, is too small to support them, constituting only 5% of the total book trade. The Nasionale Pers group are the only publishers to market directly to various educational departments. This can be seen as an indication of their link to various government institutions, as well as a sign that they are such a large and influential group that they have no need to worry about protests or boycotts from threatened booksellers.

As can be deduced from the above comments about marketing strategies, so much interaction between the various components of the book industry – the publishers, the booksellers, the libraries and the educational institutions – ensures that all segments of the industry are kept in touch with the needs of each part. This results in close interaction and feedback as to what is wanted by the market itself, which ensures that publishers produce books which will be seen as marketable. However, the needs of which publishers and buyers are most aware are those of the white market and this is because bookshops and libraries are predominantly in 'white' areas. Toni Dalling of Caxton's says: 'most booksellers refuse to send their representatives into black areas because this perceived as potentially dangerous'; moreover, there are few bookshops in black areas and black schools have no funds with which to purchase books for their school libraries. Publishers attempt to rectify this imbalance by marketing directly to the READ organisation. Every publisher to whom I spoke said that they submit their books directly to READ, who are seen as setting a standard in terms of the quality of local literature that they purchase, as well as being the most important means of tapping the emerging black book buying market. Black schools, involved in the various READ projects buy directly from READ, as well as taking their advice about what constitute desirable books.

In South Africa, as was indicated by the quotations from interviews with Dada and Arnold, the market consists of two major buyers – libraries and educational departments.

What makes a consideration of this area interesting as well as problematical is that, given the changing South African political climate, this is difficult area about which to speculate, with uncertainty surrounding educational policy as well as the future of library funding. Any research done in this area is likely to become quickly outdated, but this is nevertheless a worth while area of consideration in the light of what it reveals about the shaping of children's literature and the book industry in South Africa at present (1993: interview).

The system of distribution and marketing of children's literature in South Africa is complicated. 'Distribution' implies the spreading of a substance over an area and in relation to books could be seen as the means through which literature is made available to the reading public. Marketing of literature would mean both the way in which books are marketed to central distributors like libraries as well as the way in which the notion of literature is presented to the reading public. This is especially important in relation to young children whose reading habits are being formed by the literature to which they are exposed as well as by the manner in which books are presented to them. Furthermore, any indigenous children's book in English faces competition from imported books in English, Afrikaans language children's books do not face competition from imported literature, and neither do children's books in vernacular languages, although there does not seem to be much of a market for children's books in vernacular languages.

South Africa's educational system has been the well-documented focus of debate for many years, and it would be a waste of time to recap the development of the current educational system in South Africa. There are, however, some general points which are relevant to this thesis and which are worth noting. The first point is that the South African school educational system is extremely complex and diverse and reflects the broader social conditions in South Africa. In the 1980s there were some eleven educational departments in South Africa, which were intended to cater for South Africans on a colour and class basis. The South African educational system has an indisputable political basis and in the past the bolstering and the furthering of apartheid policies formed the cornerstone for the broader educational policy. One of the clearest areas in which this political basis was reflected was

in the area of government funding of pupils, which in turn affected the broader status and buying ability of the schools themselves. Figures in the 1980s reveal that approximately R700,00 was spent on 'white' children as compared to R59,00 on 'black' children. This inequality of funding has had far reaching effects, one of which is a low matric pass rate amongst 'black' children, as well as a low level of literacy amongst 'black' South Africans (Perold 1985: 98).

Low literacy levels affect what and how children read, because children who grow up in a family without a 'reading culture' (see below) tend to be at a disadvantage when it comes to continuing reading after they have left school. Poor funding of schools affects how funds are spent and, as a rule, funding of school libraries is usually seen as being of low priority. Thus many black children are not exposed to books from an early age, and once they achieve literacy, the maintenance of this (it is estimated that a newly literate person can return to illiteracy within some nine months if stimulation is removed) is hampered by a lack of school libraries and of books in general.

With current political changes in South Africa, the educational system is undergoing an overhaul. There are moves towards unifying the various educational departments and under the current 'model' system, schools are being desegregated along colour lines. Under this system, semi-private schools have been established and funding for the schools is derived in part from fees paid by the parents. Again school funding is determined by class, and schools in more affluent areas tend to have more funding than schools in less affluent areas (it would be interesting to compare funds for Westerford and Rhodes High, both ex-government funded model-C schools). These differences in funding express themselves in terms of where money is spent on the school, and as was previously suggested, where funds are low, there is likely to be little spending on libraries and books.

As indicated, the educational market – specifically the setwork market – is a potentially lucrative market for publishers. With current uncertainty about the educational system as well as long term educational policy, the educational market is a somewhat speculative one. It does, however, remain an extremely important one for the future of

South African Publishing. As Jay Heale comments: 'The future of South African children's book publishing depends totally on the decisions taken in education' (September 1992: 4). Whether or not the educational market will remain attractive to publishing houses depends upon whether the future government elects to make books and school libraries a priority when it comes to the allocating of funds. Given the very great basic inequalities and problems that need to be considered (shortages of buildings, desks, textbooks, for example), this market will remain speculative.

What makes the South African educational market particularly viable for publishers is the 'setwork market'. At high-school level, specific books are prescribed for children to read. Books are first prescribed from about standard six upwards and the type of book prescribed will depend on the type of school and department that it falls under. In the past, educational departments have had no set policy of prescribing specifically South African books at high-school level. This was partly because there were not very many 'suitable' books that were South African in origin to prescribe. Until indigenous children's literature became popular and was actively encouraged in the mid-1980s, there were few 'youth literature' books that had been written in South Africa. Apart from classics like Olive Schreiner's Story of an African Farm or Pauline Smith's The Beadle, most of the fiction written for the adult market – and therefore suitable for an English home language school at standard nine or matric level – was politically suspect and subversive (in the eyes of the repressive National Party). Books are only prescribed at a senior-school level, not at a junior or pre-school level, and this is one of the main reasons that so many South African publishing houses are currently moving towards publishing so called 'youth fiction', which is a direct import from American practices. Indigenous youth literature has been prescribed at a lower standard level (that is standards six through eight) in English medium schools, and right up until matric level at English second language schools. One of the more interesting trends at the current moment is the move towards producing youth literature in vernacular languages, aiming at both the black language market and the English language market, where publishers obviously envisage an educational policy that necessitates English

speakers learning one or more vernacular languages (although this might change with political party drawing up new language policies).

Despite the number of youth literature books being written in South Africa, only a certain number get to be prescribed, yet the educational market remains one of the most financially rewarding markets for South African publishers. The reason for this is that every education department has a sub-section that considers, evaluates and recommends certain books for school use. Schools are supplied with a recommended (and under the more repressive National Party days, desirable) list of suitable works of fiction for the school library. Government schools are expected to purchase a certain number of books from this 'recommended book list'. The purchasing of 'recommended books' is then subsidised by the department concerned, and it is this practice that makes the educational market so viable. The types of books that are recommended, however, tend to be more conservative and less innovative than many teachers would like them to be, and thus the Model Library exerts a degree of control over what children at school are exposed to.

Important to remember when considering the future of children's literature in South Africa is that it is at school level that many children are exposed to books for the first time, particularly if they are 'black' or come from a family that does not read. It is all too easy to assume that the reading habits of white middle class families – where children are exposed to the written word at an early age and are thus 'literate' in that they understand the way in which a book functions from an early age – are the norm rather than the exception (Anne Greenwell 1993: interview). What children read at school and how books are presented affects their attitudes towards books, making them into readers, libraries users and book buyers or non-readers, non-buyers and non-library users. It is obviously crucial for the future of literature in South Africa (not just children's literature) that children become readers of books. Given that the foundations of the reading habits of children are laid at school, I will consider the approaches to books at school level before the South African library system and before bookshops.

In each province of South Africa, as a subsidiary of the various education departments, there are 'model libraries' which are designed to provide information about school subjects and about desirable non-text books that a school could consider using. These 'model libraries' are advisory facilities which have an enormous amount of indirect influence in the children's book industry. In March 1993 I spoke to Rosie Bennett (sic) of the Cape Town Model Library about the service in which she is involved. This model library service is intended to cater for the needs of 'white' Cape Education Department schools through out the Cape Province. There is an equivalent service for 'coloured' schools in the Cape Province, and Bennett assured me that there has always been co-operation between the various services. She commented that although there is a library service of sorts for 'black' schools, the stocking of libraries has not been seen as a priority. In an attempt to improve the quality of libraries in 'black schools' the Non-Government Organisation READ has done a lot of work in the 'black' community, of which Bennett was extremely complimentary, commenting that the lack of official interaction in 'black' communities was a 'tragic' hangover from apartheid education policies. The 'model library' services are funded by the education departments concerned, and currently these services are experiencing problems with their funds being cut back. With the structure of the educational system changing, there are hopes that in the future the various services will be amalgamated into one central service that will cater for the needs of all schools in the Cape Province.

Bennett comments on the function of the Model Library as follows: 'The entire purpose of this operation is of an advisory service' and the Model Library aims to 'produce lists of recommended books'. Although in conception an advisory service, the Model Library is in fact a library and has an extensive permanent collection of books ranging in age categories from pre-school to post-matric. The collection comprises books that are both fiction and reference books, and books in a variety of foreign languages (like French and Latin), as well as books in Xhosa and other vernaculars, are kept in the library. The Model Library in Cape Town has a staff of nine people (all women) who are experts in their

various areas – which are divided up according to languages, age groups, fiction or reference material and so on. Books that cover all syllabus subjects are kept by the library, although the library has a policy of not stocking text books per say. Books in various languages are stocked – the policy being that any school taught language should be represented by the Library. Concerning books for children in vernacular languages, the Library has some books in Xhosa, but not in other vernacular languages. Although the library could stock books in other vernacular languages if they wanted to (funds are available), they have so far had no reason to do in that there has been no demand from teachers or pupils for books in, for example, Zulu or Sotho. Educational Library services in other provinces stock books in other vernacular languages, but the main demand in the Cape is for books in Xhosa. Bennett comments that with the current changes in the educational system, the library will begin collecting books in vernacular languages, but at the moment, suitable books in vernacular languages are not easy to find. Ideally, the Model Library is hoping to collect books written by black writers for a black audience, but there are no such books [that fulfil this need] being produced currently. Perhaps the most important role that the Model Library plays, certainly from the point of this thesis, is that the staff are used by the educational departments on books selection committees to determine prescribed (fiction) school books.

The facilities of the model library are available to teachers and given that there is co-operation between the various educational departments, teachers from all types of schools make use of the model libraries facilities. Bennett sees the library as being open to teachers so that ‘they can see what is available and make educated choices’ about the types of books and various approaches to a subject that exist with in a teaching environment. This is a crucial service as it keeps teachers informed in a way that no bookshop could ever hope to do, mostly because bookshops are limited in the amount and type of stock that they can carry. Increasingly the Model Library’s facilities are being used by school children, whose own schools lack library resources and variety. Although the Model Library is a lending service for teachers, school children and members of the public may only utilise the books

on the Library's premises. As part of its 'awareness campaign' to promote books, the Model Library service goes to various schools with books in order to introduce children to the broad variety of fiction and reference books that exist.

Given that the Model Library and the Library staff are active in the process of recommending books for school prescription and for recommended school lists, the criteria they use is of crucial importance to the South African publishing industry. Bennett argues that adults 'need to guide a child's reading in order to help the child to establish what they like or dislike'. Adults are intimately involved in the process of helping children 'to establish values'. The types of books that a child reads is seen by Bennett to be of a great deal of importance in shaping a child's psyche and outlook. 'Adults need to have some input in to what builds a child's soul. ... I do not consider myself to be a censor, I consider myself to be a helper, I am sifting, removing the really awful stuff.' Given that she has so much influence over what is prescribed at school level, Bennett's highly subjective view is somewhat alarming, especially given that she does not have a clear notion of what makes a specific book a 'good' or a 'bad' book, but argues '[what makes a book a good book] is almost a gut feeling, you know inside you what makes a book good or bad'. Whilst at the publishing level subjective judgements can result in a decision not to publish a 'controversial' book, when a person in Bennett's position decides that a book is 'unsuitable', the reading material of children within a whole educational department is limited.

One of the areas in which research is currently being undertaken is in the effects of racial and gender stereotyping in children's literature on the children who read stereotypical books. Although findings are inconclusive and subject to debate, there has been a trend in both America and Britain towards anti-bias material, that is material which actively sets out to be aware of sensitive issues in children's literature. In South Africa, a country with a legacy of racial and gender inequality, it would be supposed that people who work with children's literature, especially literature that might be recommended for a wide range of school children of all ages, would be sensitive to these issues and their potential ramifications. Bennett, however, expresses doubt about the effects of stereotyping – be it

racial or gender – on children. She comments that an experiment was undertaken by the Model Library which showed that children identified with and related to characters in books, regardless of the characters' race or gender. 'Children don't notice the colour [or gender] of characters if they are interested in the story'. Considering new trends in issue sensitive literature for children, Bennett suggests that these 'sensitivities are adult projections on to children's literature', and have to be considered in the light of adult 'guilt' about whichever issue is being highlighted. Despite being suspicious about the motives that guide anti-bias writers, Bennett remarks that in selecting books to recommend to schools, she discards any stereotypical or discriminatory texts, remarking that a book needs to be assessed on its aesthetic merits rather than on its 'political' correctness – a contradictory statement. This way of assessing books ties up with her remark that 'most good children's books deal with lots of social problems and provide stimulus for discussion' and that there is no need to force writers to produce books that comment on society. A hopeful sign for South African children's literature is that many South African writers, according to Bennett, are beginning to attempt to address the social problems in South Africa. Some South African books even deal with South African violence, although there are 'not as many as there ought to be, and this awareness is especially absent in Afrikaans literature'.

Bennett is in a position to influence what kinds of books get bought by schools, and her recommended lists of books include both local and imported literature. When I asked her if she considered it important for children to read South African literature she replied that it is 'a contentious question, but the short answer is no'. She argues that there are things that are more important about a book than merely its setting and that these factors outweigh any considerations about providing children with books that reflect their literal situation. Children, Bennett suggests, need to read books which deal with issues that are pertinent to them. They need books which are psychologically right for their maturity level and which deal with things in which they are interested. Commenting on the importance of reading indigenous literature, Bennett argues forcefully that:

If they could be written by South Africans, it would be wonderful, but we also have to realise that that is another way of increasing our insulation. At least by reading these other books they have an idea of some other countries. ... [children] absorb something ... at least if they read about [other children] it is giving them some perception of the whole world ... and they realise that people are in essence the same. ... where there are good South African books let's read them, and increasingly there are more and more.

The Model Library, as I have attempted to show, has a direct effect on what types of books are used in historically 'white' schools in the Cape Province. The recommendations that the Model Library makes have a direct influence over the types of books that are bought by school libraries. With the changing education system, the influences of the recommended book lists are felt in schools that are not traditionally 'white' schools. Although schools in 'coloured' areas are influenced by the Model Library, schools in 'black' areas have problems with obtaining funds for buying books and for stocking their libraries that are not in any way being met by an education department. How schools in traditionally 'white' areas (mostly Model C schools, so many of them are now non-racial, but certainly middle class, schools) respond to education department recommendations about books and how they run their libraries will be considered below. The approach of the Non Government Organisation READ in schools in 'black' areas will be considered after that.

George Walker of the International School in Geneva (quoted in Bookchat No. 108: 4) made the following statement about South African education: '[it is a system] that is impoverished in scope, authoritarian in approach ... and didactic in delivery'. The authoritarianism is certainly reflected in relation to the buying of books by schools in South Africa. The limitations imposed upon schools is clearly highlighted by the following remark by June Burgess, the librarian at Westerford, a Model C government school: 'We are under the restraints of the education department'. Westerford receives about R900,00 per annum with which to buy books and is expected to purchase books from a recommended booklist

supplied by the Model Library. Westerford is 'inspected [by the education department] and therefore needs to be careful of what is bought'. Burgess comments that the booklist supplied by the model library is essentially conservative in nature, although with changes in the education system, this is changing somewhat. Westerford receives funds from the government with which to buy books and one of the limiting factors in terms of book buying is that if the school purchases books of which the education department disapproves, the library funds will be cut off. However, even if the threat of the suspension of library funds did not exist, Burgess says that buying for the library would still be conservative because she cannot afford to run the risk of parental complaints – many parents are fairly conservative.

Caxton's bookshop is one of the biggest suppliers of children's books to both schools and libraries in the Cape Province. Toni Dalling of Caxton's says that she supplies books in greater Cape Town area to both government and private schools. Caxton's does not supply to schools in the townships because first 'it's dangerous for the reps to go into the townships' and second because 'black schools don't seem to have the funds to spend on books at this stage'. Commenting on the schools that buy books, Dalling is hopeful that although D.E.T. schools are unable to buy books for their libraries at the moment, with the changes in the educational system this will change and black schools will have the funds to buy desperately needed books for their libraries. At the moment, Dalling is full of praise for the work of READ in the black areas. Government funded schools 'buy books recommended by the model libraries which is a conservative buying force'. When schools are using government money they have to buy government approved books. Private schools do not suffer under the same restrictions, although they are restricted by what is available and by how open minded parents – who fund the school libraries – are (Jane Mulliner of Diocesan College library). Toni Dalling comments on the difference in the types of books supplied to government and private schools, underlining the essentially conservative nature of school's which are government organs. Although she is critical of the conservative nature of what is recommended for government schools, Dalling does suggest that 'by

focusing on the fear of alternative, unconventional literature, the schools' [and the education department] are affirming how powerful a force children's literature can be.

How many books a school buys depends on the amount of money available, but the types and genres of books bought are a reflection of what is needed by the school (for example, books that deal with issues like divorce or racism), as well as a reflection of how the school library is perceived (this would determine whether more fiction or reference books were bought). Dalling co-ordinates Caxton's representatives who go to schools and find out what each school wants, how much money they have to spend, what quantities of literature is wanted and what languages books are wanted in. A simple example will highlight the enormous gaps between different types of schools in South Africa: Caxton's does not supply to any 'black' schools, because there are no funds available; government model C schools receive some government funding as well as funding from the parents, so limited supplies of generally conservative books are bought; Caxton's sends any 'interesting' (meaning socially or politically relevant) books – fiction or non-fiction – to the library of the Diocesan College and if it is of interest it is bought by an unnamed sponsor who funds the school library (Toni Dalling and Jane Mulliner 1993: interviews). Both June Burgess and Jill Palmer, librarians at government Model-C schools, spend the majority of their limited book budgets on non-fiction reference books. Burgess argues that pupils ought to belong to the public library and use it in order to obtain fiction books for recreational reading. Westerford is near the Rondebosch public library and pupils can easily make use of it. In addition the cost of fiction books is prohibitively high, and they last about eight readers. The Westerford library is seen as 'a reference and as an educational institution rather than as a recreational institution' (Burgess 1993: interview). Jill Palmer explains Grove Primary School's buying of reference over fiction books as a response to budget cuts which limit her buying of books to what 'we desperately want' and what will be used, which in most cases is non-fiction material. Grove Primary School is able to afford about fifty new books a year.

Encouraging pupils to read fiction is seen as problematic (pupils focus their reading on books that will directly aid them in their school work) and both Grove and Westerford have introduced programmes to encourage the reading of fiction by pupils. Both schools run reading projects intended to broaden the nature of what pupils read, but both Palmer and Burgess say that children are reluctant readers of fiction. The reasons for this are given as work pressure, which limits the amount of time available to children to read, the numerous non-book attractions (TV, video games, sports) that exist, and finally a deep-seated resistance to reading fiction. Both Burgess and Palmer remark that children would by choice read 'junk' literature, but neither schools can afford or want to stock such literature. The assessment of some literature as being junk literature implies that the librarians are to a certain extent 'censors' of what the children are exposed to. The type of fiction purchased depends on choices made by the librarians and is extremely personal, although the librarians are influenced by recommendations by other staff members as well as by reviews of books and lists of books in Bookchat. Burgess is actively trying to move away from buying Euro-centric types of books because the pupil profile has changed in recent years from being predominantly 'white' (and therefore Euro-centric in outlook) to more racially mixed, and she buys the Young Africa series as well as other non-Euro-centric (as in Indian or Jamaican) imported books. Recognising the importance of catering for the needs of all the pupils at Westerford, Burgess comments that it is difficult to find genuinely 'multi-cultural' books, rather than books that have merely been 'blackwashed', but which reflect essentially Western middle class values. Although South African books and multi-cultural books are seen as important by Palmer and Burgess, they both comment that it is difficult to persuade the pupils to read them. Palmer comments that maybe 'South African literature is too close to the bone', and children prefer to escape into light formula based fiction – often imported American literature – that has an recreational, non-demanding feel to it. Palmer does however 'think it would be very meaningful for children in South Africa to learn about the hardships that others have dealt with' and she feels that 'white children are very sheltered in terms of the South African situation' (1993: interview). Although school librarians as a rule believe in the importance of children reading literature to which

they can relate – that is literature which mirrors the society in which they live – most librarians are hampered by the lack of interest shown in indigenous books by the school children themselves. Indigenous children's books have to be pushed; 'they are not very popular' (June Burgess 1993: interview).

Considering the impact of schools on the distribution of indigenous children's books in South Africa, some of the following conclusions can be drawn. Schools are hampered in their buying of children's literature in respect of available funds, especially in black areas, and government schools are expected to purchase recognised and recommended books. The Model Library is perceived by librarians and booksellers to be an essentially conservative force, which sets out to avoid controversial and subversive children's literature (confirming through its avoidance of that type of literature the potential of children's to be an influencing factor in how children think). Although schools are funded by the state to aid their purchasing of recommended books, most of their budget goes towards reference books. When fiction is purchased, it is likely to be of a level suitable for already literate readers, indicating that schools are not buying illustrated children's readers or children's picture books, perceiving these to be a waste of money and time. Black schools are virtually uncatered for, and most people involved in literature at a school level are inclined to rely on the work being done by READ in that area. If few fiction books are bought by schools, then school children's perceptions of libraries is likely to be that libraries are reference centres rather than recreational centres and they are likely to carry this perception of books with them into their adult lives. Finally, most schools in white areas expect their pupils to make use of public library facilities for their fiction purposes.

These conclusions are valid for schools in white areas, and indeed most of the information available about the role of books in the educational system is specific to white schools, and questions about black schools result in statements about shortages of funds, language problems and other issues which are not being tackled by mainstream organisations like bookshops or the various education departments. When questioned about black schools and what can and should be done to expand book distribution to black areas

as well as the exposing of children to books, interviewees responded that READ was doing a valuable job in black schools. What then is READ?

Established in 1979, and operating from some ten regional centres throughout Southern Africa, READ is a non-government organisation that aims 'to help the people of Southern Africa to read, write and speak with greater competence'. Whilst READ is in practical terms an educational organisation, hoping to help people with newly acquired literacy skills to 'cope with the modern world' and to 'improve their chances of employment', READ also sees literacy as 'increasing the enjoyment of leisure time' and helping people to 'share the wealth of wisdom of the world's great literature' (Information from a READ Educational Trust pamphlet of 1990). Thus READ sees literacy as having two main benefits a practical, educational function as well as a pleasurable recreational facet.

In June 1993, I spoke to Brian Prehn, the Western Cape regional organiser of READ about READ's aims and approaches in black schools. Although READ's long term plans are unclear, Prehn believes that with changing educational policies in South Africa, NGO's like READ will have crucial roles to play in the future of education. Whilst READ recognises the problems of low adult literacy in the black community, a factor that manifests itself particularly in the form of children rapidly losing their newly acquired literacy skills when they return to a non-reading environment and thus makes it difficult to ascertain how successful READ's program actually is, the organisation has decided to focus on teaching literacy skills to children rather than to adults. In order to achieve this, READ has set up numerous projects at primary schools through out South Africa. Funding for these projects comes exclusively from the private sector, who may or may not be actively involved in the READ projects. Much of READ's advertising is aimed at attracting sponsors – see for example the pamphlet The READ Organisation: Addressing key educational issues in South Africa which has a section called 'Benefits to Sponsors' in it. As economic pressure has increased in recent times, so has the level of funding declined, resulting in cut backs in the number of schools served by READ. In the Cape Town area

alone READ has had to cut back to only thirty school projects from a previous seventy or so projects (Prehn 1993: interview).

In order to promote literacy in black children, literacy projects are set up in schools in the black townships which involve, first, training teachers in book use and language development in children. Then, books are provided for the school in the form of 'book boxes' (see below) or libraries (depending on the needs and availability of funds, as well as on the ages of the children at the school). Having set up a project, READ monitors the success level of the project, provides further training for teachers if necessary and generally 'acts as a support system' over an extended period of time (most of the Cape Town projects have been running since the early 1980s). READ, then, is primarily an educational organisation. What makes its practices important for this thesis is that it is one of the only distributors of books in black areas, as well as being the driving force behind the creation of a black 'reading culture'.

A large selection of published children's books, both local and imported, are kept at READ's Johannesburg head offices and books are ordered by the regional organisers of READ for the various schools. As much liaison as is possible between organisers and teachers is undertaken in order to make certain that schools have a say in the types of books available to them. Teachers are sometimes taken into central bookshops so that they can choose books themselves, but Prehn observed that this has proved problematic because of the literacy problems of the teachers themselves who find the bookshop environment intimidating and confusing. At primary schools READ supplies 'box libraries', which at that level are more effective than large school libraries. 'Box Libraries' are boxes of age-graded books which are placed in individual classrooms for the pupils to read and to take home and share with their families. When selecting books for these book boxes, the organisers consider all the books (local and imported) available in South Africa. There is an increasing demand Prehn says for locally produced books because many imported books are foreign to children and are thus and inaccessible to them. Despite this, Prehn does not believe in supplying exclusively South African books to the various schools because ideally children

should read as much and as widely as possible. Two of the most interesting aspects of READ's project are its multi-lingualism and its workshopped books. Jay Heale in Bookchat (September, 1992) says the following about READ's project:

A commendably positive attitude has come from READ creating workshops with authors and illustrators and teachers to build the easy reading storybooks we need. Their 'Little Library' project [see below] has resulted in ten stories that will be translated into nine African languages and Portuguese. Cassette tape will stress the cultural richness of a multilingual environment.

The teachers at black schools are themselves aware of the demand for books in vernacular languages, and this multilingual project grew out a frustration at the lack of books produced in vernacular languages. Prehn remarks that there are few publishers producing books for children in vernacular languages because it is perceived as such a limited market, although READ buys almost all locally produced books in vernacular languages. One of the most productive projects that READ has embarked upon in recent months is the production of books by the children themselves in various languages (English and other black languages written next to one another) which are then circulated through a variety of schools. Books produced by children have a number of advantages: first they are immediately related to what the children have experienced themselves and they are produced in a language, even if only in 'South African English', with which the children are familiar; second, because the children themselves are involved in the production of books, books are demystified and made more immediately accessible; and finally, they are a recognised way of improving literacy levels and teaching children to read. By demystifying books and by making books immediately accessible to children that reflect their home environments and which are written in languages in which the children are fluent, the READ organisation hopes to improve the literacy levels of children as well as make reading a desirable and a pleasurable occupation for children. By making books enjoyable and important READ hopes to foster a reading culture – which, being the largest sector of the

population, will be the book buying culture of the future – amongst black South African children.

Although the educational market is important it is small and its buying focus is in the main so called ‘youth literature’ written in either English or Afrikaans, rather than a broad spectrum of books including books for younger and preliterate children. With the educational system being currently in flux, many changes can be expected, but at this stage the main market in South Africa for children’s literature are the public libraries. As with most official institutions in South Africa, the library service is a complex and split system. Each province has its own library service, which is run independently of other provincial services and which receives its funds from provincial and government sources. In addition there are Council library service which serve larger city municipalities and are called the ‘City Library Services’, and which, because their funds come from city council rates, are relatively independent organisations.

The role of libraries in a community is clearly laid out in the ‘UNESCO Public Library Manifesto’ which was adopted by the Cape Town City Libraries Services in 1981 (Annual Report 1991-92 of the Cape Town City Libraries):

The public library is a practical demonstration of democracy’s faith in universal education as a continuing and lifelong process. ... The public library is concerned with the refreshment of man’s spirit by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure; with assistance to the student; and with provision of up-to-date technical, scientific and sociological information. It should be maintained wholly by public funds, and no direct charge should be made to anyone for its service. ... The public library must be readily accessible and its doors open for free and equal use by all members of the community regardless of race, colour, nationality, age, sex, religion, language, status or educational attainment.

This is an important and informative manifesto that will bear some close examination, especially with regard to the South African situation. The ‘public library’ is seen as embodying political principles, notably of democracy and the belief in education. Adopted

in 1981, this statement ran counter to the reality of South African politics of the time, which were anti-democratic and actively aimed at disinforming rather than educating member of the public. However, since 1991 there has been a continual move towards democracy and the statement that libraries should be open to all members of the public has come close to being realised with the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act. However, despite the scrapping of this act the reality still exists that the standard of libraries differs from area to area, with those in previously 'white' areas being vastly superior to those in so called 'black' or African and 'coloured' areas. The main focus of a library is seen as being educational. A library is seen as a demonstration of a democratic faith in 'universal education' and libraries are seen as providing books for information and assistance, as well as for pleasure and relaxation. This duality in the role of the library is very clearly demonstrated in South Africa. The 'aim' of public libraries is to provide access to books for all the population, and how successfully this aim is realised is dependent upon a number of factors ranging from the types of books purchased and the accessibility of the library itself to the ease with which people not initiated in book culture can make use of the library, that would depend on helpfulness of the staff, clarity of the library's layout, etc. (Hall 1979: 118). In discussing the library services in the Cape, these factors will be considered when assessing how successfully the libraries fulfil their roles.

As was discussed, the library services in any one province are fractured and in the Cape there are two library services: in the greater Cape Town area the municipal library service, called the 'Cape Town City Libraries' service ; and at provincial level, the 'Provincial Library Service' which has branch libraries through out the Cape Province. The split in the Cape and in other provinces is thus between metropolitan areas and rural areas, including the smaller municipalities, and this split is reflected in other areas of South Africa as well.

I spoke to Cedric Callaghan of the Cape Town City Libraries Services (CTCL services) and to Elizabeth de Roubaix of the Cape Provincial Library Services (CPL Services) in 1993 about how the two library services work with regards to the selection and

distribution of children's literature. In the CTCL services, children's book selection is based on circulation statistics – the bigger the library, the larger the issue, the more points are awarded to individual libraries. The Central library Services pre-selects books and regional librarians make selections based on the number of points that they have. 'Selection is community based', that is the needs of the community are catered for in terms of how their expression is interpreted by the librarians concerned (Cedric Callaghan 1993: interview). Important to notice here is that the number of books purchases for a library depends upon how many users a library has. This has the effect of increasing the book stock of libraries with a high issue rate. What this effectively means is that in areas where people are already in possession of a book culture, books usage is encouraged, whereas in areas where there is less book usage or book culture, little is done to improve or alter this. In the CPL services selectors at a central point review books and discuss which ones to buy and in what quantities. The input of regional librarians is received through computer reviews which enables regional libraries to select and request specific books as well as be active in the selection process. Thus both library services depend on a pre-selection process in which trained library staff sift through books submitted by bookshops and recommend books to regional or branch libraries. These libraries can then order books that they perceive as being appropriate to the areas in which the libraries are situated. Cedric Callaghan commented that the type of book selected does not vary depending upon what type of area (differentiated by race or class) the library is situated in. This lack of variation arises, he argues,

because we are speaking to the universal child. We [of the CTCL Services] believe that children are children wherever they may be. We are addressing the individual child, not a class or race specific group of children. Whatever we have found to be outstanding in itself, we will buy. We buy what is good, and whatever answers the questions and the needs of children out there.

By contrast, Elizabeth de Roubaix comments that different kinds of books are sent to different areas, for example language will vary depending upon whether the library is in a

white or a black area, because library usage is still colour coded, despite the scrapping of restrictive legislation. The types of books bought by both the library services depends on user demand as interpreted by the regional or branch librarians. Another important factor in determining what types of books are bought depends upon the source of the library services' funds. Although the CPL services are province and government funded and tend to be conservative in their buying and selecting of children's books, their buying policy has a definite aim in mind: namely to correct the 'current imbalances' in the libraries in the Cape Province. The libraries aim to provide books that are not discriminatory and which 'will not cause offence' in their selection they sees themselves as benevolent censors or guides of what types of books children are exposed to. Whilst the CPL services actively buy South African literature and see this as important in fostering awareness amongst young South Africans, their approach is cautious and above all is intended to cause no offence to any reader or library user. The CTCL library services sees itself as having adopted a far more aggressive stance with regard to children's literature. Callaghan states that the library service aims to uphold standards of literature and to select children's books on the basis of merit alone. The CTCL services aims to expose all children to a wide range of children's literature, to place vernacular language texts in all libraries and to rigorously attempt to rectify imbalances that exist in the city libraries. This is made difficult because of the system of buying books in relation to how many users a library has. In response to this the CTCL services provide story-telling sessions for children and parents in order to encourage children from non-book culture families to read. By contrast the CPL services are too dispersed for this to be a feasible approach. Through these story-telling sessions, the CTCL services are recognising the importance of the family in the promotion of children's reading habits.

Perhaps one of the most difficult areas to tackle in terms of reading and library services is how libraries are perceived by the general public. The role of libraries has changed from recreational and leisure institutions to educational institutions (Callaghan and Roubaix both make this observation). The general public sees libraries as educational rather

than recreational, and the biggest demand for books is in the area of self help or self improvement books. The reasons for this are complex, but are related to the current economic crisis which results in people attempting to improve their own marketability. In addition, with libraries becoming community centres and serving the needs of a wide range of people, many users are not readers and do not come from 'book culture' backgrounds. This affects children and their reading habits as follows: because literacy is seen as being education and self improvement related, children are expected to read for educational rather than recreational reasons; in addition, because many library users are not recreational readers, their children are unlikely to become recreational readers in their own right.

Finally, how effectively do libraries take books to the people? With limited staff and limited funds as well as the low status accorded to library services, it is apparent that library services are far from optimally effective. Libraries are situated in various areas, in the Cape Province, libraries are situated in towns over a certain size and in the Council libraries in each municipality that has sufficient members to warrant a library service. Few new libraries are being built and the book stock in historically black and coloured areas does not compare with that in the white areas. This effectively means that towns are better served than rural areas and the white and middle class areas have better book stocks and better variety and range than other areas. Efforts made to take books to people through the use of mobile library services seem to have limited success, as these services carry limited stock and as a rule serve areas close to main towns. Finally, the majority of books bought by the various library services are in English which means that in areas where there are already low levels of literacy, people are unlikely to be able to read the books that are available. Libraries respond to this by observing that they buy what is available – and that there is a great need for more books in vernacular languages for all ages to be produced, which ties into the circular argument about which comes first the market or the product, with publishers producing very little in vernacular languages because there is no market for the books.

The challenge that faces the South African book industry is making books of an affordable cost and a high enough standard available in all areas of South Africa, so that all

South Africans can benefit from reading. This of course means things like improving literacy on a large scale level, producing books in vernacular languages, and most important of all, distributing them throughout South Africa. There is a great need to change marketing and distributing tactics in the book trade. The question is how can this be best achieved? Publishers themselves admit to being at a loss when it comes to developing new marketing tactics, being stuck as they are between perceiving the need for books to market in vernacular languages and with local themes, whilst at the same time being reluctant to produce books before there is a market already in existence.

Richard Whiting of the Southern African Literary Society (SALS) says that there are two important issues to tackle in addressing the problems of book distribution in Southern Africa. The first is that basic literacy levels – especially in rural areas – need to be improved by an improved educational system – an enormous undertaking that needs to be attended to at government level. The second is that having once established basic literacy levels in children in rural areas, their reading skills need to be maintained and improved, which can only be done if there is a constant supply of books for the children to read. Thus both books themselves and the distribution of books needs to be demystified. Further, the cost of books needs to be brought down to a level that makes them affordable by all. Books need to be viewed as necessities (necessities in that literacy should be a right) that are freely available, rather than as luxury items that are the preserve of the rich. Reducing the cost of books is a complex and difficult undertaking as many publishers will tell you. Cheaper books often mean books of a poorer quality and most publishers refuse to lower the standard of their book productions. – again reinforcing the notion that books are something special. If it is impossible to lower the cost of books (READ's approach will be considered below), then it is still possible to make books more accessible to more people, by improving distribution tactics. Traditionally, books are distributed through bookshops, positioned close to their target markets – namely middle class/literate urbanites or through libraries, also situated in urban centres. This limits the availability of books to people who live in towns or who have the means to form their own private collection, a very limited and

select minority. Whiting suggests that the same approach to distributing books in South Africa should be adopted as the approach use by the SALS in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Books - both local and imported and for adults as well as for children – are sold through a central bookshop which puts out mail-order catalogues, which are sent to all schools and libraries, as well as to individuals who are members of the SAIS. Lists of books, both local and imported, are drawn up and people and institutions are able to order from the central suppliers. In addition, the SALS has a mobile library unit that travels around the countryside supplying and selling books, as well as enrolling new members for the society. Currently, both the Cape Provincial Library Services and the City Library Service have mobile library units, but these for the most part limit the scope of their activities to urban rather than to rural areas. The SALS informal method of distribution makes books accessible to a larger number of readers, many of whom would be unable to reach an ordinary bookshop or who would find the whole book buying experience extremely intimidating. The SALS in South Africa is trying to set up a comparable organisation in South Africa, targeted initially towards the Western Cape, but the organisation as a whole is finding the price of books prohibitively expensive and this is hindering the organisation's activities.

READ is one organisation that is attempting to work towards producing books that cost less and that are of the same standard as more expensive books. READ's policy, according to Brian Prehn (1993: interview), is to supply books to children, arguing that it is more important to support literacy in children than in adults. The organisation has also been outspoken in its belief that children should be encouraged to read books that reflect their own vision of the world, that is indigenous books rather than imported books, as well as books that are written in their own home languages. Most of the schools in which READ operates are poorer schools in 'black' areas where English is not the first language. In order to overcome the problem of the high cost of books as well as the scarcity of books written in the various black vernaculars, READ has produced a set of books called the 'Little Library'. The 'Little Library' consists of about twelve books written and illustrated by

children at various schools and cheaply produced by READ. A further innovation is that the text which accompanies the illustrations is in the nine most commonly spoken South African languages, thereby further reducing production costs. This technique is also carried out by various other African publishing houses like Zimbabwe's 'Baobab Press' which produces books in Shona, English and Ndebele simultaneously. The 'Little Library' is distributed free to the various schools that form part of READ's program, and the children themselves are encouraged to produce their own story books which can then be used by the school as a whole. This method of producing books themselves further helps to demystify the whole process of book production for children, emphasising that all members of a community have the right to tell their own stories, something which expensive imported books do not set out to emphasise.

Whilst attempting to make books as accessible as possible as cheaply as possible might appear to be a Third World project, the precedent for such projects exists in both England and America. Gillian Klein (1985: 11) writing about ways in which parents can help to combat insidious racism and stereotypes in children's books, remarks that book clubs are an effective way of doing this. Parental involvement in encouraging children towards literacy is extremely important because of the precedent that it sets for the young beginner reader. Obviously in South Africa where literacy levels are at best very poor, this poses an additional problem which needs to be combated through adult education programs. Bookclubs can, if used well, provide parents with information about books available suggesting what kinds of books are worth reading, what prices various books are and what types of books are worth investing in. Further, because bookclubs do away with the need for booksellers and because bookclubs buy in bulk, the prices of books tends to be somewhat lower than bookshop prices. A carefully organised bookclub will provide not only books at reduced prices, but also provides information about the books themselves so as to enable buyers to make informed choices about what is available to buy. Klein (1985: 11) also comments on the effectiveness with which various library services in England have used mobile libraries to take books to schools in which there are no adequate libraries. This

technique of using mobile libraries to take books to less privileged children would be especially effective in South Africa, where the schools without adequate libraries are also often in areas where there are few libraries and where parents have a lower literacy level, which means that they are not enthusiastic library users themselves.

Jay Heale (Bookchat, no. 108) comments that the future of indigenous publishing in South Africa is ultimately dependent on government decisions about future educational policies. Ultimately, the South African book industry caters for too few buyers, who are drawn from a small and very select economic group of book buyers, and in order to survive the industry needs to diversify. Diversifying means an active attempt to decentralise the control of books, to make cheaper editions of books available, to adopt alternative methods of distribution that are more in keeping with the Third World in which South Africans live as well as demystifying the whole book process itself. In South Africa, the future of the book industry depends largely on how a future government allocates funds for education and book production and libraries. Since the majority of books are bought by official institutions like libraries or educational departments, how funds are allocated in this area will determine the future of the book industry in South Africa. The bottom line for the indigenous book industry in South Africa will simply be dependent upon how future governments view education and books, whether they are seen as an area of primary or secondary importance.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN AWARD SYSTEM

Cape Provincial Library Services have produced a pamphlet, available from any library, which lists all the various awards given to children's books, both in South Africa and abroad, as well as the motivation (in a shortened form) for the various awards. The non-South African awards listed focus on book awards in Great Britain and in America, obviously because these are books produced in English and thus of interest to South African readers. There is also a section called 'International' which lists the various recipients of the 'Hans Christian Andersen Medal', which has been awarded to books written in English as well as in most other European languages. The purpose of this pamphlet, entitled Award Winning Children's Books, is to aid 'people' in the selection of reading material for children. 'People' encompasses both the general public – parents selecting books for their children – as well as more specialist selectors such as librarians or school teachers. The implication of the pamphlet is that award winning books are outstanding examples of children's books, and are worth reading or buying for children. To a person examining the types of books listed as award winners, this list reveals what kinds of books have been seen as desirable over the years, as well as whether what was seen as desirable in the past has changed over time. Such a list of award winning books enables the reader make deductions about what kinds of standards and criteria have been applied to children's book selection over the years. The listings in the pamphlet go up to 1989, although there is an up-to-date supplement in the form of a list of the most recent – from 1990 to 1992 – award winning texts in Cape Librarian/Kaapse Biblioteek, November & December 1992 (a photostat of the relevant two pages is supplied with the pamphlet itself).

Before examining the awards given to books in South Africa it will be useful to consider the nature of awards given to children's books in other countries. 'Award' is defined in Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as 'that which is awarded or assigned, as payment, recognition etc.' after examination. In this context, an 'award winning text'

implies a text which has been selected out of a number of competing texts and judged to be of the highest standards (note the presumption that there are suitable unbiased judges who have definable standards by which to assess a text) or the best available and that has been awarded some form of 'prize' (the implication of some sort of recognition or gain on the part of the recipient). Award winning books are presumed to be the best available – as the legacy on numerous book covers or blurbs indicates: for example 'A.S. Byatt "Winner of the 1990 Booker Prize" Possession: A Romance (1990)' or ''92 Queens Road: Dianne Case: "1991 Winner" (1991)'. Award winning books usually sell well and, as a visit to any bookshop will show, most award winning books are prominently displayed, at least for the period that their award is being publicised. Thus the award system is a powerful force when it comes to publicising and marketing books.

The CTLS pamphlet Award Winning Children's Books lists fifteen non-South African book awards, of which eleven awards are British in origin. In Britain the first award for children's books – the Carnegie Medal – was inaugurated in 1936. It is intended to give recognition to 'an outstanding book for children', published either first or concurrently in the United Kingdom (Award Winning Children's Books: 14). The award commemorates Andrew Carnegie, an American industrialist, and the monetary reward (750 pounds to donate to a library) is derived from a trust fund set up by Carnegie himself. In the U.S.A., the John Newberry Medal was first awarded in 1922, again for an outstanding children's book produced in America (Award Winning Children's Books :29). Named after the London bookseller who was the first publisher to print books especially for children, the prize was endowed by a private individual, namely Frederic G. Melcher. It is significant that both the American and the British awards discussed thus far are funded in a private capacity. That is there is no funding by a publisher or by a library service, and the pool from which the award winning books are selected is extremely broad – any book published in either Britain or America. This open ended pool and private funding suggest a certain degree of disinterestedness in the award process. It is also worth noting the dates on which these awards were inaugurated: 1922 and 1936. These dates suggests that within the

Anglo-American writing culture the field of children's literature has been long recognised (as well as long in existence) as an independent literary field and that the importance of the field has been acknowledged from at least 1922. The Newberry Medal and the Carnegie Medal are awards for any outstanding book for children. Within the American and British award system, there are awards intended specifically for certain types of children's books: for example the 'Kate Greenaway Medal' and the 'Caldecott Medal', British and American respectively, are awards specifically for children's picture books (Award Winning Children's Books :18&27). In addition, many of the awards have age specific categories, for example the 'Smarties Prize for Children's Books' has three age categories under 5s, 6 to 8 year olds and 9 to 11 year olds (Award Winning Children's Books: 23). This dividing up of the award in the age specific categories suggests first a level of financial well being on the part of the sponsor (in this case the international sweet company Rowntree Mackintosh) as well as a desire to encourage and recognise writing for children that supplies different age needs, a financially backed belief that all literature for children, regardless of the age of child for whom it is intended, is important.

Two further aspects of international book awards are worth considering for later comparison with South African awards, these being the nature of the sponsorship of the prize as well as the nature of the judging panels selected to assess the various books. With one exception – the 'Macmillan Prize' for illustrated children's books, which is funded and judged by the Macmillan publishing house (Award Winning Children's Books: 21) – all the international book awards for children's books are sponsored by organisations or individuals that in no way directly benefit through sales from the creating of prize winning books. Most of the sponsors are, however, either booksellers or members of the Library Association, but they are not publishers as sponsors tend to be in South Africa. The 'Kate Greenaway Medal' intended to recognise excellence in children's book illustration is sponsored and administered by the British Library Association (Award Winning Children's Books: 18). Two awards are sponsored by the media – the 'Guardian Award for Children's Fiction' sponsored as its name suggests by the Guardian Newspaper; and the 'Best Books

for Babies' award which is sponsored by Parent's Magazine (Award Winning Children's Books: 17&13). Both the 'Mother Goose Award' and the 'Children's Book Award' are sponsored by booksellers, the first by the proprietors of 'Books for your Children/Booksellers' group and the second by the 'Federation of Children's Book Group' (Award Winning Children's Books: 22, 16). As has already been discussed, there are other awards sponsored by industry as well as by private individuals. In the United States of America, with the exception of the already discussed 'Newberry Medal' which is privately sponsored, all the book awards are sponsored and administered by the American Association for Library Services to Children (Award Winning Children's Books: 27-32).

For the most part the selection of judges for each award is left to the discretion of the administrators of the various awards, for example to the various Library Associates whom one could suppose are suitably qualified to assess children's books. The 'Guardian Award for Children's Fiction' is awarded based on the decision arrived at by a panel of judges derived from the newspaper's reviewers as well as various authors of children's books, who consider in their assessment of a book the overall production of the nominated writers (Award Winning Children's Books: 17). The judges for the 'Children's Books Award' are expected to select a book of high literary standards which is especially well received by child readers, and to this end children play an important role in the judging and assessing of the various competitors (Award Winning Children's Books: 16).

What conclusions can be drawn from this discussion of foreign children's book awards? Perhaps the most important factor to recognise is that in order for the book awards to function as they do in Britain and in America, there has to be a large body of children's literature. This enables awards to be given to already published books, thus placing no pressure on publishers to solicit manuscripts in the hopes that they will be able to publish award winning texts. That certain awards have been in existence since the 1930s suggests that the field of children's literature has been recognised and valued since then. The wide range of awards and of sponsors suggests that the field of children's literature is generally recognised and that the assessment of children's literature is actively participated in by

many institutions involved in the field of children's literature – by, for example, the Library Association and by various booksellers. The general recognition awarded to children's literature through the medium of awards and sponsorship suggests that the field is well known publicly, and that its importance is widely recognised.

137 How then do South African Awards for children's literature compare to international awards for children's literature? In 1955 the 'Scheepersprys vir Jeuglektuur' was inaugurated (Award Winning Children's Books: 9). The award, endowed by F. L. Scheepers and administered by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, is intended to bring recognition to writers of high quality literature in the age group 12 to 18 years. The prerequisites for receiving the prize are that the work be of a high literary (letterkundige) or moral (opvoedkundige) standard and that 'the book upholds Afrikaner character traits and furthers national pride' (die boek moet staan in teken van egte Afrikanerkerkereienskappe en nasietrots) (Award Winning Children's Books: 9). It is this last requirement that is of particular interest. In 1914 the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns instituted the 'Hertzog Prize', which was 'closely linked with the development of Afrikaans language, literature and culture' (Adey et al 1986: 22). Recognising that an accepted method of encouraging writers to produce literature of a specific nature is to institute various prizes and other methods of recognition, it can be argued that the 'Scheepersprys vir Jeuglektuur' was inaugurated with the specific intention of fostering the field of Afrikaans youth literature. Instituted some seven years after the Nationalist Party gained power in South Africa, it was intended to enhance a sense of the Afrikaner character and to create a sense of national pride by exposing the Afrikaans youth to 'suitable' literature (Award Winning Children's Books : 9).

The 'Scheepersprys' was followed in 1960 by the 'C. P. Hoogenhout Medalje' administered by the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science and awarded to the writer or illustrator of an outstanding children's (pre-12 years) book which was written in Afrikaans (Award Winning Children's Books: 3). Also administered by the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science, the 'Katrine Harries

Award' recognises the 'best illustrator of a South African Children's Book'. No language restriction was placed upon the book selected (Award Winning Children's Books: 4).

Inaugurated in 1974 and awarded annually, it was only in 1991, however, that the award was given to an illustrator of an English language book (Joan Rankin in general recognition of her illustrations in children's books, Cape Librarian, Nov/Dec. 1992: 3). Prior to this the award had been presented to solely Afrikaans language children's books (or to translations from English as in the 1987 award to Niki Daly for Nie so vinnig nie, Songololo, originally an English language book). Other awards intended specifically for Afrikaans language children's books include the 'M.E.R. Prys' instituted in 1984 by the Nasionale Boekhandelars and the 'Tienie Holloway Medalje vir Kleuterlektuur' instituted in 1969 (Children's Book Awards: 6&11).

The first book award instituted specifically for a children's book written in English was the 'Percy Fitzpatrick Award', inaugurated in 1974 and administered by the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science. The award is intended for any book 'written by a South African or [one that has] a South African background' (Award Winning Children's Books: 7). Despite having been inaugurated in 1974, it was not until 1979 that the first award was given to Marguerite Poland for The Mantis in the Moon, although three earlier books had received honourable mentions. In 1984 Poland again received the award (which had not been awarded in the interim) for The Wood-Ash Stars. Both Poland's award winning books are collections in the manner of retold African Folktales (Award Winning Children's Books: 7). The non-awarding of the 'Sir Percy Fitzpatrick Award' could be seen as an attempt to maintain standards in South African children's fiction that are in keeping with international standards and this possibility will be discussed below. Further, the first two awards were made to collections of retold folktales, suggesting that the selectors were looking for a specifically South African flavour to the award winning texts. Poland's early writings were indeed amongst the first books published in South Africa that attempted to create a feeling of 'being African' amongst their predominantly white readers, and it is arguably this that the panel of judges involved in the

administration of the 'Sir Percy Fitzpatrick Award' wished to encourage and applaud Poland's intentions.

One of the most interesting trends in the area of South African children's book awards is the recent creation of awards by various publishing houses. The first such award, the 'Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature', was created in 1985 in association with Tafelberg Publishers (Award Winning Children's Books: 8). The award has two categories: separate prizes for English and Afrikaans language books. As the prize's name suggests, it is intended for books aimed at 'youth readers', that is readers between about 12 and 15 years. Perhaps the most important thing to notice about the 'Sanlam Prize' is that it is intended 'to foster and to promote a strong indigenous children's literature' ('om 'n sterk inheemse kinderlektuur te bevorder') (Award Winning Children's Books: 8). Through this public statement of intention, Tafelberg have recognised the vital role that publishers play in the creation and development of an indigenous literary tradition. Indeed, perhaps they are instrumental in creating this role for publishing houses. Worth noting is the fact that although Tafelberg is primarily an Afrikaans publisher, they set about creating an award that would promote both English and Afrikaans children's literature.

In 1986 the publishing house of Maskew Miller Longman, following the example of Tafelberg publishers, instituted the 'Maskew Miller Longman Young Africa Award' for the 'best untranslated unpublished English novel for 12 to 15 year olds (Award Winning Children's Books: 5). Criteria included 'a distinctive South African setting and a fresh unstereotyped perspective' (Award Winning Children's Books: 5). The award has three categories, a winner, a runner up and a special award for the 'most promising writer in English as a second language', intended to 'encourage young African writers to develop their talents for writing in English' (Award Winning Children's Books: 5). Again notice that Maskew Miller Longman, like Tafelberg before them, saw itself as having an interventionary role to play through the creation of these awards. The most recent development in the area of publishers awards has again come from Maskew Miller Longman. In 1993, Maskew Miller Longman announced through an extensive media

campaign the creation of a several awards for youth literature books written in vernacular African languages (that is, not in translation) (Fatima Dada 1993: interview). The reason given for the creation of this award was the desire to foster a literary tradition in vernacular languages, and indeed this is the first award of any kind intended specifically for children's literature written in vernacular languages. Important to note with regards to the awards created by publishing houses is that prizes are given after a competition which is widely publicised, and for which manuscripts are actively solicited. At the moment, there are new awards constantly being created for children's and youth literature, and a number of these awards are being funded by industrial concerns, for example the 'Sanlam Prize' (in conjunction with Tafelberg publishers), as well as the recently inaugurated 'Old Mutual Prize' (given to a book published by Human and Rousseau, and having categories – age, language, theme – that vary from year to year) and the bilingual 'Volkskas Prize for Juvenile Literature'. The implications of this will be considered below.

An important and possibly uniquely South African award is the 'Carl Lohann Prize'. Funded by the South African Institute of Library and Information Science and started in 1991, the annual award recognises the 'bevoording van kindeboeke in Suid-Afrika'. To date the Carl Lohann has been awarded to individuals who are actively involved in the encouragement and promotion of children's literature in South Africa. In 1991, the award was made to Marina le Roux of ISKEMUS and in 1992 it was given to Jay Heale, founder of Bookchat. Both le Roux and Heale are well known figures in the field of juvenile literature in South Africa and both have done an enormous amount to bring the field to the public's attention. Le Roux has set up the most extensive reference centre of information about South African children's literature and is currently engaged in compiling a bibliography of South African children's literature. Heale has been involved in the field first as a school teacher and latterly as the founder of Bookchat, a magazine that provides reviews and commentary on South African children's literature. Heale is also the chairman of the South African Children's Book Forum which in 1992, after long campaigning was admitted to IBBY (an international children's book forum from which South Africa had

been excluded because of sanctions). Both le Roux and Heale are well known public speakers and are frequently selected to be members of judging panels for various children's book awards.

The 'Carl Lohann Prize' is a unique award it is a recognition of the active role played by various people in the creation of a 'field' of juvenile literature in South Africa. As was discussed in the chapter on attitudes towards indigenous juvenile literature, the field has not evolved gradually or naturally, but has rather been actively 'created' and fostered by interested and concerned individuals. The 'Carl Lohann-Prys' gives recognition to the existence of this South African (and third-world) phenomenon and simultaneously recognises the importance of encouraging the fostering and growth of juvenile literature in South Africa through the lauding of involved and concerned individuals.

A recent trend in the area of judging children's literature that is in keeping with recent theoretical trends is having children as judges on book award panels. In After Alice (edited by Styles et al 1992) various ways of actively involving children in the production, selection and assessment of children's books are discussed. Increasingly it has been recognised that children are capable of assessing and passing judgement on what they read – an area that was previously seen as the preserve of involved and concerned adults. This recognition of the capability of children in selecting and assessing books is a break away from traditional buying structures in which publishers have marketed books so as to appeal to the sensibilities and sentiments of the adults who are seen as the main buyers. An outcome of this new awareness might be the active involvement of children in the book selection process – currently dominated by adults – at all levels, awards, libraries, schools and individuals. This trend recognises that children are capable of making critical choices about what they like as well as why they like it, and is a direct contradiction of the notion that children are merely passive recipients of what adults perceive to be 'good' or acceptable literature for young readers. In keeping with this international trend, the 'ATKV/Tekkies-Kinderboektoekenning' award relies on a panel of judges that includes children in making its assessment of the award winning texts. This award, first given in

1991, is divided into four age categories from 3 – 5 to 10 – 12 and children of the relevant ages are involved in the assessment process. Worth noting is that the award is sponsored by ATKV rather than by any official sponsor, which is presumably why it is so innovative in its use of judges.

What can be concluded about the South African book award system? As has been stated, the first awards for children's literature were specifically for Afrikaans language children's books, which was in keeping with the National Party's policy to promote and encourage the growth and development of Afrikaner culture. In the 1970's an award for English language children's literature was created. This recognition of the importance of indigenous children's literature, as well as the need to foster and to encourage its production in English, coincides with the political disturbances of the 1970s. It is almost as if a process of conscientisation took place amongst white middle class (the book buying section of the population) English speakers, which resulted in a desire to promote and to encourage 'genuine' South African literature (which would reflect 'South African culture') over imported Euro-American children's literature (which reflected other cultural values and experiences alien to the majority of South African children). Also important to notice is the nature of the various sponsors of the awards. The longest standing sponsor of children's literature is the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science, which has sponsored awards for both English and Afrikaans children's books since the 1960s. The importance of publishing houses in the creation of awards is also worth noting – as is the fact that this is a specifically South African phenomenon.

The criteria cited for the various book awards have been briefly mentioned and will be discussed in more detail below. Whether or not the award are publicised depends upon what the underlying intentions of the specific criteria of an award itself are. In the case of the various awards administered by the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science, the criteria vary from award to award, but the awards are given to books already published in South Africa. These awards are given mostly to books that fall

into the category of 'children's literature', that is literature for pre-eight year olds, rather than into the category of youth or juvenile literature.

An award that does not fit this category is the 'Sir Percy Fitzpatrick Award' for an English language book which has been awarded to children's as well as youth books. Criteria for the award are: 'any book, provided that it has been written by a South African or has a South African background, is eligible, regardless of the place of publication of the book' (Award Winning Children's Books: 7). The selectors are thus free to consider all books published in English by South Africans and are encouraged to reward the most meritorious text. With such loose criteria, notions of what constitutes a 'good book' and who judges and assesses the books become of prime importance. The 'Sir Percy Fitzpatrick Award' is administered by the South African Institute of Library and Information Science and the judges, who are nominated afresh every two years when the award is due to be given, are selected from a pool of recognised experts in the field of South African children's literature. This pool of recognised experts, as will be seen, is fairly small, and the experts are frequently consulted in the area of assessing children's award winning texts. Important to note is that because of the relatively recent development of this literary field, there are very few experts in the field and these experts, because they are frequently asked to sit upon more than one assessment panel, have a great degree of control over what comes to be seen as 'good South African children's literature' (presuming of course that the South African reading public believe that award winning texts are amongst the best South African texts for children).

For the most part, however, the more prestigious South African book awards, that is those awards that offer the greatest financial reward, are presented to 'solicited' texts in the youth literature category. This trend is especially true with regard to the recently created publishers' awards, that is awards either sponsored by South African publishing houses or awards that are sponsored by industry in conjunction with publishing houses. The soliciting of manuscripts takes the form of a competition with rules and a closing date. The procedures of the various publishing houses competitions (the Maskew Miller Longman

Young Africa Award and the more recently instituted award for youth literature in vernacular languages and the Sanlam-Tafelberg Award) are similar and I will therefore focus in some detail on only one of the publishing house awards.

The 'Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature' is awarded in conjunction with Tafelberg publishers, and was inaugurated in 1985. Louise Steyn, Chief Children's Editor at Tafelberg publishers provided me with the following information in an interview. Some months before the closing date of the competition (31st January, 1992 for the most recent award) the competition is advertised nationally in various newspapers (for example The Sunday Times and The Weekly Mail) and information about the competition is circulated to colleges, universities, schools and other institutions that might harbour possible writers of youth literature. (Fatima Dada observed said that Maskew Miller Longman have publicised their new vernacular languages award not only through newspapers and educational institutes, but also through an extensive TV and radio media campaign, aiming to reach as many people as possible, as well as to stress the importance of the award).

Each year the Sanlam Prize has a specific 'theme'. This specification aims to limit and channel the number and type of entries as well as to provide some means of comparing the merits of the various manuscripts. The themes for the previous competitions have been as follows: in 1988 an historical novel was solicited (interestingly, the 1985 award winners were also by and large historical novels); in 1990 the manuscripts were required to have an 'urban setting'; in 1992 'human relations' was the broad theme and the most recently advertised competition lists 'humour' as its prerequisite. It is interesting to notice the shift from the relatively safe 'an historical novel' which has in the past been a mainstay of South African children's fiction to the more contentious 'human relations' historical novel with its emphasis on both personal and social interrelations (see both Davies [1992: 145 – 160] and Jenkins [1993: 109 – 128] critical assessments of the genre). This trend is in keeping with more recent trends in both Europe and America, where much youth literature focuses on interpersonal relationships and social interactions (consider the prolific output of American youth writer Judy Blume, as well as the points raised by Karen Chubb in 'Germany's lesson

for South African youth', 1992, The Weekly Mail: 6). Louise Steyn commented that the most recent theme – that of humour – was an attempt to redress a lack in the current South African market, suggesting that the political and social climate in South Africa have resulted in youth literature having a sombre tone.

As the various manuscripts are received, they are all read through by a committee of 'pre-judges' who select a few (Steyn gives the figure of ten) of the more outstanding manuscripts in both English and Afrikaans to be considered by the judges for prizes in the various categories. At all stages of assessment, the manuscripts are assessed anonymously. In 1992 the prejudges were Nona de Villier (selected to assess the Afrikaans manuscripts), Jay Heale (editor of Bookchat and assessor of the English manuscripts) and Robert Hill, a writer of youth literature. These selected finalists are then given to a panel of judges who are selected by the editorial staff of Tafelberg publishers. The panel of judges changes each time an award is made; Tafelberg tries not to use the same people as judges every time so as to provide some variation and a fairer assessment of the field. The judges are selected as people who 'know about children's literature' and who are 'acknowledged experts in the field'. How books are assessed is left up to the judges (and varies from award to award), and Louise Steyn was unable to give me any criteria for what would be seen to constitute an award winning book. She made the point that the judges' decision was final and that the editors at Tafelberg had on occasion felt that their choice of award winning text was 'unwise' or 'bad'. In addition, the judges reserve the right not to make one or any of the awards, should the quality of the entries not be up to standard. This reservation is intended to safeguard the standard of the awards and to ensure that they are in keeping with 'international standards'. The 'recognised experts' who formed the 1992 panel of judges were as follows: assessing the English language manuscripts were Rosie Bennett who heads the English fiction section of the Cape Town 'Model Library', Dee Nash who is a Tafelberg manuscript reader, and Cedric Callaghan who is head of the children's division of the City Library Services; and assessing the Afrikaans manuscripts were Andre Jeanne Totemeyer,

who is the Children's Book Forum representative in Namibia, Hilda Grobelaar a school librarian, and Elizabeth de Roubaix of the Cape Provincial Library Services.

The Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature has two categories – an Afrikaans and an English category – and three awards are made in each category – a gold, a silver and a bronze medal. As from 1992, the bronze award was 'reserved for beginner writers ... who have not yet had a book published' in an attempt to encourage and to discover 'new talent' in the field of writing children's literature. Tafelberg undertakes to publish the winning manuscripts and there are prizes (sponsored by Sanlam and having, in 1992, a total value of R20 000) awarded to the writers. In addition, Tafelberg also reserves the right to the first option to publish any of the other manuscripts received.

By funding and judging an award for youth literature, Tafelberg are cleverly attracting manuscripts to themselves that are of a high standard and which already conform to a specific theme and structure. This enables the editors to bypass the time-consuming process of sifting through manuscripts that fall outside of the types of books that Tafelberg hopes to publish. By creating an award for youth literature specifically, Tafelberg has become a specialist publishing house which has cornered a part of the most lucrative section of the juvenile literature field, namely youth literature. Youth literature is the most frequently bought and prescribed type of juvenile literature, which is arguably why Tafelberg and Sanlam decided to focus on this section of the market.

What then are the advantages to the publishing houses in sponsoring or participating in literary awards? One of the main advantages is that a publishing house through a competition gets to see a vast selection of unpublished manuscripts, all of which are pre-selected and suitably pitched for the publishing house's market. This saves them having to sift through quantities of non-specific manuscripts and because of the high publicity involved, the publishing houses are able to employ specialist editors to deal with children's and youth literature. Further, young writers are more likely to send a manuscript to a publishing house that actively promotes youth or children's literature (even if there is no current competition being run by the publishing house,) than to a publishing house that is

occasionally known to publish youth fiction texts. Youth literature is published most consistently by Maskew Miller Longman and by Tafelberg, both of which have specialist publishing 'lines' (the Maskew Miller Longman 'Young Africa' series, for example). Publishing houses such as David Philips or Raven Press (both 'socially conscious' in a way that neither Tafelberg or Maskew Miller Longman is) publish children's or youth literature in limited quantities, in part because they attract only limited numbers of manuscripts (correspondence with Raven Press editor, February, 1993).

A second important benefit from a publishing house funded award is the publicity that the publisher and the sponsor, if they are separate, receive. The various awards produced in conjunction with publishing houses are marketed in terms of how they are instrumental in promoting the indigenous field of children's literature and in encouraging and discovering local talent. Industrial sponsors like Sanlam and Old Mutual are perceived to be actively involved in promoting the Arts through their encouragement of literature, as well as to be involved in the betterment of the community through their encouragement of a 'para-educational' field like children's and youth literature.

The greatest benefit that publishers receive directly through their involvement in the award system is a financial reward. As has been noted, the awards sponsored by publishing houses are without exception for youth literature, that is for children between the ages of about 12 and about 15 years. To quote Fatima Dada of Maskew Miller Longman (1993: interview) 'any literature is geared towards the [school network] market'. In schools there is an increasing trend towards prescribing indigenous children's literature and the stage at which this prescription takes place is in the lower standards, that is when the school children are between the ages of about 12 and 15 years. By presenting the educational departments with preselected books of a high standard (which is what an award winning book is perceived to be), the publishing house stands to benefit by having the book set for that year. In addition, it is believed that libraries are more likely to buy award winning texts than other undistinguished texts (and having librarians on the judging panel – three on the 1992 Sanlam Prize panel – ensures that the award winning books are perceived as being of

library standard). Since, as we have seen, the main book sales of publishing houses are either to libraries or through setwork books to education departments, by creating both awards and a publishing 'line' made up of award winning books, a publishing house is able to gain a share of the market which is lucrative and viable.

The current system of awards for juvenile literature has become firmly entrenched in South African book culture and the system has both supporters and detractors. For the most part, supporters of the book award system argue that the South African juvenile book industry is in dire need of fostering and encouraging by any means available (both Lynne Wilson and Louise Steyn, amongst others, have argued this). Conversely the detractors argue that actively bolstering the South African book industry through an award system produces an artificial book culture, based on what publishers' perceive as marketable rather than upon what is actually an aspect of South African book culture. Important to note is that the awards which are most criticised are those which have been initiated either by or in conjunction with publishing houses. Awards sponsored by more disinterested parties – like for example the South African Library Services – seldom have their motives questioned. However, the creation of publishing house sponsored awards has resulted in a variety of challenges arising with regards to the non-publishing house awards.

Given that the most outspoken support and criticism of the award system revolves around the publishing house awards, this discussion will centre around the attitudes of various upholders and detractors towards this type of award. Awards sponsored by publishing houses are a distinctively South African phenomenon. A principle reason for this is the relative newness of the South African field which has meant that there are relatively few books which are potential recipients of existing awards. Given this sparsity, the award donors (publishing houses) see themselves as encouraging and promoting the children's literature industry through their eliciting of manuscripts for competitions. Further, most of the publishing house awards reserve an award for a previously unpublished writer (see the discussion of Sanlam-Tafelberg above) which they argue serves as an inspiration for unpublished writers to write in order to get into print. Further, by creating awards which

are administered by publishing houses but funded by financial concerns (like Sanlam or Old Mutual), the award donors argue that the importance of juvenile literature is being emphasised, both through the extensive publicity which surrounds the competitions and awards, and by the largess of the prize money awarded to winning novels. In a nutshell, there is a point of view which argues that publishers have a vital and active role to play in encouraging and promoting juvenile literature in South Africa. Furthermore, given the small size of the field, the creation of competitions to attract manuscripts, especially from previously unpublished sources and in black vernacular languages, is an encouraging trend which will, it is hoped, result in a rapid increase in the size of the field and the material available.

Even though publishing house awards are perceived so positively by the people involved in the award system themselves, there are a number of harsh critics of the system. The person who most clearly articulated some of the shortfalls of the publishing house award system was Anne Greenwell of 'The Bookshop' in Observatory, who has been a member of a variety of judging panels for book awards. Greenwell (1993: interview) is critical of the current South African book award system on two levels. Her first criticism is that the majority of awards, and certainly all the publishing house awards, are for so called 'youth literature'. There are very few awards made to books intended for very young children and this she perceives as a gross oversight and a failure to recognise the intrinsic value and importance of children's literature. Unlike youth literature, there is no real financial market for children's literature and this she argues is why the publishing houses are eager to fund awards for youth literature. At senior school children are required to read a certain number of prescribed books and publishers hope that by creating award winning indigenous texts they will be able to increase their sales of books to educational departments. Greenwell argues that 'economics is the motivating force behind book awards in South Africa'. Her second criticism of the current book award system is that it lowers the standards of the literature being produced in South Africa. Greenwell suggests that far from promoting and encouraging the production of indigenous children's literature in South

Africa, the award system has effectively created different standards by which local and imported books are assessed. She argues that the quality of locally produced literature is inferior to Euro-American literature and fails to measure up to the standards set by the majority of people involved in the book trade. 'Most local stuff is promoted because people are trying to encourage the growth of children's literature in this country', Greenwell argues, and she suggests that this means of encouraging the production of children's literature is short-sighted in that it will produce, in the long run, an inferior children's literature. Many awards that are made to indigenous children's literature reflect a lowering of local standards, she argues, citing a recent award that she was invited to judge where despite there being no one really outstanding literary work, all three prizes were none the less awarded. This she contends results in a decline in local standards as well as a loss of prestige for the award itself because its inferior quality will be instantly recognisable to a discerning reader. The unfortunate result of the current trend to promote indigenous children's literature through publishing house awards is that 'in South Africa we apply different standards to locally produced as opposed to imported literature'.

Despite the existence of independent awards, many people in the book trade have expressed concern over the fact that many of the awards are made to the same book. For example Dianne Case's 92 Queen's Road (1992) received both a Sanlam Award and the Percy Fitzpatrick Award. This trend suggests that far from increasing the output of local writers, the publishing house awards are drawing writers who would otherwise be involved in producing independently motivated books. The writers themselves are drawn to submit manuscripts to publishers competitions because of the potentially lucrative rewards that lie in store for them, should they win an award. However, this trend means that most writers in South Africa who are writing for younger readers tend to tailor their productions to suit the requirements of the publishing houses competitions.

What then can be seen as the purposes of the book award system in South Africa? One important function of an award system is to provide recognition for outstanding books and writers in a country. This theoretically brings them to the public's attention and

increases their circulation and their sales. Awards thus recognise and in recognising define what are seen as 'good' and desirable texts and authors. In South Africa, the award system has done more than merely provide recognition for outstanding texts, it has been instrumental in delineating the field of children's literature itself, as well as in bringing the field to the public's notice and attention. Further, the award system in South Africa has been instrumental in creating an indigenous literary field, as well as an indigenous critical tradition. However, critics of the award system would argue that the whole award system is a closed system which is self-perpetuating because it is dependent on the opinions of a limited number of experts who are instrumental in determining what kinds of books are produced and written.

Any judgement made about what books are of a high enough standard to be award winners necessarily smacks of social and ideological preconceptions. Books chosen for awards are ultimately, if unconsciously, chosen because they uphold and promote a society's notion of what is desirable both in an abstract sense as well as in terms of how the society desires itself to be seen. Whilst a 'good book' is seen as being stylistically 'sound', a book that is stylistically sound will not be selected as 'good' unless its ideological content is perceived as being 'sound' as well. Subversive books that question and threaten the status quo do not win awards, even though many of them may come to be seen as visionary or insightful in the future. At the time of their production they are seen as too threatening to society as a whole to be afforded any kind of official recognition, which a public award would bestow on the book. Book awards thus serve to indicate what kinds of books and what kinds of themes have met with societal approval over the years.

SOCIALLY AWARE JUVENILE INDIGENOUS LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

As noted earlier, there is an assumption made by people who work with children's literature that it is a potentially powerful medium of change, a means of enlightening people about the features of a society in which they live, as well as a way of bringing about basic changes to that society. Children's literature, it has been claimed, can bridge apparently insurmountable gaps, it can bring a sense of common and shared experience, it can be far more than 'merely' a means of amusement or a brief diversion to its readers. I want to quote the responses of a number of people whom I interviewed for this thesis to the question; Can children's literature make a difference in South Africa?:

'Books might make a child sit up and question things. Librarians have to believe in the power of the pen'. Elizabeth Roubaix (Cape Provincial Library Services).

'Struik hopes to produce books that project an image of the more open society which we are all aiming for'. Marje Hemp (Struik)

'Literature can enrich children's lives, although one needs to be aware that books are not everything. It can stimulate the imagination and help children to gain insights. Stereotypes in books affect children, even if at sub-conscious level. They result in conditioning of the reader to acceptance, and a perpetuation of the status quo. Books which are not familiar [which question things] might cause you as a reader to think'. Alida Potgieter (Human & Rousseau).

'It has a role to play, especially in a society in transformation, by examining and confronting issues and not shying away from them'. Fatima Dada (Maskew Miller Longman).

'The notion of a political project behind the production of certain kinds children's literature is over simplified and unjust'. E.R. Arnold (Via Afrika)

It is widely believed that literature can play a role in alerting its readers to aspects of the society in which they live, though how this is done and whether it is in fact done is a subject of intense theoretical debate. Given the historical and political context of South Africa, it is not that surprising that there exists a level of social 'relevance' or 'awareness' in much of the children's literature that has been written in South Africa. Whilst I do not wish to suggest that this tendency is in most cases thought out or forced (this would be an oversimplification of the issue to echo E.R. Arnold), it exists in response to the very nature of South African society. Terms such as 'socially relevant' or 'socially aware' are broad and, unless clarified, potentially meaningless terms. By using these terms to describe a trend apparent in certain works of fiction, I wish to suggest a type of fiction that in some way is questioning and critical of the status quo, is aware of imbalances or 'issues' in the society that it describes and which attempts to address, although not necessarily resolve, the problems that it raises. In more radical works of fiction there might be an attempt to redress imbalances or in some way to make amends for the inequalities described, but these works of fiction are usually politically didactic and forced, and thus markedly less successful as pieces of fictional writing.

Historically, children's literature has always been perceived of as influencing how children think, feel and act (for a discussion of this see Bob Dixon's two volume Catching Them Young; as well as The Slant of the Pen, a collection of essays edited by Roy Priesweik). This belief that children's literature functions as a commentary on the society out which it has developed, is by no means a uniquely South African phenomenon. Indeed, the existence of such a trend in South Africa owes its existence to international, especially American, trends which have preceded it. In the nineteenth century, children's literature was often didactic and moralistic, and intended to provide children with a set of rules or examples by which to live (see amongst others, Peter Hunt's excellent overview Children's Literature, Jack Zipes' Fairytales and the Art of Subversion, and Humphrey Carpenter Secret Gardens). Then in the early nineteen hundreds, children's literature frequently took as its theme the glories of imperialism and adventure, setting out ways of behaving and of

thinking for young boys and girls which was stereotyped and limiting (see Imperialism and Popular Culture, edited by J.M. Mackenzie, Martin Green's Deeds of Adventure, Dreams of Empire, and the already mentioned volumes by Bob Dixon). Much has been written about the potential dangers of gender and racial stereotyping in children's literature and the response to these writings is the most recent development in children's literature (see Gillian Klein's Reading into Racism). Anti-bias writing sets out actively to correct unjust or dangerous stereotypes by self-consciously providing children with alternative role models (a crude example would be father keeps house whilst mother works etc.). Literature of this nature has an obvious project and is frequently unconvincing and clumsily executed. What I want to suggest in this brief consideration of certain areas and aspects of children's literature is that the producers of children's literature have frequently had notions about the effects and impact of children's literature which are far beyond their readers ability to comprehend. The readers are expected to find the books that they read to be, in some way or another, more or less directly, 'educational', be it at a conscious or sub-conscious level.

The three genres that I propose to discuss in this chapter on 'socially aware' or 'relevant' children's literature are folktales, historical novels and teenage social-issues novels. Although these three genres are apparently very different, I will attempt to show how they each in completely different ways exhibit an awareness of South African social and political issues. Each genre has developed in response to specific circumstances within South Africa itself and each has been the subject of various awards for children's literature in South Africa. Whilst many novels fitting into each of the genres discussed can be seen to exhibit an awareness of their South African context, it would not be accurate to state that all the novels do. Some novels – be they historical novels, novels intended for teenagers or collections of folktales – are at best oblivious of their context or in some cases downright reactionary, having features (of plot or theme) which suggest a resistance to any fundamental political or social changes in South Africa. This conservativeness in some novels' approach is in part a response to the conservativeness of many of the novels' potential purchases. Lynne Wilson of 'Young Books' remarks that people avoid South

African books that are perceived to be ‘relevant’ to the South African situation, suggesting that adult buyers find the subject matter to be ‘too close to the bone’ for readers’ comfort. Elizabeth Roubaix of the Cape Provincial Library Services says that whilst the Library Services try to buy progressive books, they receive feedback from branch outlets that indicates a level of resistance to these progressive books which can be seen as a reflection on the undisguised conservativeness of library users.

The folktale is probably the most popular genre in children’s literature. Internationally, it encompasses sub-genres like fairytales and fables, as well as folktales. In South Africa, folktales are the most commonly bought type of children’s literature (Lynne Wilson 1993: interview), as well as the genre most commonly borrowed from libraries (Cedric Callaghan 1993: interview). In terms of indigenous literature, the folktale genre accounts for the majority of children’s books produced in South Africa. Jenkins (1993: 8) states that more than one hundred and fifty collections of folktales have been produced for children in South Africa, and that most of these collections date from after the early 1970’s.

Frequently, because of the uncertain status of folktales, it is difficult to assess who the intended audience of a collection is. Early collections of folktales were clearly anthropological, intended for adult readers rather than for children. As an indigenous field of children’s literature began to evolve in South Africa, publishers began to produce editions of folktales for children which were illustrated and simplified. Even today, publishers exploit the ambiguity of the field, deliberately not clarifying who the audience is intended to be, whether adult or child, and frequently whether a collection is intended to be seen as purely a work of fiction or whether it is intended to be seen as anthropological as well. The publishers’ blurbs on collections frequently serve to underline these ambiguities. Consider these publishers claims:

‘This is a story which will appeal to both old and young alike’ (Queen of the Tortoises, Gcnina Mhlope, 1990).

‘The Cape Malays have made a fascinating contribution to South African folklore, a contribution which is a curious mixture of East and West. ...’ (Tales from the

Malay Quarter, recorded and retold (sic) by I.D. du Plessis, 1981.).

'Long ago, the old people of the San used to tell their children's children stories about a Dream Time ... So starts the tale about the Sun and Moon as retold by Jenny Seed in this collection of authentic (sic) San stories' (Old Grandfather Mantis, Jenny Seed, 1992).

And the brave and optimistic assertion at the foot of all Raven press books: 'Raven books for the Children of Africa' (in this case on The Mantis and the Moon by Marguerite Poland, 1979).

The people who buy children's literature are adults who are in some way involved with children, rather than the children themselves, and are concerned with what they consider to be 'good' for a child, rather than with what a child might actually want (Lynne Wilson 1993: interview). Publishers realising who the actual buyers of children's books are, produce blurbs that are intended to appeal to adults who are interested in stories that are in some way 'universal' in their appeal, as well as 'authentic' in their South African-ness. According to booksellers I interviewed, adults buying books expressed concern about what type of books to buy, frequently looking for an external standard or way of assessing the books. In this respect, folktales are perceived by many buyers and readers as being 'authentic' examples of South African literature, which makes them the most popular and frequently bought genre of indigenous children's literature in South Africa.. Popular amongst local buyers, folktales are also bought as presents to be sent overseas, seen as 'cultural artefacts' that reflect some aspect of South African life (Lynne Wilson 1993: interview).

Indeed these stories are 'cultural artefacts', but whether they are examples of 'black' culture or actually a reflection on the 'white' culture that has spawned them, is a point worth discussing. One aspect of the intended audience of folktales in South Africa is clear: folktales, at least those currently in circulation in the form of books and collections, were produced by 'white', mostly English speaking adults for the enjoyment and occasionally enrichment of 'white' mostly English speaking children. Historically, there

have been very few collections of folktales compiled by black people (in any language and for any audience) and it is only recently, that various folktales retold by black writers (see the Gcnina Mhlope story cited above), usually in English, have come to be produced.

The origins of children's literature in South Africa follows a common pattern, with collections of indigenous folktales being the first books produced specifically for children. In Europe, collections of fairytales collected by Charles Perrault (in France) and the Grimm brothers (in Germany) formed the basis of children's literature in both those countries. Apart from any significance that folktales might have in terms of revealing aspects of South African society to the critical reader, the genre is important because it is in many ways the 'mother of South African children's literature'. Crucially, the first South African award for an English language children's book was made to a collection of folktale type stories. The 'Percy Fitzpatrick Award', sponsored by the South African Library Services, was awarded for the first time in 1979 to Marguerite Poland's The Mantis in the Moon. This award was of importance because it drew attention and gave recognition to a newly emerging field, that of children's literature in English. It is also significant that the award was made to a collection of folktales (as was the second award), underlining as this did the essentially 'South African' nature of the genre. Subsequent awards have been made to fictional works that fall into other literary genres.

Folktales in South Africa, given racial sensibilities, are a fraught genre and over the years attitudes towards folktales have changed. Originally, folktales were oral tales told to people of all ages by members of various indigenous groups. These tales served various functions, being at times entertaining, didactic or a means of self-definition, and the tales themselves lacked a formal Western style rigidity and structure and were thus free to alter and evolve, depending upon the circumstances in which they were recited. Contact with early white travellers resulted in the tales being transcribed, set down, translated and frequently distributed outside of the groups of people who first created them. The tales thus became 'dispossessed'. These early collections of folktales were reproduced as anthropological studies, then re-formed into collections for children (thus suggesting that

the originals, as well as their original tellers, were 'simple' and suitable for children). The collections were in English, intended for white readers and were seen as 'curiosities'. In the seventies, attitudes towards folktales began to change and there was a move towards re-evaluating and re-affirming Africa and African ways of life. However, the tellers of folktales were still white English speakers, still writing for a white English speaking audience. It is only in the very recent past that black writers have begun to produce collections of folktales in English for a wider audience, thus beginning the process of repossessing this 'typically African' genre.

The oral tradition or 'folktales' of the indigenous people of Southern Africa were transcribed for the first time by travellers and missionaries in the later 1800s. Bishop Henry Callaway, compiler in 1868 of Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus comments on his collection as follows:

These simple [Zulu] tales are the history of a people's mind in one phase of its existence. The tales of olden times collected from the people by Grimm, or Thorpe ... are of a very different character and speak of a very different society. ... (ii)

We know not yet what shall be the result of such collections of children's tales. ...

If carefully studied and compared with corresponding legends among other people, they will bring out unexpected relationships, which will more and more force upon us the great truth, that man has everywhere thought alike, because everywhere, ..., he is still man, – one in all the essentials of man, – one in that which is a stronger proof of essential unity, than mere external differences are of different nature, – one in his mental qualities, tendencies, emotions, passion (iii).

Callaway perceives his collection as serving to record the oral stories of the Zulu nation, whilst at the same time underlining the Zulus 'common humanity' with (presumably) Western man. Interestingly Callaway, despite his recognition at another point in his introduction that these stories were told by women to everyone and anyone, they were not age specific, terms his collection of tales a 'collection of children's tales'. In the 1860s, other collections of oral folktales were compiled by various people, most notably the San

legends and myths collected by Dr W.H.I. and Lucy Bleek (available in The Mantis and His Friends: Bushman Folklore edited by DF Bleek, 1923). The Callaway and Bleek collections of folktales, initially designed as anthropological records, were used as the basis in South Africa, for popularising African folktales and turning them into 'suitable' reading matter for young children. With such collections to work from (there were also numerous other anthropological records of sub-Saharan African folktales compiled as Europeans settled in Africa) collections of folktales were produced for children to read. These first collections of folktales for children were frequently pseudo-anthropological in nature, setting out 'histories' of the stories, attempting to contextualise the stories, providing glossaries and maps, all to make the collections more accessible to young readers.

Geraldine Elliot in the introduction to The Long Grass Whispers (1939), provides the following introduction:

All through the African day men and women, children and animals, on their way to the maize gardens, to the waterholes, to the hunting grounds, to the forests, pass through the long grass. What happens there to beasts and men cannot be spoken of in the daylight. But at night the people gather around the flickering fire, within the dark circle of the hut, to hear the grandmother, as she leans against the hut pole, telling how the animals live and talk. Her imagination and her personality illuminate the ancient stories with her own turns and phrases. The story is the same, but its telling is always changing, for the long grass whispers its secrets anew to each hearer. ... Such tales are not forgotten, for they are part of a people's heritage. An old Ngugi man, who listened long ago to his grandmother, told these stories to the author.

She also provides a glossary of terms and of names. The effect of this introduction is to create an aura of the 'otherness' of the original storytellers, of Africa – a 'landscape' that a white child reading these stories would find unfamiliar and alien. Phyllis Savory in African Fireside Tales (1982) gives the reader some historical background to the tales, thereby suggesting that the tales are foreign and alien (hence the need for background information)

to the reader. Early collections of folktales seek to underline the anthropological nature of the collections through introductions and glossaries, much in the same way as Elliot and Savory provide notes. By implying that these stories require notes to be understood, the reader is alienated by the tales, and the 'otherness' of the original tellers, black South Africans, is reaffirmed. This attempt to establish Africa, specifically black Africa, as 'other' and 'alien' can be seen as a manifestation of both a colonial outlook – that Africa is alien, it is not 'home', that white children born in Africa are not 'African' but displaced Europeans – and in later South Africa an Apartheid mentality – namely the attempt to establish South Africans of different linguistic groups and backgrounds as different and as separate. To quote Andree-Jeanne Totemeyer (1989: 397) on the implicit dangers of this trend in the retelling of folktales:

The great admiration for African mythology and the culture of the blacks in South African juvenile literature, far greater than in any other country of the west, therefore possibly has ideological implications. The cornerstone of the whole apartheid ideology is the belief in the separate cultural identity of each ethnic group. It is nothing more than the old British 'divide and rule' concept, clad in ethnic attire. By instilling admiration in South African white children for the various black cultures with due emphasis on the differences between them, the apartheid system based on these differences is perpetuated. Although this may not be the intention of the retellers and collectors ... of folktales, their endeavours can contribute to the reinforcement of the concept of ethnicity on which the apartheid ideology is based, depending on the manner in which the stories are told.

The phrase 'manner in which they are told' is crucial, underlining the fact that so long as the retellers of African folktales remain distanced and voyeuristic in their efforts, the effect of the folktales on the readers will be to alienate and to separate the audience from the folktales themselves, and by implication from Africa and from the groups of people who originally told the tales.

Most folktales compiled are told in such a manner as to present them to their readers as curiosities, as examples of other and different cultures. This is especially true of compilations made before the 1980s. More recent ways of looking at folktales are particularly clear in the work of Marguerite Poland. Poland, a white, middle class, English speaker, grew up in the Eastern Cape and has an honours degree in Xhosa and Zulu, and she argues that because she is fluent in Xhosa and Zulu, she knows and understands the minds of these people. She is also the recipient of the 'Percy Fitzpatrick Award' for both The Mantis and the Moon (1979) and The Wood-Ash Stars (1984). Subsequent to her receiving of the 'Percy Fitzpatrick Award', no collection of folktales has won an award.

Poland's approach to folktales is completely different from the approach of most other retellers of folktales. Most retold folktales have an identifiable source, frequently cited in an introduction or in the publisher's blurb; the story might be based on a San myth or be about the joker-hare figure of Southern African renown. As such they are reworkings of static, already recorded tales and their authors do not deviate to any great degree in the workings or outcome of the plot. Poland argues that this fixed-ness of plot is false and untrue to the oral tradition (notes from a paper delivered by Poland at the 1992 Towards More Understanding conference). Oral stories, Poland argues, are dynamic; they change over time and new stories are developed or created to fill needs within the society. Thus these static stories might reflect the needs or circumstances of the time from when they were first recorded, but they are alien in time as much as anything else, from a contemporary reader. Poland in her tales does not reproduce a known folktale instead she attempts to create a new piece of literature out of both African traditions and English traditions to produce a work that is uniquely South African for contemporary readers. In her writings although she focuses on environmental concerns, amongst her main concerns are social issues. Poland's main goal is to provide stories that create a 'sense of belonging' in her readers. This she hopes to achieve through a mingling of traditions, through a rejection of artificial barriers (like glossaries, etc.) and through an acceptance and

celebration of the African landscape. Expressed differently, Poland is attempting to create a sense of 'African-ness' in her predominantly white readers.

This is the change in approaches to folktales that takes place in the early 1980s, that is so clearly illustrated in Poland's approach. In the 1970s, perhaps sensitised by political events as well as by world trends (black consciousness, civil rights, African studies, etc.), there was a move in South Africa to re-examine and re-affirm Africa and the experience of being 'African'. From regarding Africa as alien and other, there was a move towards identifying with Africa, towards being 'African'. In children's literature this trend expressed itself in terms of producing an indigenous literature (note that the sudden rise in the amount of literature produced locally coincides with the period discussed) as well as a move towards reclaiming folktales. No longer were folktales distantly derived from anthropological collections suddenly they were stories experienced first hand by their retellers. Many collections of folktales published recently are 'authenticated' with statements such as 'Diana Pitcher has been fascinated by African legends since as a child she first heard them from her Zulu Nurse' (blurb to The Mischief Maker 1988) or other statements which indicate that the stories were first encountered in their oral form, rather than in print. By asserting such familiarity with the stories, the retellers are able to claim a stake in the oral tradition; they encountered orally told folktales, and they are able to position themselves as the logical next link which in this print age it is understandably the setting down of oral tales in print. When it is obviously impossible to have encountered a folktale in the oral medium, as would be the case with a San myth, the reteller might avoid an excessive mention of sources – in other collections achieved through introductions and glossaries etc. – and rather imply that the context of the tales is familiar to the reader, thereby suggesting a heritage which includes the context of the tales. Jenny Seed sets out to achieve this in Old Grandfather Mantis (1992) in which she provides no introduction, but talks of a 'dream time' before rigid boundaries existed (perhaps looking forward to such a boundary-less future), suggesting to the reader that they 'know' what the context of the tales is, and that the exact context is not crucial to understanding the tales – that being

'African' is enough. A further development in the area of folktales in South Africa is the publication of increasing numbers of folktales written in English by black writers, often by black publishing houses. This trend could be read as a desire by black South Africans to reclaim folktales in print – after all the majority of folktales in print currently are written by white South Africans – as well as a desire to 'share' and spread a rich cultural heritage – hence the publication of the folktales in English rather than in vernacular languages.

As this is a fairly recent trend, not much has been written about folktales as a social force, that is folktales as a means of establishing a shared identity, of being African. One person who has written extensively about Zulu folktales in general is Noverino Canonici, who in The Inganekwane Tradition (1987) considers 'The Present Status of Folktales' in a chapter by that name. Considering the recent trend amongst black writers of recording folktales Canonici (1987: 63) comments

as African culture moves from oral to print literacy, the folktale is still a powerful influence; this is because it is a cultural reservoir, a system of beliefs, and a way of transmitting educational values.

The rich folklore of Africa is increasingly used as a source for emerging African literatures in European languages. Traditional cultural elements are seen as a unifying factor for peoples which are trying to establish their political and cultural identity.

As Canonici contends, using oral and traditional literature to affirm a sense of cultural and political identity is common. In many post-Independence sub-Saharan African state, the collecting and collating of folktales has been seen as extremely important in terms of affirming a country's cultural identity. Folktales are frequently perceived as being a 'cultural reservoir', important to preserve (see Nancy Schmidt, 'Children's Books in Sub-Saharan Africa' in African Studies Program, 1985 for a discussion of this phenomenon).

It is immediately understandable that black people should collect folktales and regard them as cultural reservoirs, but in South Africa this move to identify with folktales has been played out by white writers as well. Of this trend Canonici (1987: 69) comments as follows:

An important and rather recent development in the field of African folktales is the publication of such tales in children's books in English by authors such as Ligouri-Reynolds and especially Marguerite Poland.

There is no need for me to comment on such a welcome development in our country except to say that this kind of writing reveals the search, also from the point of view of more sensitive Europeans, for roots in this land of Africa, a mother who brings together all her children of whatever colour. From the point of view of the folktale I timidly offer the following remarks:

It is beneficial for intercultural exchanges that African folklore be researched, preserved and presented in a language which can reach the majority of people in South Africa and in the world.

The understanding of African cultural values and life frame work revealed in these publications can only help to create a climate of mutual understanding which is conducive to cross-culturalisation.

Canonici thus perceives folktales both as reclaimed by black writers as well as those produced by white writers as having a definite role to play in easing social and political tensions in South Africa. He sees folktales as providing a bridge across different cultures, a providing a means of communication. As I have suggested, folktales are seen to have a vital role to play in terms of social awareness and social unity.

An aspect of these retold fairy tales that Jenkins is particularly dismissive of is their style. Jenkins argues that the tales are frequently clumsily constructed and waiver between pseudo-folksy tones and excessive sophistication (1993: 20-3). Canonici recognises these stylistic shortcomings, but argues that in the present context – perhaps where social understanding is of more importance than literary finesse – these shortcomings are of second rate importance to the goals that the stories are setting out to accomplish:

Although the shortcomings in regard written work [that is collections of folktales for children] will be present also in these recent publications, the gifted writers seem to be able to compensate for them by recreating the atmosphere of the

African setting in a way which is, perhaps, not sacred, as in traditional folklore performances, but is charged with mystery and emotion (1987: 69).

Much as folktales have been invested with the ability to cross cultural barriers, so have historical novels been invested with the ability to redress imbalances in South African history. Like the folktale genre, historical novels, along with the related 'adventure genre', have long been a 'staple' feature of the juvenile South African literature scene. Jay Heale in his Young Africa Booklist (1985) lists a number of novels which deal with history, suggesting that these novels might provide useful 'background reading'. This suggestion perhaps hints at why the genre is so popular amongst adult buyers and recommenders – it is seen as being academically 'useful', as providing pupils with information about one of their school subjects. To quote Shirley Davies (Reading Roundabout 1992: 145) on the usefulness of historical fiction:

Stories with an Historical setting can be of immense value to the child in that he [sic] begins to see the modern world in perspective. He learns how present thought, customs and practical conveniences are built on the philosophy, discoveries and inventions of the past. By observing historical events and the fate of the personalities caught up in them, the child is more able to deal with themes such as war, racism and poverty objectively.

Although Davies does not develop these insights further (her chapter lists historical novels available without any attempt to interpret critically or understand what the content of the book signifies), she is aware that historical novels because of their historical content are ideological 'missiles', bombarding a young reader with biased historical 'facts'. These novels present a version of the past that suggests to the impressionable reader, or the reader without critical skills, a way of making sense of and of accepting the present. The ideological function of historical novels is again acknowledged by Elwyn Jenkins (1993: 110) when he writes of Jenny Seed's importance in South Africa as follows:

As one of South Africa's most prolific and widely published [in both English and Afrikaans], – and therefore presumably most widely read – children's authors,

Jenny Seed can be assumed to have had a considerable didactic impact on children since her first book was published in 1968. ... Seed's works occupy an exceptional place in forming the historical sensibilities of white South Africans.

It is these ideological and didactic influences that I will discuss with reference to various historical novels published in South Africa.

Perhaps the most useful place to begin this discussion is with a brief consideration of the South African school history syllabus. If historical novels can be seen as didactic tools which enable children to decode the present in terms of the past, how much more powerful an ideological tool must history itself be (Frances Aboud in Children and Prejudice, comments on the role of educational material in creating prejudices in children). It has long been recognised that history is not a collection of unbiased facts, but rather a variable and shifting assessment of the past. Any history reveals as much about the ideology of its writers that it does about the events that they discuss. History is an ideological tool, used by those in power (those with access to resources such as documents, presses, money and official sanction) to project a version of the past that justifies, explains and favourably reveals the present (for a detailed discussion of the functions and uses of history refer to John Tosh The Pursuit of History, and E.H. Carr What is History).

South African history taught at school is an example of how history can be used to further ideological ends. Currently, the school history syllabus along with the entire educational system in South Africa is undergoing radical revision. The comments that follow no longer apply, given the current changes in progress, but they are valid in terms of providing a context for the historical novels under discussion. Under the various education departments, schools were limited to teaching a specific history syllabus, using specific text books which presented a certain point of view, namely that of the Nationalist Government, with its apartheid policies. Glossing over such aspects of the educational policy as separate schooling and syllabuses for different racial groups which reinforced differences between South Africans, and served to divided up the society (see The Right to Learn, edited by Helene Perold and Dawn Butler, for a detailed discussion of the effects of Nationalist

education policies), the aim of the history syllabus was to confirm and to entrench white supremacy in South Africa. This was done by presenting historical facts in such a way as to imply that whites have been the moving force in the history of South Africa and that black people in South Africa have a history only in so far as it impinges on the activities of white people in South Africa. Briefly, South African history as presented in these terms begins with the 'discovery' and colonisation of the Cape by white explorers. This presentation suggests that South Africa before the arrival of whites was a blank map with no inhabitants and no history, waiting to be written on – or 'civilised' – by whites. From here onwards, the focus of the history taught in school is on what can be called white history – white expansion into the interior, white discoveries, British-Boer tensions, trading posts, victories in battles against the 'natives'. Any mention of black people is only as a result of some contact between blacks and whites – for example in a war or through trading. Finally, more recent history focuses on the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism and various attempts are made to justify and to explain the 'need' for the imposition of apartheid policies. Schools were discouraged from providing alternative versions of the historical past of South Africa, and this was reinforced by having standardised matriculation examinations in each province. This, by rewarding pupils who reproduced the accepted 'textbook' version of events, ensured that a specific school syllabus had been followed, as well as that a specific point of view had been taught.

It is against this historical background that children's historical novels were written in South Africa. Children's historical novels in South Africa tend to be of two types: those that reinforce the version of history taught at school level, thereby providing support for the Nationalist government and its policies, and those that set out to question and subvert the official school history and thereby set out to undermine and subvert the Nationalist version of history as well as its policies. Karen Chubb in an article in the Weekly Mail (October, 30 to November, 5 1992) entitled 'Germany's lessons for SA youth literature' argues that literature has a role to play in breaking the silence of the past and thereby enabling children to come to terms with the weight of their history. She argues that

literature enables young people to learn about their history by engaging their emotions and feelings as well as their intellects. ... Through [sympathetic] texts children not only learn about history, they share emotionally and experientially in aspects of a past which has shaped their present and will continue to influence their future. ... Systematic policies of degradation, dehumanisation and authoritarianism have made it difficult for young people to see themselves as agents rather than as objects of history. But literature can provide the emotional and intellectual space within which young people can begin to reflect on their own situations and define themselves within them.

Chubb's article upholds the idea that through novels that interrogate rather than uphold the representation of history, it is possible for young people to enact changes in South Africa by assuming a degree of responsibility for their own historical actions and status.

Historical novels that uphold the Nationalist version of history can be seen to do this in two ways. On the most simple level, novels retell historical events from the same point of view as the official history. Frequently, these novels were written in Afrikaans, often with the intention of furthering the aims of Afrikaner Nationalism. Examples of such works would be the collection of short stories written by Pieter Grobelaar which deal with various historical events. These have been compiled into collections with titles such as Die Groot Afrikanse Heldeboek (1970) or Wolraad Woltemade en ander Afrikaanse Heldeverhale (1970). As their titles suggest, they are collections of stories about Afrikaans (white) heroes, that is, about well known historical figures, and are intended to create a feeling of national pride in their young Afrikaans, white readers. They vigorously affirm all aspects of Nationalist history, upholding its depiction of events as well as its ideologies. The second way in which a novel can uphold the Nationalist historical ideology, without explicitly affirming its precepts, is through tacit acceptance of the status quo. Such a novel would be written uncritically, from a white point of view, would accept the official version of events and would make no attempt to interrogate the representation of the past. By accepting the official version of history without question, its message is subtly re-enforced, even if only

at a sub-conscious level. Examples of books which accept rather than set out to question and subvert historical representation are Juliette Marais Louw's Land of the Watching Eyes (1972) and Musket and Garden Hoe (1972), in which the experiences of white settlers in South Africa are discussed and considered. There is no real consideration of the implications of the spread of white settlers to the indigenous black inhabitants of the newly settled areas, and the point of view is exclusively a white one. Dora Tudor's Nicolaas of Vergelegen (1984) is another book which fails to question the status quo. Focusing on the friendship between a landowner's son and a slave boy, it sentimentalises the relationship, degrading it into the faithful retainer-worthy master stereotype, and at no point actually queries slavery or examines its harsh implications for the Cape slaves. Books such as these which fail to question events or relationships are dangerous because they serve to re-enforce certain views of historical relationships between groups of different people, which in turn affects the manner in which children might perceive relations between people today.

Historical novels that question the status quo exist as part of the South African youth literature field. A prominent writer of such historical children's writers is Jenny Seed, whose various novels are examined in detail by Elwyn Jenkins in Children of the Sun (1993). Jenkins terms the type of novels that Seed writes 'liberal historical' novels and it the term 'liberal' that suggests the context for such novels. Whilst Jenkins uses the term 'liberal' to describe the novels of Seed, much of what she writes is radically revisionist and actively attempts to unsettle the reader's preconceptions of the historical past. In the late 1970s and the 1980s, many South African universities set out to reconsider South African history. Alternative histories about South Africa have always existed, but this new development was far reaching and populist. Various popular histories were considered and there was a move towards empowering the oppressed peoples of South Africa by enabling them to write their own histories. This move was a recognition of the fact that to control your past enables you, in part, to control your present. To quote the introductory note to the Skotaville publication What is History? (1987: 1): 'If we do not understand the past, it is more difficult to change the present or to look ahead to the future'. As a result of this

sentiment, many revisionist histories were published in an attempt to 'understand the past' from a new perspective, that of the marginalised and oppressed peoples of South Africa. The University of the Witwatersrand set up the influential 'History Workshop' and revisionist texts such as Luli Callinicos' two volume Gold and Workers (1981) and Working Life (1987) were published. This attempt to reassess South African history, in effect to revise and rewrite it from an alternative point of view, affected the types of historical novels being written for children.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a trend towards publishing historical novels for children that tried to present children with an alternative view of historical events, one which was radically different to the history that was being presented to children in their school text books. Whilst this was the intention, the majority of historical writers avoided being overly politically didactic in their approaches and sought to undermine the official version of historical facts by more subtle means. In addition, given the strict censorship laws that existed in the 1970s and early 1980s, any overtly political book, even if 'only' a novel, would have been banned, thereby rendering it useless as a means of alerting children to the inequalities and contradictions within their own society.

There are various means employed by writers of historical fiction for alerting children to historical imbalances or oversights. One method is to undermine the image of Africa as a blank landscape, waiting to be written on by white 'civilizers'. By presenting children with stories of people who lived in Africa before any white person set foot in the Cape, writers have affirmed the existence of a long and varied African history, which does not require a white observer to validate it. In Tutti and the Magic Bird (1980), Julia Boyd-Harvey uses time travel and archaeology to recreate an iron aged past. Her protagonist, a modern black boy of Zulu and Tswana origins, is drawn back into an iron-aged settlement on the Witwatersrand. Boyd-Harvey sets out to depict the everyday life and customs of this group of people, thereby giving her protagonist a sense of his own African history. Although Boyd-Harvey has used a black child as a protagonist as well as depicting a uniquely African settlement, it is still a white father figure who initiates Tutti's voyage of

self-discovery by introducing him to the possibility of a black history through archaeology. Tutti's mother, a domestic servant, has no personal sense of her own African history, and learns of this history through the white archaeologist by whom she is employed. Victor Pohl sets out to depict the meetings of the San with encroaching black herders in Farewell, the Little People (1968). Pohl, unlike Boyd-Harvey, uses no mediator figure and presents the reader with a uniquely African historical novel.

Another approach has been to consider the effects of colonisation on the indigenous inhabitants of South Africa. All too many historical novels intended for children tacitly accept the fact of colonisation without attempting to explore its impact on the indigenous people already living on the land. Presenting the effects of colonisation through the eyes of one of the colonised rather than through the eyes of a coloniser is a commonly used narrative technique which demonstrates a desire to understand the impact of colonisation from the point of view of the indigenous peoples of South Africa. In The Great Thirst (1985) Jenny Seed, through the eyes of a Nama boy named Garib, considers the effects of colonisation on the relations between the Nama and the Herero peoples of Namibia. Using the perspective of a black protagonist, Seed attempts to assess the impact of white expansion into the interior. She tries to show without passing judgement on the historical events, the impact of historical events on individual lives, suggesting that these historical forces are beyond the control of individuals, who are left to act and react to events. The Award winning Ghamka Man of Men by Eve Merchant (1985) examines the impact of the arrival of white men at the Cape on the traditional way of life of the Khoi-Khoi. Merchant in her narrative depicts in detail the lives and the customs of these pastoral people, affirming the existence of customs and as well as a history in Africa before the arrival of whites at the Cape, who are frequently depicted as a civilising force.

Retelling stories of historical events from the point of view of the black people involved is another unsettling technique sometimes used by writers of liberal or revisionist historical novels. Traditionally, young white readers are expected to identify with the feeling and experiences of their white age mates. Providing these same readers with characters who

are black and who are experiencing familiar historical events from an alternative perspective, has the effect of making children reassess their understanding of certain historical events. This technique of choosing a black child as the protagonist is used by Julia Boyd-Harvey and Jenny Seed to great effect. Jenkins in his commentary on Seed's work comments that she 'varies the central characters of her books to cover different racial and cultural groups' (1993:112), thereby ensuring that different points of view (mostly those that do not fall into the category of 'official' history) are 'heard' by her readers. Finally, most historical novels as well as much history, focuses on great men and great events. By focusing on less well known events and ordinary people (as the various novels mentioned above do), writers causes their readers to reassess the purpose and function of history entirely. History becomes a record of the ordinary deeds of ordinary people, caught up in events beyond their control and not of their own making, rather than a record of the speeches and policies of a few select and powerful individuals. The use of child protagonists especially underlines the force of historical events, because whilst a child might act heroically under certain historically determined conditions, the protagonists are acting in response to events that are entirely beyond their control.

Revisionist historical novels have gained official sanction in the form of various awards made to novels of this nature over the years. Jenny Seed received an honourable mention in 1983 for the Percy Fitzpatrick award for The New Fire (1983), a novel which depicts the impact of colonial expansion on the San. Place Among the Stones (1987) received the MER Prize for Children's Literature in 1987. This critical recognition affirms the importance of this genre – that of revisionist historical novels – in the field of children's literature in South Africa. The importance of the field was further underlined in 1985 when the theme of the prestigious Sanlam-Tafelberg awards was an historical one. Whilst no specific 'type' of historical novel was specified, the winning novel was Eve Merchant's Ghamka Man of Men and the runners up were also, thematically, revisionist histories. Given the restrictive nature of the school history syllabus, combined with a broad recognition of the importance of recognising and affirming the existence of an 'alternative' and more

African centred history, it is easy to understand why this genre has been received enthusiastically by teachers and librarians, who see it as an antidote to the biased and ideologically suspect history that children imbibe at school level.

Unlike folktales and historical novels which existed as staples of South African juvenile literature long before they assumed renewed social or ideological significance, the final genre that I intended to discuss in this chapter developed as a direct result of the social and political pressures that exist in South Africa. To quote Elwyn Jenkins (1993: 130) on the nascence of this genre, which is acutely aware of social issues in South Africa:

The children's uprising of 1976 marked the liberation of South African English children's books from a taboo on matters of race and politics. ... The involvement of children in political activism provided material for realistic plots on this new theme, and prompted writers to make race and contemporary social issues the focus of children's books, instead of the unmarked background. ... As the pace of reform has increased and South African society has become freer, more and more children's and youth novels have been published. ... Their plots explore the potential that a more open society offers for young people to meet and learn about their fellows who have been distanced from them until now by apartheid.

Jenkins raises a number of important issues in this passage. The first is the shift in the focus of these youth novels. In most 'realistic' novels society and status quo is depicted as being secondary to the characters and the action, and this is true of novels the written for the juvenile market. Earlier novels intended for youth readers have merely attempted to 'mirror' society as it stands without initiating any critical awareness in the reader. One defining feature of the novels that fall into this emerging genre is their deliberate critique of the status quo in the society being depicted. This in itself is often more valuable than the presence of political or ideological didacticism. A consideration of the political and social attitudes of the characters, as well as a consideration of character interaction, is often more revealing and thought provoking than the depiction of actual character involvement in political events. As was discussed with reference to historical novels, assumptions are

queried rather than merely accepted and thereby perpetuated. Through this interrogative process, these assumptions become the 'focus' of the novels, rather than the 'unmarked background'. Second, many of these youth novels explore the potential and possibility of a 'freer society'. In this sense the novels are ideological and utopian, projecting a vision of a prejudice and boundary free South Africa, a vision that can appear slightly unrealistic to a present day reader in its depiction of inter-racial relationships.

Whilst a new genre in South Africa (it came into being in the 1980s), youth novels that focus on social issues have existed for some time in England and in America. As a genre, American youth novels aimed at the teenage market are intended to raise, confront and discuss the types of problems or experiences that teenagers might undergo. Problems and experiences dealt with in these youth novels range from issues such as divorce, premarital sex, peer pressure or rejection (themes often discussed by the prolific teen writer, Judy Blume) to more serious social problems such as poverty or racism (Rosa Guy's novels are set against such backgrounds). These American novels range from being thought provoking and insightful, to mass produced and essentially superficial. In South Africa, publishers like Maskew Miller Longman and Tafelberg have actively encouraged authors to write books for the youth market by establishing publishing lines like the 'Young Africa' series and through public recognition like the Sanlam and Maskew Miller Longman awards. By initiating awards and publishing lines, publishers have expressed their own certainty as to the market potential for teenage books that confront and question social norms and values. Like their American counterpart, South African teenage novels raise and confront social issues, but these issues tend to be rather more serious. Although problems such as parents, sex, peers and divorce might be raised in these novels, their focus tends to be on the weightier South African issues of coping with the aftermath of apartheid.

As a genre of South African juvenile fiction, socially aware youth novels are intended to provide the reader with more than just an entertaining read. The characters and plots have a purpose and a function which is an extension of the writers' projects. These projects are expressed in various different ways, depending on the intentions of the writers.

In some novels, especially those written in the later 1980s, characters are depicted as being actively involved in the 'political struggle' for change in South Africa. These novels are frequently politically didactic and rely on their political idealism rather than on their strength of plot to attract readers. Jane Rosenthal's Wake Up Singing (1990), which won the Young Africa Award in 1990, is an example of novel which has as its focus political awareness and involvement. Focusing on the growing political and social awareness of a white, middle class boy named Nicholas, the plot centres on the effect of this awareness on Nicholas's relations with his family and at his school. Set in 1985, at the height of political 'unrest' Wake Up Singing confronts issues such as patriotism as well as the insularity of the cocooned white middle class world that most teenagers who would read this novel inhabit (22-4, 44-7). Although this is a novel about political involvement – much of the plot centres on the hiding of young black activists named Zach and Mpho – it is a well written novel that is not politically didactic (63-7, 74). Rosenthal explores the relations between Nicholas and his father, highlighting aspects of and reason's behind his father's conservativeness as well as his genuine concern for Nicholas (17-8, 55-6). Further, she attempts to draw an accurate and complex picture of the driving forces behind the right-wing teacher character Preller (41-3). In Wake Up Singing, Rosenthal sets out to depict the effects of political awareness on an 'average' white middle class boy, exploring its implications and reverberations for both the boy and his family.

Some writers employ realist techniques, focusing on events and characters without being politically didactic and without having an overly politicised plot. An awareness of the South African political and social climate is expressed through a subtle interrogation of the values and attitudes of the characters – frequently the values of the adults as they appear to the observing children. This technique is apparent in Wake Up Singing, discussed above, where the attitudes of parents and teachers – the upholders of the status quo – are interrogated by the central teenage characters. In Elana Bregin's The Kayaboeties (1989, Sanlam award winner), the plot centres around a music competition and the interaction four boys – three white, one black – as observed by 'Charlie', one of the boy's sister. Whilst

Bregin does not set out to discuss the political situation in South Africa in any obvious manner, her novel subtly interrogates the status quo and political situation through depictions of a racist mother and her limited outlook on life, the horror of the maid's quarters (a stuffy, dark, windowless room) and the three white boys' relationships with the black boy Sam.

Some writers attempt to depict ways of life and people who might be different to those with whom their readers have come into contact. Lesley Beake, one of the most prolific and successful writers for young adults who has won various awards including the 'Young Africa Award' and the 'Percy Fitzpatrick Award', frequently attempts to present her readers with depictions of life in South Africa that is foreign to the average white middle class reader. Particularly successful were The Strollers (1987) and A Cageful of Butterflies (1989). The Strollers is a portrayal of Cape Town's street children, which attempts to describe their way of life and their experiences sympathetically. Given the reality of the situation, it is an ambitious project which was greeted with much critical acclaim in the form of two awards. A Cageful of Butterflies focuses on the interactions of a white boy and his deaf-mute black companion, which Beake claims is based on a real life situation. Another particularly successful writer in this area is Dianne Case, who with Love, David (1986) and 92 Queens Road (1991) has won international acclaim, as well as various local awards. Case is one of the few 'black' writers working in this area, and her books are seen as being of particular importance in expressing some of the realities of the effects of the apartheid regime from a black perspective. In Love, David Case explores life on the Cape flats as seen through the eyes Anna the daughter of a domestic worker and a gardener. Case explores the degrading effects of apartheid on a poor family. Love, David has been acclaimed as a South African classic and was described by the judges as:

achieving just the right tone – neither the monotonous South African fictional chorus of negativity and woe, nor a romanticisation of poverty. It is a story about human relationships.

92 Queens Road is a semi-autobiographical story detailing the implications of apartheid on Woodstock's 'coloured' community in the 1960s – namely relocation to a designated 'coloured' area. Potentially a book motivated by rage and anger, Case sees her novel as being a stepping stone towards reconciliation and understanding amongst younger South Africans of all castes and creeds, rather than as a novel intended to judge or assess the apartheid regime (interviewed by Jane Rosenthal for the Weekly Mail, 1992).

The final frequently used technique in this genre is the pseudo-realist type of novel. Frequently in this type of the novel the plot is non-political, but the main characters bridge political, social, economic and linguist barriers that the reader knows exist in South Africa at present. Given this knowledge, the reader recognises the novels as unrealistic, and therefore as providing a 'vision' or fantasy of an idealised and united South African society. Various writers, including for example Lesley Beake (1989, A Cageful of Butterflies), Anne Dymond (1986, Borderline), Barbara Ludman (1989, The Day of the Kugel) and Elana Bregin (1989, The Kayaboeties), set out to portray relationships between black and white children as being essentially ordinary and normal. Given the distances between black and white South Africans – distances both physical, economic and linguists – these portrayals are unrealistic and 'exceed the bounds of probability' (Jenkins 1993: 135). The effect of these portrayals is, however, that the reader – usually a young white teenager – comes to experience these relationships as 'normal', just as the black children portrayed are seen as 'ordinary' rather than as 'other' (Jenkins 1993: 135). Jenkins (1993: 136-7) comments on the intentions of the writers who provide the reader with such depictions of interactions as follows:

The effect of this ordinariness is central to many books; even though the plots are a little far fetched for the present, they enable the authors to anticipate a new dispensation in South Africa and encourage their readers to explore new modes of living that will make it possible. ... So far I have indicated that the apparent realism of these novels is actually a deliberately slanted portrayal.

As Jenkins argues, these books have a definite 'ideological package', namely to provide an alternative vision of a new South Africa, and the question that remains to be considered is how effective is this package in terms of achieving what it sets out to achieve – that is changing the attitudes of the young people who read the books.

The majority of the novels that fall into the 'socially aware' genre are published in English, although it is only fair to note that some have been produced in European languages for an overseas market by Maskew Miller Longman, who are also setting up a black youth line. At a cost of about R20 per book and with mainly white protagonists (Dianne Case's protagonists are notable exceptions), it is fair to presume that these novels are intended for white middle class English speaking readers. Elwyn Jenkins comments on the intended audience as follows:

The books are clearly intended for whites who will identify with them. The writers use this identification to let the readers experience what will be for most of them, new modes of relationships with black people, to see black people in what may be a new light and to listen, with the characters, to what blacks say they do and think. In the young adult fiction particularly, the readers can share with the protagonist a growth in understanding and development in relations between black and white.

As with the two other genres discussed above, socially aware novels are perceived to have the potential to bring about changes in South Africa. An encouraging development in all three genres is the move from exclusively white writers writing for white middle class readers in the area of folktales as well as in the area of socially aware novels towards less exclusive and didactic novels intended for a broader spectrum of readers, and written by writers of all races. Whether or not these novels, intended to bring about changes in South Africa, will be successful will largely depend on how well they are marketed as well as how easily they are available in libraries and as prescribed school books. The novels that fall into the three genres discussed have the potential to alert sensitive readers to a larger South Africa, that is to a South Africa outside of their limited and often middle class white world. As such they can be seen as a potentially powerful and active force that could affect far

reaching changes in South Africa. Perhaps because of their evangelical stance, a criticism often made of these novels is that the texts tend to be forced and prescriptive as well as stylistically poor. Finally, as was noted despite the fact that there are changes underway in terms of the writers and the intended audience, most of the books discussed were written with a white English speaking audience in mind. In this respect it can be argued that these novels are redundant in that they are 'preaching to the converted', given that they are read in large by socially aware white teenagers rather than by unaware teenagers, as well as building on white middle class guilt.

CONCLUSION

Children's literature is just beginning to gain official recognition as an academic field in South Africa, and as such any examination is likely to be a starting point for future studies, rather than a definitive overview. Indeed a consideration of South African children's literature is likely to raise more issues and problems than it will solutions. This study is intended to be just such an exploratory overview or introduction to the field of indigenous children's literature in South Africa. As such, I hope that it has raised and discussed issues rather than attempted any premature conclusions about the field. Indeed, the only accurate conclusion that can be drawn about the field is that it is in flux, undergoing changes in its focus and composition and likely to do so even more so in the near future. As South Africa is a society in change, re-evaluating its value system and reconsidering its ideological outlook, so too is the field of children's literature undergoing radical changes based on ideological and social factors, changes that will be dependent upon and reflect language, educational and economic issues. As the field is undergoing fundamental and radical changes it is more fruitful to consider, by way of conclusion, some of the issues raised in this thesis rather than to make an attempt at drawing hard and fast rules about the field.

One of the most obvious features of children's literature in South Africa, is that the field is at this stage very small and that sales are dominated by imported rather than by indigenous literature. Many critics writing about the field, myself included, refer to the field as being indigenous juvenile literature, thereby including both literature written specifically for small children and literature written for teenage or youth readers under the same heading. This lumping together of literature is a response to the smallness of the field, but it blurs some of the most important aspects of the field in South Africa. In South Africa publishers, libraries and award committees focus on youth literature rather than on children's literature. This means in practice that far more youth literature is produced and that children's literature is sidelined as being unprofitable. An issue that is frequently raised

is that basic children's books like early readers, ABCs and essential picture books are not being produced in South Africa. It has been argued convincingly by theorists like Gillian Klein (1985) and Bob Dixon (1977) that many early ideological messages are transmitted through books such as these, which ought to make the production of indigenous ABCs and early readers a priority. However, because of various financial constraints, these books are not being produced locally. Resources such as writers and awards as well as money for productions are being channelled towards the production of youth literature which, because it is prescribed by educational departments and bought by libraries – which children's books are not – is the most profitable type of juvenile literature currently under production in South Africa. Because children's books are not produced locally but have for the most part to be imported, the prices of these books is prohibitively high, and few private individuals can afford them. A further issue to consider about the types of books being produced is that youth literature is generally targeted at a white middle class audience who are already literate. At the moment, with the exception of such organisations as READ, very little is being done to promote literacy amongst less privileged readers who are unable to buy or who, because of status or geographical circumstances, have no access to libraries. Obviously it is unrealistic to lump all the literature being produced for young people in South Africa under the one heading of 'juvenile literature', but this is likely to continue to be the trend unless some active measures are taken to promote children's literature and youth literature separately. Whilst it is possible to criticise people involved in the field for lumping the various genres together under one collective name, it is also important to remember that any recognition of the field is a positive sign, given that the field is in danger of being sidelined as financially unprofitable. As Jay Heale of *Bookchat* observed in 1992, the future of juvenile literature in South Africa - of any description at all – is ultimately dependent upon future official government policy. This uncertainty about the field's future has tended to make publishers very cost and profit conscious, and this is likely to continue unless the field receives some kind of official recognition in the form of subsidies or grants,

which would make it possible for publishers to focus on producing less viable and more innovative juvenile literature.

As was remarked upon in the relevant chapters, there are numerous issues to consider in relation to the production and distribution of indigenous juvenile literature in South Africa. Children's literature in South Africa is largely supported and funded by libraries and educational departments, that is by official institutions. Publishers, who in the final assessment are run as businesses which are profit motivated, will only publish what they know will be bought by either the libraries or by the educational departments. This means that what is produced tends to be conservative in that it will tend to be similar to material that has proved successful in the past. Further, the type of books that get published will tend to be books that uphold rather than that question the status quo. Many of the books produced tend to be for the school network market and are therefore of a specific 'type'. The current award system underpins these tendencies, although in some cases, the award system has led to the beginnings of new trends, for example the current trend towards socially relevant youth literature. This has meant, however, that most of the publishing houses involved in the production of youth literature are currently moving towards producing socially relevant books for teenagers, which reduces an innovative and daring exercise to what has become expected and unimaginative. Publishers produce socially relevant youth literature, not because they have an ideological point to make, but because socially relevant children's literature has proved to be financially successful.

Another external limitation imposed upon the field, which is in its own way a direct threat to the future of juvenile literature in South Africa, is the problem of costs. As publishers reiterate, locally produced books cost more than imported ones. This is because of the size of the print runs which are very small, as well as things such as the cost of paper which is high in part because of the weak Rand. One frequently applied solution is 'co-production' in a variety of languages undertaken either between different local publishing houses, as happens for example in the Nasionale Pers group, or between local and international publishing houses, as has happened between David Phillips and Puffin books.

Whilst co-productions do tend to focus on children's books rather than on books for teenagers, there is still a chronic shortage of affordable books for children that have a local flavour and that are available in vernacular South African languages. Publishers who enter into co-production, whilst recognising that they are cost efficient, nevertheless point out that even when it is possible to produce books more cheaply, it is still necessary to have a viable market who will buy these cheaper books. The area in which there is the greatest need for indigenous juvenile literature is in the area of children's illustrated books that reflect a familiar and known vision of the world, that is a vision of the world that is specifically African in its outlook, are the least frequently produced books because of the high costs involved in printing texts in full colour. In this area whilst co-productions do reduce costs to a certain degree, it is the high cost of coloured ink and the printing techniques that makes it an unviable undertaking.

Added to the problem of already high costs involved in the production of children's books is the already mentioned issue of the falling South African Rand. In most other Southern African countries, for example Zimbabwe, it is impossible to import books because taxes and the exchange rate make the final book price too high. South Africa looks set to follow this Southern African trend, with few books being imported and high taxes being imposed on imported books. One positive outcome of this trend is that indigenous publishing in countries like Zimbabwe has increased to meet the demand, specifically for children's books, and it is to be hoped that South Africa will follow suit, should the need arise. The question that arises out of this scenario is what types of literature as well as what standard of literature will be produced in a country where there is only indigenous literature available? Cynics might argue that, given the already low standard of indigenous literature, it is only to be expected that the standard and quality of books produced under such circumstances would be lower than international standards for book production. A final point to consider is whether the publishing houses would come to be increasingly government controlled and subsidised under such a system. Official control of publishing

houses would not be a new South African phenomenon. as the National Party run Nasionale Pers shows.

Changes in production and distribution patterns in South Africa, whether brought about by rising costs or increased government control of printing presses, is likely to affect the way in which books overall are viewed. At the moment, as librarians agree, books and libraries are viewed by and large as being educational rather than recreational. Literacy is seen as a means of self-improvement rather than as a means of developing a leisure-time activity. In a developing country such as South Africa, where there is greater emphasis on education and job creation than on leisure and self-fulfilment, this emphasis on books as a means to self-improvement is likely to remain firmly entrenched. Such expectations of books will obviously affect the types of books produced – for the adult market more self-help books and fewer novels – and these trends will obviously in time come to affect juvenile literature as well. A challenge that will face local publishers in the future will be how to market leisure books successfully in a country that is looking towards books as a means of betterment and where television and sport are the two main leisure-time activities.

Current production trends are increasingly being underpinned by the local award system. Awards are made to books that are seen as economically viable, that is to youth literature rather than to children's literature. This focus on economic success is not surprising given that the majority of book awards – and certainly the most financially rewarding – are sponsored by local publishing houses rather than by disinterested outsiders. The tendency to focus on youth literature has made this genre the main area of local productions in South Africa. Many of the award winning texts focus on social problems which are uniquely South African. In this area the local award system has actively fostered the growth of a genre which has by definition to be locally produced. With the changing political climate it is likely that increasing numbers of books which confront South African issues will be produced in a variety of vernacular South African languages as well as in the already common English. This genre has proved to be enormously successful in part because it taps into the school network market, in part because it is in touch with the

changing political reality in South Africa at the present time and in part because it enables writers and publishers to play an active role in challenging the political status quo in South Africa.

The single biggest issue that needs to be considered with regards to juvenile literature in South Africa is the split between the 'white' English speaking market and the 'black' vernacular languages market. These issues are too complex to be dealt with in such a short study and are intricately connected to economic and sociological issues, rather than to literary issues and need to be considered in that context. There are, however, a number of points that can be made about this issue. Most local publishers cater for an English, middle class, white market, arguing that there is no black market in existence, and that it is unprofitable to spend time and money on trying to create one. Notable exceptions to this include Maskew Miller Longman who have recently introduced a multi-lingual series of youth readers aimed at a broader market as well as at newly literate adults. Even so, Maskew Miller Longman is aiming at a fairly select audience, those who are already literate and for the most part urban (they have no plans to diversify their distribution techniques). For the majority of publishing houses, problems of literacy, of distribution and ultimately a lack of writers and proof readers who can produce books in vernacular languages, remain a major draw back with regards to plans to enter the black market. Despite these problems, the black market is recognised as a potentially rewarding one, and most publishers recognise that it has enormous potential. Problems in terms of mobilising a black market include issues such as lower literacy levels amongst adults which means that there is no established 'reading culture' to nurture the newly acquired reading skills of children. Further, the perception of reading as being a means towards self-improvement hinders children from undertaking recreational reading. Undoubtedly the biggest challenge for local publishers in the near future will be finding ways of overcoming the problems associated with the diverse local market, in an economically viable manner.

Closely allied to the black/white market split are problems which revolve around aspects of distribution in South Africa. Currently the distribution of juvenile literature takes

place in urban areas, which means that there is a limited number of books buyers. Given that a large percentage of South Africans live in rural areas, effective distribution of books should be able to reach these areas. The challenge facing the marketers of indigenous juvenile literature is to overcome the limitations of Western marketing tactics and to employ other more innovative and more Third World methods of distributing books to rural areas. Alternative methods of distributing books will include such tactics as mobile booksellers and mail order book clubs.

Attitudes towards juvenile literature in South Africa vary, but an outlook that is common is the belief in juvenile literature as a means to heal splits in South African society. As is apparent when considering the nature of award winning texts in South Africa, many publishers are actively setting out to promote juvenile literature that is 'socially aware' and which offers alternatives to the traditional view of South African society. This vision of juvenile literature – as a healing and mediating force – is in keeping with current views of children themselves, which position children as the means of reconciling a split and disparate society. A question which begs consideration is has the trend towards socially aware juvenile literature come about as a result of market demands or has it been imposed on society by publishers from above.

Falling under a consideration of the ideological dimensions of juvenile literature is the issue of a return to more conservative values, specifically of a sexual and Christian nature and how this will affect juvenile literature. In America, there has been an increase in books for teenagers which raise issues such as Aids, teenage sex and other such issues. This trend has been followed in South Africa where various publishers have produced books aimed at the youth market which raise issues like Aids and cross-cultural relationships. Worth considering as time goes by is how the conservative elements in society – and many teachers and school librarians are conservative – respond to such issues and whether books that broach these forbidden topics become more common or whether they are gradually sidelined and abandoned. If juvenile literature becomes increasingly conservative and unsubversive, will there eventually be a return to moral and didactic children's literature?

A final issue to consider is what and who are the forces that control children's literature currently and will this change in the future? Currently, publishing and marketing are dominated by white males – although in the area of juvenile literature there is a high number of white women. This composition of people working in publishing and production affects the field intimately, and results in certain linguistic and cultural norms and expectations being imposed upon what is written and published. Frequently this imposition of values and expectations takes place at a sub-conscious level, when publishers assess books in terms of a specific hidden agenda which is shaped by their own experiences and notions about literature. The imposition of these largely Western or Eurocentric values affects all aspects of the field, from notions about what children like and what is 'good' for children, to issues such as what constitutes a 'story' and how best juvenile books should be marketed. Indeed, some of the current problems associated with distribution and market creation can be seen to be affected by the fact that publishing in South Africa is dominated by white males who have no notion of how best to market books to black rural dwellers, simply because they lack personal experience in this area. Further, the limited numbers of languages that most publishing house produce books in is a direct reflection upon the fact that for the most part people employed by the publishers are unable to read any black languages and are thus limited to productions in English or Afrikaans.

However, the face of publishing in South Africa is slowly changing, and increasing numbers of publishing houses are producing books written in vernacular languages which are intended for the black market. This change has necessitated the employing of black people, who can read various vernacular languages and who understand the restrictions imposed on the market and who are able to tailor their projects to suit the emerging black market. Furthermore, according to Fatima Dada of Maskew Miller Longman affirmative action is being implemented in various more progressive publishing houses in an attempt to change the employee profile. Whether or not this will be successful remains to be seen, as does whether this trend will become commonplace amongst all, including the more traditional and conservative publishing houses. Despite the advances being made towards

employing a linguistic and racial mix of people, what remains to be seen, in publishing as in any other company where affirmative action has taken place, is whether these changes will reach senior management positions where actual decisions are made or whether this trend will remain as window dressing without any far-reaching implications. A further point worth noting is that there are a high proportion of women involved in the publishing of juvenile literature than in any other area of publishing. Reasons for this are unclear, but two possible interpretations were suggested. The first is that women because of their maternal role are more interested in books for children than men are and are thus 'naturally' drawn to the field. The second is that in South Africa, juvenile literature is seen as being a lower status area of publishing than adult fiction would be, and thus women are sidelined into pursuing a career in this area rather than in any other one.

Currently, the structures surrounding children's literature in South Africa accurately reflect existent South African social structures. The focus on English and Afrikaans over black languages reflects an awareness of the market – determined by literacy levels as well as by existence of money – as well as an historical reality in which white South Africans have had many more privileges than black South Africans. Current distribution trends further reflect both the nature of the market and the *status quo*, namely that it is urban rather than rural, and white rather than black. Publishing houses are controlled by white capital, although this is changing to a certain degree. Finally, the biggest challenge facing juvenile literature in South Africa is how to enable the industry to free itself from these long-standing limitations and expectations so that it can emerge into the new South Africa, a force that is able to cater to the needs of all South Africans.

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