

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01814-3 - Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction

Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CHILDREN'S FANTASY LITERATURE

Fantasy has been an important and much-loved part of children's literature for hundreds of years, yet relatively little has been written about it. *Children's Fantasy Literature* traces the development of the tradition of the children's fantastic – fictions specifically written for children and fictions appropriated by them – from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, examining the work of Lewis Carroll, L. Frank Baum, C. S. Lewis, Roald Dahl, J. K. Rowling and others from across the English-speaking world. The volume considers changing views both on the nature of the child and on the appropriateness of fantasy for the child reader, the role of children's fantasy literature in helping to develop the imagination, and its complex interactions with issues of class, politics and gender. The text analyses hundreds of works of fiction, placing each in its appropriate context within the tradition of fantasy literature.

MICHAEL LEVY is Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He is the author of *Natalie Babbitt* (1991), *Portrayal of Southeast Asian Refugees in Recent American Children's Books* (2000), editor of *The Moon Pool* by A. Merritt (2004) and co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Extrapolation*. Levy was awarded the Clareson Award for Distinguished Service to the fields of Science Fiction and Fantasy (2007).

FARAH MENDLESOHN is Head of the Department of English, Communications, Film, and Media at Anglia Ruskin University. She is the author of *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), *The Inter-Galactic Playground: A Critical Study of Children's and Teens' Science Fiction* (2009), co-author of *A Short History of Fantasy* (2009) and co-editor of the Hugo Award winning *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (Cambridge, 2003) and *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy* (Cambridge, 2012).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01814-3 - Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction

Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01814-3 - Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction

Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CHILDREN'S FANTASY LITERATURE

An Introduction

MICHAEL LEVY AND FARAH MENDLESOHN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-01814-3 - Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction
 Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107018143

© Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn 2016

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2016

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Levy, Michael, 1950 April 15-

Children's fantasy literature : an introduction / Michael Levy, Farah Mendlesohn.
 pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-01814-3 (hardback)—ISBN 978-1-107-61029-3 (paperback)

1. Children's literature—History and criticism. 2. Fantastic, The, in literature.

3. Fantasy fiction—History and criticism. I. Mendlesohn, Farah. II. Title.

PN1009.5.F37L48 2016

809'.89282—dc23

2015029104

ISBN 978-1-107-01814-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-61029-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
Introduction	I
1 How fantasy became children's literature	11
Perrault, fairy tales and the French court	15
A Grimm business in Germany	19
English fairy tales, Mrs Teachum and Mrs Trimmer	21
Defending the imagination	24
2 Fairies, ghouls and goblins: the realms of Victorian and Edwardian fancy	27
A market for children's fantasy	28
Putting the fairy in folk tale	31
The first great era of fairy stories	34
Changing attitudes towards childhood	38
Moving away from the fairy tale	44
3 The American search for an American childhood	49
Distrust of the fantastic	49
Nathaniel Hawthorne and Company	52
A Danish import	54
L. Frank Baum and the American fantastic	56
E. B. White and the rise of urbane children's fantasy	62
The pulps	69
4 British and Empire fantasy between the wars	73
Is children's fantasy worth writing about?	76
Spinning new strands of fantasy	78
New fairy tales	86
<i>The Hobbit</i>	98

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-01814-3 - Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction
 Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

vi	Contents	
5	The changing landscape of post-war fantasy	101
	The quest story	101
	Narnia and the salvation of the world	106
	The nature of evil	109
	Destiny	113
6	Folklore, fantasy and indigenous fantasy	117
	The freedom of the land	119
	The Matter Of Britain	123
	Fantastic nation-building in the Commonwealth	125
	Coming out of the woodwork	130
7	Middle Earth, medievalism and mythopoeic fantasy	133
	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i> and secondary-world fantasy	134
	A sudden flowering of heroines	141
	The Matter of Britain, again	146
	Fairy tale fantasy	149
	Diana Wynne Jones	153
	Other medievalisms	155
8	Harry Potter and children's fantasy since the 1990s	161
	Social realism in fantasy	161
	Pullman and Rowling	163
	A fantasy revival	167
	In the wake of the Potter boom	170
	Horror and dark fantasy	185
9	Romancing the teen	195
	Growing to adulthood	195
	Fantasy romance	201
	Adults can't be trusted	207
	Understanding the role of Young Adult fantasy	209
	The bitterness of Young Adult fantasy	211
	Evolution of a form	224
	<i>Notes</i>	227
	<i>Further Reading</i>	237
	<i>Index</i>	245

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of long-term collaboration and discussion between the two authors – some by email, some in person during intercontinental visits – discussions and sometimes disagreements (occasionally in print) over the nature of fantasy literature. Each of us, as editor of the other's work, has occasionally felt the need to play the heavy and request edits that led to still further interesting conversations. In general, however, compromise has been the nature of the game and each of us has convinced the other of things we didn't originally agree with. In truth, like all such books, this one is the result of multiple collaborations with many other scholars, librarians, readers and friends.

We would like to thank the scholars, editors and students with whom we have held many discussions over the years, who have shaped our thinking. Particularly important to us has been the work of Brian Attebery, Holly Virginia Blackford, Cathy Butler, Mike Cadden, Maria Nikolajeva, Charles W. Sullivan III and Virginia L. Wolf.

For actual assistance with the book we would like to thank Charles Bayliss for his database; Ann Dowker, Eileen Gunn, J. P. Satyamurthy, Aishwarya Subramanian and also friends on Child_Lit for assistance with fact-checking; Josh Steans of the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Robert S. Swanson Library Learning Center Interlibrary Loan Department; Susan Thurin, owner of Bookends on Main; Diane Roback and John Sellers, children's book editors at *Publishers Weekly*, for supplying books; Sue Foxwell of the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Research Services and Angela Soutar for help on New Zealand's fiction; Judith Ridge and Stefan Ekman for Australian fiction; Cathy Butler, Hallie O'Donovan and Gillian Polack for reading the manuscript; Hazel Sheeky for taking on the arduous task of checking a bibliography that contained so many different primary texts; and Maureen Kincaid Speller for making sure that two Englishes appeared as one and spotting titles we had omitted from the bibliography.

Both of us are grateful for the material and professional support we have received from our own and other institutions. Michael Levy would like to thank the UW-Stout sabbatical, professional development and named professorship committees for release time, travel funds and the Reinhold and Borghild Eng Dahlgren Endowed Professorship. Farah Mendlesohn is deeply appreciative of the kindness of Eileen Wallace and Sue Fisher of the Eileen Wallace Collection at the University of New Brunswick.

More general thanks go to Michael Levy's colleagues and friends: Jerry Kapus, Laura McCullough, Kelly McCullough, Mandy Little, Matt Kuchta, Quan Zhou, Joan Menefee and Andy Cochran for ideas, support and good fellowship; and to Farah Mendlesohn's colleagues at Middlesex University, particularly Ben Little, Maggie Butt, David Rain, James Charlton and Lorna Gibb, and to her new colleagues at Anglia Ruskin University, which includes her whole department and many of the faculty but in particular Nina Lübbren and Andy Salmon, who helped to carve out time for the last stages of the book. Her PhD students Tiffani Angus, Agnieszka Jedrzejczyk-Drenda and Audrey Taylor have been unfailingly supportive and patient.

Finally, we would like to thank our partners, Sandra Lindow and Edward James. Both are respected science fiction and fantasy scholars in their own right, and their critical input has been invaluable. Edward James provided essential practical support and assistance in the final stages of this project.