Contents

CHAPTER 1
Thinking of the Children 1

CHAPTER 2
History, Childhood and Modernity 27

CHAPTER 3
Cinema for Children 55

CHAPTER 4
Television for Children 127

CHAPTER 5
Videogames for Children 193

CHAPTER 6
Conclusion 263

Bibliography 273

CHAPTER 2

History, Childhood and Modernity

A Story of Children and Modernity

This chapter develops the argument, briefly outlined in Chapter 1, that modernity provides a useful means by which contemporary Western concepts of childhood and children's culture can be explored. Although a contested term, 'modernity' can be broadly understood as the current historical epoch, heralded by developments between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries associated with the Renaissance, distinguishing the contemporary period from the medieval. Modernity entails a form of social organisation characterised by industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism. The period is also associated with philosophical shifts towards reason, secularism and scientific rationalism, individualism and political democracy. As previously suggested, children frequently function as a symbolic antidote to modernity and expression of adults' ambivalent disposition towards contemporary culture and society. Although many historians consider childhood to be a modern invention, in many ways it comes to represent what is thought to have been left behind in the transition from a seemingly simpler, more natural, more authentic past, frequently regarded with a sense of nostalgia, loss and melancholy. The history of childhood reveals a recurring theme in which the child, imagined as somehow timeless, represents a fixed point of reference in an era of turmoil, dislocation and uncertainty. Childhood comes to symbolise a mythical refuge from the angst of the modern era. Numerous discursive, cultural and legislative practices can be seen as insulating actual children from the impact of modern life so they might more authentically fulfil this symbolic role. Yet in other discourses, instead of representing the past, the child functions as a symbol of hope for the future.

This also reflects adult's discomfort with their contemporary situation, only now the child becomes a beacon for a better world, the point which will be reached when the project of modernity, a process which is still to run its course, has been satisfactorily completed. Many discourses reflect this belief, and many practices of modernity such as education, sanitation and healthcare can be seen as working to ensure children fulfil their imagined future potential. Despite the apparent contradiction of this situation, with children positioned at points existing both prior to and after modernity, both constitute reactions to the ambivalence of contemporary modern living. These tensions are characteristic of modernity itself. The modern condition, meaning the social, cultural, economic, political and philosophical state of being in the modern world, is as much constituted by what it has left behind or is moving towards, as what it currently is. As Marshall Berman points out, there is a paradoxical sense in which to be wholly modern is also to be anti-modernity.[1] Insofar as childhood can simultaneously be characterised as a lost past, a state of fluid transition and a movement towards some ideal future adult state, childhood shares many of modernity's structures, complexities and contradictions.

Histories of childhood, from a wide range of scholarly works, provide a useful way of understanding the concept's emergence within Western culture, and its relationship to the modern circumstances within which it was formed. Scholarship in this area functions to defamiliarise hegemonic ideas of childhood, and adulthood, and to highlight the central tenants of these contemporary ideologies. In presenting evidence for childhood as a social construction, the previous section made reference to several historical accounts. These included Cunningham's discussion of medieval concepts of childhood innocence,[2] Brown's observation relating to children's paintings, an important source of evidence reflecting changing attitudes towards children,[3] Gillis' notion of the 'virtual child' in the Victorian era,[4]

1 Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2010), 14.
2 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*.
3 Brown, 'Introduction'.
4 Gillis, 'The Birth of the Virtual Child'.

and Steedman's arguments concerning childhood's relation to adult selfhood in the eighteenth and ninetieth centuries.[5] A historical approach is appropriate, given this study's investment in concepts of childhood as a social construct, with an analytical focus on intersections between childhood and modernity. At the same time, this approach is not unproblematic. Rex Stainton Rogers and Wendy Stainton Rogers are particularly critical of historians' attempts to construct a single linear narrative around childhood, a process which invariably result in the imposition of a particular interpretation according to the writers' own agenda.[6] Histories of childhood are complex, inconsistent, contradictory and contested. For the purpose of this study, and in light of these authors' reservations, it is necessary to make clear the story which this chapter intends to tell.

It is a historical narrative which illustrates the ways in which children become increasingly separate from mainstream society. In this respect young people share the same fate as befell the mad, the ill, and the criminal in being, as Anthony Giddens terms it, 'physically sequestered from the normal population.'[7] Many developments modernity entailed, such as the growth of literacy and the printing press, the establishment of widespread schooling, the division between social and domestic spheres, led to increasing dislocation between adults and children. This is a common observation in histories of childhood. There is no precise moment when Western childhood came into being, any more than there is an exact point in time when historians determine the advent of the modern era. Nevertheless, an enhanced belief that children were a specific category of person, occupying a state of 'childhood' which made them significantly different from adults, emerged concurrent with many of the infrastructures, practices and philosophies which constitute the modern era. For example, Colin Heywood writes of the ways in which the schooling system, whose impact was to

5 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*.

6 Rex Stainton Rogers and Wendy Stainton Rogers, *Stories of Childhood: Shifting Agendas of Child Concern* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

7 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 8.

'quarantine children from the world of adults'[8] was a combined response to middle-class requirements that male offspring be educated in ways which would allow them to continue the family business, and Enlightenment discourses promoting education as a force for moral improvement and increased worker efficiency. This was facilitated by modern developments such as the expansion of the nation-state as an institution of government and social engineering. Before modernity, it appears, such widespread institutionalisation of childhood was not considered necessary. Although there is considerable dispute about the nature of medieval childhood, most historical accounts suggest that the modern period produced a significant shift in the ways children were treated and childhood was conceptualised, that the degree of separation between adults and children within contemporary Western society is more extreme than in previous cultures, and that many of these changes coincide with developments associated with the emergence of the modern condition.

A central aspect of this historical story is the tendency for children, through these processes, to be excluded from spaces, practices and activities which seem particularly exemplary of modernity. Children were banished from the industrial workplace, the metropolitan public sphere and the city street. Children were insulated from the influences of an urbanised working class and placed in scholastic institutions dedicated to traditional forms of education. Even as the vote and associated democratic rights extended across society, children were and continue to be denied enfranchisement. In addition to this social treatment of children, childhood became increasingly defined in ways which are distinctly at odds with modernity. Children came to be associated with the past, with a pre-industrial traditional way of life, rather than with the present. Children were seen as irrational, frequently associated with religious iconography, and regarded as variously animalistic and primitive. The homogenising category of 'children' functions to deny young people the individualism of the modern adult. Clearly justifications are presented for this state of affairs. However, many of these reflect and reinforce the extent to which childhood is seen as outside of the

8 Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 157.

modern. City streets are particularly dangerous for children. The workplace, if not physically injurious, will interfere with children's play and education. Children, unlike adults, have not developed the skills or abilities to manage money, to make sensible decisions concerning their own purchases, or to resist the unscrupulous machinations of advertising agencies. Neither have they the necessary critical faculties to engage in the democratic process in the same rational, informed, unemotional manner as adult participants. If they were to be given the rights and responsibilities afforded the modern adult, common sense dictates that children will only do themselves and others harm. Children are not ready for modernity, and many of the institutions which surround young people, including the production of media considered appropriate for their needs, appear designed to protect them from its influences.

In this respect 'modern childhood' is 'modern' both in terms of its contemporary nature, and in its historical reaction to specific social trends defining the modern condition. At the same time, 'modern' childhood can be seen as a contradiction in terms, positioning children outside of the institutions through which modern adult identity is constituted. Yet this is itself perversely compatible with modernity. As noted, modernity is a condition often at odds with the very qualities which appear to define it, characterised by a sense of mourning for what it has left behind, or anticipation for the state it is moving towards. Furthermore, this is not the only 'story' which the historical accounts will present, although it might be the most prominent. Another equally compelling narrative suggests that, in different ways, far from being excluded from modernity, far from being anathema to aspects of modern life, children come to exemplify the modern condition. In such formations, children have an innate affinity with technology. Children have a thirst for knowledge and experience. Children embody the curiosity, enterprise and imagination upon which modern capitalism depends. Children are symbols of consumption and consumerism, expressing a productive and profitable sense of wonder at the mechanical marvels of the age. Similarly, modernity is youthful, vigorous, energetic. Modernity is about progress, growth, improvement. Modernity is about leaving the old crusty dusty past behind and hurtling towards a brighter tomorrow. These contrasts, entailing different dispositions towards

modernity and towards childhood, form many of the tensions expressed in the children's media texts which this volume will continue to explore.

Histories of Childhood

Andrew O'Malley makes clear the relationship between the child and childhood, as currently understood within Western culture, and the advent of modernity, when writing: 'The onset of the industrial revolution, the democratic revolutions in America and France, and the rationalization of the sciences and of medical practices ushered in radical changes to class relations and led to the formation of new subject categories, among them the modern child.'[9] Within Western Europe the nineteenth century saw a wave of legislation variously designed to protect and regulate the lives of children, primarily in the areas of education and employment. Such developments reflected changes in perceptions of children's appropriate position in society. Between 1800 and 1900, Harry Hendrick sees the establishment of a 'modern' childhood, one which was 'legally, legislatively, socially, medically, psychologically, educationally and politically institutionalised.'[10] The period marked by these social and cultural developments also saw significant speculation and investigation concerning the nature of children and childhood. Sociologists Alan Prout and Allison James go as far to say '"the century of the child" can be characterized as such precisely because of the massive corpus of knowledge built up by psychologists and other social scientists through the systematic study of children.'[11] Debates taking place

9 Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

10 Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872–1989* (London: Routledge, 1994), 37.

11 Alan Prout and Allison James, 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems', in Allison James and Alan Prout, eds, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer Press, 1997), 9.

in newspapers, periodicals, popular and academic publications, as well as works of fiction, concerning the qualities of being a child as distinct from being an adult, effective methods of child rearing, the dangers posed to and from children, all attest to the significant ways in which childhood has, and continues to be, defined across a range of institutions. Media produced for children, which also began to emerge in this period, are similarly discursive in reflecting, contributing to and disseminating ideas of childhood.

Many writers examining this history take as their starting point Philippe Ariès polemic claim that: 'In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist.'[12] The author of this often-cited statement proposes that contemporary childhood is a comparatively recent development, largely a consequence of social changes within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. These led to the establishment of different roles, spaces and culture for young and old, and a widely held conceptual distinction between 'adulthood' and 'childhood'. The specific reasons behind this emerging divide, together with its precise chronology and extent, are open to considerable dispute. Amongst other factors, Ariès argues contemporary childhood came about as a consequence of the advent of universal education. Stevi Jackson relates the emergence of Western childhood to separation of the public and private spheres, home, work and education, and anxieties concerning the emergence of an industrial underclass.[13] In a different context, Neil Postman proposes that the distinction between adult and child arose from increased literacy and the consequent 'knowledge gap' between the generations.[14] The exclusion of children from the workplace, and its consequent impact on children's economic, political and social participation, might also be considered central to the division between adults and children. While this move is commonly perceived as an act of child welfare, a survey of the evidence suggests many disparate impulses motivated changes in attitudes towards child labour. Irrespective of the intentions behind these developments, universal schooling, division of social spheres, publishing,

12 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), 128.

13 Stevi Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited, 1984).

14 Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (London: Howard and Wyndham, 1983).

literacy and employment legislation are all aspects of modernity, suggesting the extent to which the increasing institutionalisation of childhood was entwined with modern developments.

Certain criticisms have been levelled at Ariès' thesis and those who have developed his work. Lack of documentation is often cited by historians as a major impediment to understanding pre-industrial childhood, while interpretations of these sources are open to considerable dispute. Paintings of medieval children depicted as 'miniature adults' are often evidenced as reflecting the absence of a concept of childhood within that culture. However, as Peter Fuller notes, such representations might have served specific cultural functions or embody complex projections, impacting on their formal characteristics.[15] The domestic organisation of modern families, in which adults existed alongside children, is also presented as evidence of a lack of generational distinction. Yet Shulamith Shahar observes that living arrangements in the Middle Ages were also integrated across class lines, with all levels of society living in close proximity, but this has not been interpreted to mean there was no conceptual difference between master and servant.[16] Evidence that adults and children wore clothes of the same style is also used to suggest medieval cultures did not distinguish children from adults. However, David Archard points out that, while the practice of dressing children in a distinct manner might reflect their differing status, the lack of such practices does not necessarily prove its absence.[17] Many point out the comparative dearth of lower class commentaries in the evidence available to historians, as well as those of actual children whose representation is always in the hands of adult commentators. As Dimock writes in the context of painting, 'pictures of children are adult fabrications imposed on historical subjects without voice or self-representation.'[18] Such limitations must temper any claim concerning past conceptions of childhood, or their absence. In addition, Messenger Davies points out that such

15 Peter Fuller, 'Uncovering Childhood', in Martin Hoyles, ed., *Changing Childhood* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1979), 78.

16 Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), 102.

17 David Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood* (London: Routledge, 2004), 22.

18 Dimock, 'Children's Studies and the Romantic Child', 192.

accounts exclude those responsible for caring for young people. Asserting an unavoidable biological component to childhood, the author writes:

> Children up to puberty need constant supervision and generate considerable amounts of physical labour in terms of feeding, clothing, keeping clean and transporting. And children, by simple virtue of being children, always did … The problem with the cultural history of childhood is that it is not written by the people who perform this labour. They were almost certainly far too busy.[19]

Further challenges to Ariès' interpretations are presented by evidence that previous cultures did indeed express a concept of childhood. Cunningham identifies child rearing advice in the Bible, as well as Greek and Roman texts.[20] The author also notes that physicians by the end of the fifteenth century had categorised maladies which were particularly associated with children.[21] In direct opposition to the claims of Ariès', Cunningham states: 'medieval writers and painters showed that they distinguished childhood from other ages, divided it up into different stages and invested it with characteristic forms of behaviour and feeling. Children were not simply "little adults"'.[22] Barbara A. Hanawalt details the criticisms which have been levelled at Ariès and other historians who developed his arguments. These include the limited evidence from which their 'cavalier' interpretations are drawn, the elite nature of historical sources, and the lack of national or geographical variation. Hanawalt charges such historical perspectives with contributing to narratives whereby children's lives have steadfastly improved from the Dark Ages into modern times. This, the author suggests, is a particularly comforting perspective for contemporary readers, one which confirms popular perceptions of the 'medieval' as necessary undesirable and unsophisticated. Like Cunningham, Hanawalt references historians who identify awareness of childhood in medical texts, works of

19 Máire Messenger Davies, *Television is Good for Your Kids* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1989), 54.

20 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 29.

21 Ibid. 31.

22 Ibid. 34.

literature, childrearing practices, legal records, cultural objects and pictorial representations. As Hanawalt writes:

> The abundant evidence of manuals devoted to children and stages of life, art and archaeology, miracle stories, and coroners' inquests indicates that medieval and renaissance Europe recognized a distinct period of childhood and had exact words that applied to different stages of childhood.[23]

Assertions that medieval society had no concept of childhood constitute a normalisation of current standards. More appropriate to say that premodern society appears to have had a concept of childhood, albeit one that differs from contemporary perceptions, the exact nature of which is open to debate, the extent to which is also a matter of uncertainty. The fact that this has been perceived as a totalising absence reflects the hegemony of Western ideologies of childhood.

Authors critical of the positioning of children in society observe how modern developments served to marginalise young people, relocating them to the periphery, in a manner which seems at odds with perceptions of contemporary culture as somehow 'child centred'. The 'invention of childhood' might conversely be understood as the 'invention of adulthood', a modern formation from which children, along with a host of other identities, were excluded. As Warner writes, children's perceived innocence emerges from their location as outsiders, 'outside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, kin to unspoiled nature.'[24] In other words, outside everything which the modern adult is supposed to embody. The otherness of the child, in contrast to the white, male, middle-class adult, emerges from the absence of rationality and reason, a quality eighteenth-century writers considered central to humanity in differentiating mankind from animals. As O'Malley argues:

23 Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'The Child in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', in Willem Koops and Michael Zuckerman, eds, *Beyond the Century of the Child: Cultural History and Developmental Psychology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 33.

24 Warner, *Managing Monsters*, 44.

> If the ideal figure of the age was the productive, moral, self-disciplined, healthy, male adult governed by the faculty of reason, the child came to be viewed in many regards as its opposite: the subject interpellated through absence and difference.[25]

Childhood inhabits a similar realm to other minority identities in failing to conform to these normalising standards. Observing the connection between women, slaves, the insane and children, Steedman notes how the 'extraordinary plasticity' of the term 'children' allowed it to imply a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, weakness and submission which had no necessary relationship to chronological age.[26] Children's marginal status is also reflected in literature for children. Amy Ratelle suggests a comparable alignment between children and other othered or minority group in the overlap between discourses of animal rights, issues of slavery and women's rights in animal fiction for children.[27]

Children and Modernity

Developments associated with modernity contributed to an increasing distinction between adults and children. Many of the resulting measures served to position children outside of modernity. One of the clearest articulations of this process was the prohibition of child labour. The relocation of children 'from the workshops to the school benches'[28] was achieved throughout the nineteenth century as a consequence of successive acts of legislation. These gradually reduced the number of hours children could legally work, while increasing the extent children were obliged to be in the classroom. Eventually the former was entirely eclipsed by the latter. This

25 O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, 11–12.
26 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 7.
27 Amy Ratelle, *Animality and Children's Literature and Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 39.
28 Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, 142.

turn against child employment was articulated almost entirely in terms of children's work in industrial contexts, and seems a concern which was not present in previous eras. Significant evidence suggests that in pre-modern times young people were integrated into agricultural and craft-based work from an early age, with little concern that this might impact adversely on their wellbeing. From the age of seven children might run errands, help with harvests, pick vegetables and tend farmyard animals, tasks being allotted according to a child's developing abilities, affording more responsibility as they grew older. With the industrial revolution came an erosion of such casual participation in a domestic economy increasingly displaced by a separate industrialised workplace. In the early stages of this period, entire families were incorporated into the workforce of factory employees. However, around the mid-nineteenth century Jackson relates how middle-class Victorian sentimentalisation of children, economic changes which decreased the demand for child workers, concerns about the burgeoning of a dangerous lower class, and discourses promoting the shielding of children from adult sexuality combined with a more general desire to control young working-class people, resulting in increasing pressure to outlaw child labour.[29] A series of parliamentary acts throughout the nineteenth century eroded and eventually forbade children's participation in the industrial workplace. It is undeniable that the working conditions for many children in this period were dangerous, and that concern for child welfare was a prominent justification for these measures. However this was not the only implicit or explicit rationale expressed, and there was a specific targeting of industrial working conditions in this period. Children were far from the only group for whom factory work was injurious and exploitative. Nevertheless it was they who became the focus for campaigners, many of whom would have themselves been beneficiaries of the expanding industrial economy.

Calls to remove children from the industrial workplace was frequently justified in terms which construct childhood and modernity as somehow incompatible. Lionel Rose draws attention to arguments that a cheap child

29 Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality*, 41.

workforce reduced the incentive for mechanical innovation, inhibiting the progress of modern developments.[30] According to such arguments children and their labour represented an obstacle to technological innovation. For many, Hendrick argues, child labour appeared to symbolise the threat of industrialisation to a perceived natural order, to the extent that campaigns against child labour were directly engaging with concepts of industrial progress and its impact on society.[31] Other forms of employment associated with the modern space of the city were also targeted. Steedman observes that in the mid-Victorian period children were visible on streets in a number of capacities, as sellers of goods, as street entertainers and as workers engaged in family professions. From the 1830s these 'street children', characterised by their apparent wildness, independence and lack of adult accompaniment, came to be regarded as a threat to urban order.[32] Children's removal from paid employment associated with the industrial workplace and the city street was accompanied by antipathy towards children's relation to broader systems of capitalism. In a study of early twentieth-century American childhood, Viviana A. Zelizer narrates the 'expulsion of children from the "cash nexus"', a 'cultural process of "sacralization" of children's lives'[33] resulting in the transformation of the useful child worker into the economically useless yet sentimentally priceless child. In analysing heated arguments surrounding the definition of child labour, Zelizer observes similar distinctions drawn between industrial and agricultural employment, with the latter regarded as positively beneficial.[34]

Other developments in the treatment of children were informed by ideological constructions of childhood at odds with a modernity characterised by the dissemination of scientific knowledge, and a shift from religious or spiritual to rationalist models of understanding. Gillis writes

30 Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Child Oppression in Britain 1860–1918* (London: Routledge, 1991), 22.

31 Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 25.

32 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 112–113.

33 Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11.

34 Ibid. 77.

of a crisis of faith in the mid-nineteenth century, in which many turned away from institutional religion, and towards nature, 'noble savages' and children as a substitute.[35] The investment of children with religious sentiment was accompanied by concern that young people, particularly the urbanised working classes, were becoming too self-reliant, knowledgeable and independent. If the modern adult was characterised by an increased understanding of the world around them, the child should express an ignorance consistent with an innocence befitting their angelic state. This appears to be another aspect of the nineteenth-century anti-child labour movement. Hendrick details how reforms represented an attempt to 'save' children from, or force them to 'unlearn', adult knowledge and conform to middle-class domestic values of childhood dependency.[36] A similar precocity was observed in child performers, as detailed by Steedman. Pressure to legislate against young people's employment in the entertainment industry reflected an awareness that such children, trained to manipulate the emotions of their adult audience, 'were not only knowing, but had knowledge of their own knowingness.'[37] Moves towards universal education would seem to run counter to this trend. However, the form of education privileged in this process was non-vocational, distanced from industrial practice, and in many cases strongly linked to the church. In contrast to a growing interest in science, modern literature and politics among the general population, new schools tended towards a Humanist education, disassociated with technology and business. As C. John Sommerville observes: 'the public seemed to want education to stay the same, and all the more so as other things began to change.'[38]

In other discourses the child is differentiated from the rational adult by their primitive, animalistic state, serving to locate them in a past which pre-dates the evolution of the human species. The second half of the nineteenth century, William Kessen notes saw 'a riot of parallel-drawing between

35 Gillis, 'The Birth of the Virtual Child', 86.

36 Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 28–29.

37 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 136.

38 C. John Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (London: Sage Publications, 1982), 190–191.

animal and child, between primitive man and child, between early human history and child.'[39] Similar constructions of the child also emerge through developmental theories of childhood informed by Darwinian evolution. Archard locates the basis of child psychology in Darwin and Haeckel's theory of 'biogenetic law', both of which connect the development of the child with the development of the human species. Similarities between human embryos and those of various animals were observed and presented as evidence of mankind's animalistic origins. As a consequence of their close connection to this ancestry, children were seen as possessing many instincts and memories of mankind's early evolutionary stages.[40] Heywood points to the concept of recapitulation, attributed to the work of G. Stanley Hall in the early twentieth century, in which the child's growth reflects the development of humans from animality to civilisation.[41] This, Hendrick argues, served to represent children as savages at the beginning of the evolutionary process, and therefore a potential threat to society.[42] Such perspectives have clear impacts upon literature for children. Ratelle observes frequent instances where child readers are encouraged to identify with animal characters, part of a drive to teach children to treat animals well, but also reflecting a perceived solidarity between the two in recognising adult hypocrisy and their shared subordination.[43] Notably, this hypocrisy was frequently shown to be the consequence of an urban culture 'driven by an unrelenting productivist ethos'.[44] Associations between children and animals further serves to exclude children from the sophisticated civilised metropolitan adult, and position the child in opposition to commercial capitalism.

Many of the discourses emerging around this period explicitly defined children in relation to nature. In this respect the Romantic Movement which emerged in the late eighteenth century appears exemplary. Jonathan

39 William Kessen, *The Child* (London: Wiley and Sons, 1965), 115.

40 Archard, *Children*, 40–41.

41 Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, 28.

42 Hendrick, Harry, *Child Welfare*, 36.

43 Ratelle, *Animality and Children's Literature and Film*, 31–32.

44 Ibid. 19.

Bignell identifies this as a philosophy in which the child is 'uncorrupted, innocent, authentic and contrasted with an adult world of guile, artifice and the "civilisation" underpinned by capitalist industrialism.'[45] Messenger Davies similarly considers the movement 'a reaction to the spread of industrialization and its ugliness, overcrowding and pollution' in which the child is contrastingly aligned with nature and noble savagery. Significantly there is a strong anti-educationalist dimension to the form of child rearing proposed by one of the movement's founders, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[46] Romantic art, in its depiction of children, reinforced their associations with the past and with nature. It is often considered partly responsible for the successive outlawing of industrial child labour and the belief that a 'proper childhood' was one separated from the capitalist marketplace. Examples cited by Christopher Parkes include Thomas Gainsborough's 1785 painting 'Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher', or William Wordsworth's 1804 poem 'Ode: Imitations of Immortality'.[47] Cunningham points out that Wordsworth's impact reflects his alignment with contemporary thinking, and cites Joshua Reynolds' portrait of a six-year-old girl, 'The Age of Innocence', as similarly representative.[48] As Gillis writes, by the end of the eighteenth century childhood had become to represent 'not only uncorrupted nature but also the nobility associated with simpler times and peoples.'[49] And yet, despite its construction as the antithesis of modernity, the child, as it became known, was a product of the very modern processes it stood against. Moreover, when it comes to the study of media for children, such products are undeniably tied to modern processes of manufacturing, marketing, distribution exhibition and retail. It is this disjuncture between the modern medium, the product of technology, industry and capitalism,

45 Jonathan Bignell, *Postmodern Media Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 115.

46 Messenger Davies, *Children, Media and Culture*, 26.

47 Christopher Parkes, *Children's Literature and Capitalism: Fictions of Social Mobility in Britain, 1850–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

48 Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood*, 134.

49 Gillis, 'The Birth of the Virtual Child', 91.

and the pre-modern audience, which the children's culture discussed in this volume variously attempts to negotiate.

Early Modern Children's Media

The period which saw the increasing institutionalisation of the child within Western societies, also saw the emergence of specific children's media and culture. Such developments are the product of modernity at a number of levels. Media technologies such as the printing press, photography and cinema, the establishment of mass media organisations and the expansion of consumer cultures underpin and are underpinned by modernity, reflecting, facilitating and disseminating its influences. The emergence of a distinct literature for children, while capitalising upon such technologies, also reflected the modern belief that children were fundamentally different from adults. As John Rowe Townsend writes:

> Before there could be children's books, there had to be children – children, that is, who were accepted as beings with their own particular needs and interests, not merely as miniature men and women.[50]

In addition to reflecting beliefs that children were different from adults, the emergence of a distinct children's culture conceivably served to broaden this divide. Production of culture for children with qualities and characteristics distinct from adults' functions to perpetuate mythologies of children's nature. This is evident in the comments observed previously, whereby authors such as Zipes,[51] Kline,[52] Kraidy[53] and Inglis[54] make claims

50 John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 3.
51 Zipes, 'Origins'.
52 Kline, *Out of the Garden*.
53 Kraidy, 'Intertextual Maneuvers around the Subaltern'.
54 Inglis, *The Window in the Corner*.

concerning children's taste for animation, fantasy narratives and animals, based on media made available to children. Such assertions coincide with Romantic conceptions of children and imagination, magic, the uncivilised, the pre-industrial and the animalistic, despite emerging from media texts not made by or even specifically children, but provided for them by adult institutions. These perspectives inform even approaches to children's grass roots activities. Regarding anthropologies of children's unofficial culture, James and Prout discuss academic imperatives to construct children's street and playground games as a kind of primitive, even primeval oral tribal practice preserved throughout the generations.[55] The suggestion that children are somehow intimately connected with the media technologies they enthusiastically consume, expressed so starkly in the opening paragraph of Palfrey and Gasser's book,[56] reflects the alternative discourse in children's relationship to modernity. Rather than being antithetical to the condition, children come to embody the modern, in their innate appreciation and understanding of new technologies and the experiences they generate. This frequently assumes a source of anxiety resulting in an impulse to intervene, imposing restrictions which effectively curtail children's engagement with contemporary media. Nevertheless, a continued investment in the pre- or anti-modern child, appears at odds with a perception of children's intuitive affinity with the latest thing.

As Townsend[57] suggests, the emergence of commercial media for children coincided with an increased belief that children had distinct needs, tastes and capabilities which ought to be met by appropriate cultural experiences. In previous societies evidence suggests children enjoyed the same activities as their elders. Folk tales, rhymes, songs and stories were the culture of all ages, transmitted orally at communal gatherings, accessible to all within earshot. There appears to have been little attempt to restrict

55 Allison James and Alan Prout, 'Re-presenting Childhood: Time and Transition in the Study of Childhood', in Allison James and Alan Prout, eds, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer Press, 1997), 242–243.

56 Palfrey and Gasser, *Born Digital*.

57 Townsend, *Written for Children*, 3.

the young's exposure to their content, however violent or sexual. As a distinct children's culture emerged, it followed the tendency to define childhood as located in a pre-industrial past. Numerous paintings dating from the seventeenth century feature evidence of different styles of clothing for children. As Jackson remarks, this predominantly copied adult clothes from previous generations, now considered too out-dated for adults to wear.[58] Rural attire associated with farm and country workers, Anita Schorsch observes, was also fashionable among the upper-classes due to cultural connections with innocence and health, popularised within the work of Rousseau.[59] This underlined symbolic links between childhood, agrarianism and previous ways of life. Such impulses can also be observed within emerging adult-run organisations specifically designed for youth membership, such as Baden-Powell's scout movement. A similar reaction to urban life's perceived ill effects upon the young, this organisation was informed by the rites-of-passage rituals of ancient and 'primitive' non-Western societies.[60] The continued tendency for children in Britain to wear school uniforms, including blazers, pleated skirts and ties, a form of attire which is no longer required in the majority of adult workplaces, is a particularly persistent example of this tendency. Children's narrative culture follows a comparable pattern. It is widely accepted that the literary fairy tale is the recorded version of folk narratives which, in pre-industrial society, were part of an oral form of storytelling encountered by all ages. With the move towards social modernity, old folk tales and fables were considered too sophisticated for adults, and with the development of the adult novel were relegated to the nursery bookshelf.

Clare Bradford observes the extent to which, from a young age, contemporary children are introduced to medieval-inspired narratives and imagery in a range of cultures including animation, picture books, fairy-themed celebrations, novels, feature films and television programmes. Although medievalism is by no means restricted to children's culture,

58 Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality*, 39.

59 Anita Schorsch, *Images of Childhood: An Illustrated Social History* (New York: Main Street Press, 1979) 44–45.

60 Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, 197–198.

Bradford points to modern comparisons drawn between childhood and pre-modern periods in Renaissance and Enlightenment rhetoric, whereby both children and earlier cultures were associated with ignorance, simplicity and youth. Succinctly underlining the collapse between historical period, media and children, Bradford writes:

> One might regard the Middle Ages, children's literature and child readers as occupying a 'pre' state: the Middle Ages as premodern, children's literature as that literature which precedes literature proper, and child readers as pre-adults.[61]

Across a range of media this results in children's stories taking place in strangely ahistorical worlds, the precise period of which appears deliberately vague. Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb consider eighteenth-century debates within Romantic philosophy as a fundamental influence on literature for children, with its celebration of a childhood located in a pre-industrial past.[62] The recurring theme of the garden, Hunt sees as 'particularly attractive' to writers of children's literature 'in the context of a threatening changing society' with the countryside functioning 'to preserve a wholesome, conservative idea of childhood.'[63] From a more provocative perspective, Rose, in a critical attack on the process of adults writing books for children, observes how the child in children's literature represents a state outside of culture, 'the site of a lost truth and/or moment in history'. This is the place where an older, natural, superior sensibility is preserved, which an adult author can retrieve through the act of writing for children. Consequently, Rose argues, children's literature functions as a means by which a mythic yet seemingly authentic past, eroded by the social and cultural decay of modern developments, can be reclaimed.[64]

61 Clare Bradford, *The Middle Ages in Children's Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7.

62 Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002).

63 Peter Hunt, 'The Same but Different: Conservatism and Revolution in Children's Fiction', in Janet Maybin and Nicola J. Watson, eds, *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 76–77.

64 Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, 43–44.

At the same time, this is not the only impulse determining children's media. As with any discursive or ideological construction, childhood and the imagined audience it produces is not a singular, unified or consistent concept. Thacker and Webb assert that the Romantic philosophies which informed ideologies of childhood and associated tropes of children's literature were themselves far from coherent.[65] Daniel also observes the presence of both Romanticism and earlier Puritan impulses in children's literature. The contradictory child which emerges from this tension is idyllically innocent and pure, but can also be dangerously wild and primitive.[66] Indeed, different representations of the child and constructions of the child reader frequently hinge on an author's disposition towards the 'wild child' rather than fundamental disagreement concerning its essential existence. Children's media and modernity's parallel emergence meant one responded to the other, in a manner which was not entirely oppositional. Hunt points out that the first 'Golden Age' of children's literature emerged within a tumultuous period which saw the publication of *Das Kapital* as well as the growing trade union and Women's Suffrage movements. Beneath their seemingly conservative surface, Hunt argues, many children's books were concerned with 'empowerment, subversion, growth, liberation',[67] consistent with Ratelle's identification of humanitarian and animal rights discourses within fiction for children.[68] Although the contents of a book are most commonly the focus of scholars of children's literature, Seth Lerer observes a combination of medievalism and mechanisation in the production of Victorian children's publications. Writing of nineteenth-century adventure books, Lerer writes:

> Covered in gold letters, with coloured pictures set into, or raised out of, leather covers, these books embody the ideals of exploration and conquest of the late Victorian period. But they also embody the mechanization of artistic reproduction in the nineteenth century … Such volumes are, in a fundamental way, about their own mechanical

65 Thacker and Webb, *Introducing Children's Literature*, 14.

66 Daniel, *Voracious Children*, 12.

67 Hunt, 'The Same but Different', 77.

68 Ratelle, *Animality and Children's Literature and Film*, 39.

> production. They yoke together art and technology and, in many cases, stand as marvels of production on a par with the marvelous tales told between their covers.[69]

Parkes discusses changing attitudes towards children's relationship with capitalism, as reflected in books for young people. A prominent eighteenth-century concept was of the child as victim of capitalism in need of protection from the industrial workplace in order to enjoy a proper childhood. This contrasted with earlier traditions which saw child labour as a necessary recourse against idleness and sinfulness. However, throughout the nineteenth century, Parkes argues, as partial consequence of the continued requirement for young people to contribute to the economy, this Romantic perspective gave rise to the 'imaginative child', a figure for whom 'participation in commercial activity allows for the release of a natural capacity for ingenuity that is just as innocent as it is precocious.'[70] Instead of being a victim of capitalism, the child comes to represent the spirit of enterprise, innovation and ambition that is capitalism's very embodiment. For Parkes this is evident in the inventor's biography, a counterpoint to the animal stories Rattell considers, which suggested scientific discovery as having an affinity with the curiosity and ingenuity childhood. Mary Shine Thompson, in the introduction to an edited collection on island narratives in children's literature, discusses Stephenson's *Treasure Island* very much within the context of social, industrial and capitalist modernity, as a book which 'writes out the dynamics and the nature of the modern world',[71] and set the model for future island narratives written for children.[72] Lerer also writes of twentieth-century children's books as gesturing towards a reconciliation between the child and new modern sensibilities. Kipling's *Just So Stories* constitute an attempt to reinvent fables in the era of Darwin's theory of evolution, a bid to retain fantastical aspects of children's traditional

69 Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 329.

70 Parkes, *Children's Literature and Capitalism*, 4.

71 Mary Shine Thompson, 'Introduction', in Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan, eds, *Treasure Islands: Studies in Children's Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 15.

72 Ibid. 18.

culture even when these ideas were being challenged in a period of expanding scientific epistemology.[73] Post-war children's literature, Hunt goes on to argue, while expressing something of this opposition to the present also represents 'the tension between the author's preference for the past, and the child character's (and readers') preference and aspiration for the future.' This is frequently played out through tropes of modernity. Hunt goes on to write of *The Borrowers* (1952) and *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) as books which 'pit the conservative values of (adult) tradition – and countryside and the garden – against the corruptions of the modern world, and yet', in a reflection of the tensions within modernity itself, 'it is the modern world which the child characters have to live in, and look forward to.'[74]

Childhood and Consumer Culture

Although the dominant childhood detailed previously largely expresses pre-modern, anti-modern, or regressive characteristics, as various critics of children's literature suggest, another countertrend serves to more positively align the child with modernity, to the point where young people come to exemplify the modern condition. In contrast to Sommerville's point concerning the non-vocational content of children's learning,[75] Denisoff argues that the education system which emerged in the nineteenth century was geared around developing children as contributors to economic growth.[76] Furthermore, despite representing an alternative to industrialised employment, the schooling system might be understood as embodying many modern impulses of surveillance, systemisation and control. John Jervis notes how Bentham's panopticon, the prison designed to give inmates a permanent sense of potential surveillance, the model of institutional control

73 Lerer, *Children's Literature*, 182.
74 Hunt, 'The Same but Different', 80.
75 Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, 190–191.
76 Denisoff, 'Small Change', 10.

through internalised policing which Foucault draws upon in *Discipline and Punish*, was also intended as an architectural template for workplaces, hospitals and schools.[77] In its hierarchical organisation according to age rather than ability, through the regimentation of time and space employing bells, whistles and monitors, and in the testing, ordering and disciplining of young people across a range of practices, the state school system represents a very modern approach to education. Indeed, Steedman sees the organisation of late nineteenth-century 'mass schooling' as part of an attempt to define and fix the nature of childhood at specific ages, conscripting a variety of scientific disciplines.[78] While principles of freedom and individualism inform modern philosophies, in reality, as many commentators have observed, the effects of modernity are to control and massif. In this respect the homogenisation of young people under the title of 'children' is not as opposed to the period as it might appear.

While children may have been excluded from direct participation in capitalist processes of production, it is not the case that children have been historically distanced from consumer capitalism. Relations between children and commercialism might be characterised by the tension Daniel Thomas Cook identifies between 'sacred childhood' and the 'profane market', a contradiction negotiated through a combined strategy of defining products as beneficial for children's health and development, while constructing children themselves as desiring agents deserving of such goods.[79] In the introduction to an edited collection on children and nineteenth-century consumer culture, Denisoff details the extent to which, in relationships restricted and facilitated by class position, children participated in the production, distribution and purchasing of goods and services. From the early stages of the nineteenth century, Denisoff claims

77 John Jervis, *Exploring the Modern: Patterns of Western Culture and Civilization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 55.

78 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 7.

79 Daniel Thomas Cook, 'The Rise of "The Toddler" as Subject and as Merchandising Category in the 1930s', in Mark Gottdiener, ed., *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 114–115.

that young people were invested in their role as consumers, and commercial culture relied on children seeing themselves in this way. Children served as both buyers and sellers of goods, yet while significant ambivalence was expressed towards the later, the former increasingly became the appropriate role for young people to occupy.[80] Lisa Jacobson in a study of early twentieth-century markets points to the contradiction, within American society, as in Britain, whereby labour laws imposed restrictions on children's ability to earn, at the same time as they were increasingly subject to the pressures of the marketplace and the appeal of mass popular culture. The implication of children in commerce and capitalism is evident in the range of books and toys for young people which marked the emergence of modern childhood, even if children were not afforded the independent means to purchase these products themselves. Marketing targeted children as purchasers of juvenile goods, as the brand-loyal consumers of tomorrow, and as an active influence on household consumption.[81] Education and play, for middle-class parents, also became heavily associated with the buying of toys. Emphasising the continued influence of John Locke and his assertions concerning the educational value of playthings, Teresa Michals details how the well-purchased 'Good Toy' became 'the symbol and instrument of childhood innocence, freedom, intellectual and emotional development, and ultimate processional success'. The author emphasises the contradictions inherent in manufactured objects which represent both 'non-commercial innocence' and 'major market forces', allowing children to develop into productive adult men and women, while also facilitating a childhood retreat from the adult marketplace.[82]

Romantic ideologies of childhood also appear mobilised in the service of a kind of hedonistic delight, which in turn imbued children's commercial objects of desire with a purity and innocence which counteracted

80 Denisoff, 'Small Change'.

81 Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

82 Teresa Michals, 'Experiments Before Breakfast: Toys, Education and Middle-Class Childhood', in Dennis Denisoff, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 30.

the industrial processes entailed in their production. Garry Cross argues that the sense of wonder attributed to the child feeds into the model of the enthusiastic child consuming new toys, dolls and books purchased by parents. Both the youngster and the adult in this arrangement are indulging in 'the pleasures of encountering a fantastic world of new goods and entertainments', one as the recipient of a new toy, the other vicariously through the joy expressed by their offspring.[83] It is here that Cross sees the transformation of the 'sheltered innocence' which continued to exist in institutions including the school, the church and the child-rearing magazine, into the 'wondrous innocence' of the shopping mall, the media and the family holiday.[84] Reflecting the malleability of ideologies of childhood and consumerism, even when divorced from industry and economy the child could be reconfigured to facilitate children's role as consumer, as recipients of commercial goods, or as hawker of advertised products. Jacobson observes the extent to which images of childhood innocence and purity were used to sell a range of goods, projecting the virtues of the child onto the qualities of the product.[85] As example, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra describes the images in an 1860s Christmas book, a commercially produced object of domestic consumption themed around childhood, as containing sentimental images of children 'in bucolic settings, implying their organic connection to nature while emphasizing their absolute separation from the world of trade and business'. In the context of middle-class antipathy towards the negative aspects of capitalist industry, childhood, through this contradictory process becomes an acceptable seasonal object of adult consumption.[86] At the same time, in the images contained within these books and the poems which accompany them, Kooistra observes suggestions of the middle-class child as capitalist in the making.

83 Gary Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.

84 Ibid. 42.

85 Jacobson, *Raising Consumers*, 21.

86 Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, '*Home Thoughts and Home Scenes*: Packaging Middle-class Childhood for Christmas Consumption', in Dennis Denisoff, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 157.

The tensions between modernity, pre-modernity, media and children, and attempts to make these disparate elements harmoniously coexist, can be seen in one of the first relationships between child audiences and screen entertainment in the form of the toy 'magic' lantern. As detailed by Bak, children's use of this piece of domestic technology, which pre-dates the cinema as a form of popular entertainment, reflects many issues concerning children's engagement with screen-based media across the twentieth century. Bak argues that the commodity of the toy lantern 'positioned children's recreational time within a new economy of labor and leisure, where a modern culture of media spectatorship took hold.'[87] The location of the toy in the domestic sphere is significant in aligning this early form of screen media with children, in contrast with the more troublesome urban location of the arcade or theatre. An interesting distinction within this history emerges between the toy 'magic lantern' and what became referred to in different contexts as the 'projecting lantern' or the 'optical lantern'. The latter was an effective repurposing of the magic lantern as a utilitarian means of instruction, employed as a means of communicating information to large groups of people in public spaces. While the projecting lantern was used for serious scientific and educational purposes, the magic lantern of the nursery continued to be defined as an object of wonder and imagination. Such associations echo those of earlier theatrical exhibition by entertainers, perceptions which institutions applying the same technologies for serious purposes sought to suppress. In contrast, the design of toy lanterns sought to evoke this wondrous past, eschewing the functional practical design favoured by the lecture lantern, in favour of 'details and flourishes' which 'evoked the older, artisan-crafted lanterns of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century showmen.'[88] At the same time as looking back to this exotic media history, the toy lantern functioned to align young owners with many aspects of modernity, primarily entrepreneurial capitalism, consumerism, technology and innovation. Juvenile magazines promoting these products encouraged children not only to act as spectators but to emulate the role of early exhibitors in their organisation of domestic

87 Bak, 'Ten Dollars' Worth of Fun', 112.

88 Ibid. 115.

shows for paying friends and family. Such a culture defined the child as both promoter and technical aficionado. The continual mechanical innovation whereby increasingly enhanced versions of the lantern were made successively available suggests that children were explicitly appealed to as consumers of technologies, however 'magic'. While the role of the child as exhibitor finds less continuity in subsequent iterations of domestic children's media, Bak makes many observations which underline how the toy lantern 'played an instrumental role in the development of contemporary children's media culture.'[89] Toy magic lanterns established visual media as a respectable form of leisure and amusement for children, and introduced practices of domestic screen entertainment which anticipated home movie and the video cassette recorder. The endless release of new models of toy lanterns along with new forms of compatible software, embedding the plaything within commercial strategies of perpetual progress and innovation, anticipating the 'upgrade culture' of contemporary games consoles and mobile phones.[90] Even protracted accounts of the opening of packages containing lanterns[91] prefigure internet broadcasts which centre on the unboxing of toys and newly released pieces of technology. Moreover, the construction of the child in the home as a skilled and competent manipulator of visual technology find resonance in recent narratives concerning young people's proficiency at setting VCR timers, navigating the internet, besting their elders at digital games and circumventing parental locks on restricted television channels.

89 Ibid. 112.
90 Ibid. 128–129.
91 Ibid. 120.