"The Feast of Misrule": *Captain Underpants*, Satire, and the Literary Establishment

Jackie E. Stallcup, California State University, Northridge

With *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (1997), Dav Pilkey inaugurated a series of children's books about the adventures of two young boys, Harold and George. In the first book, they accidentally turn their mean-spirited principal into the heroic but ridiculous Captain Underpants, who runs around in his undies and a red cape saving the world from destruction. Other books in the series detail his exploits against such perils as ravenous talking toilets and cafeteria ladies from outer space. At some obvious levels, these are what we usually think of as children's books. They feature main characters who are children; they take place in a school setting; they foreground "juvenile" humor; they are easy to read and feature pictures on every page. Finally, the books are immensely popular with young children, selling millions of copies and winning numerous "children's choice" awards across the United States. On the other hand, the appropriateness of *Captain Underpants* for children is often called into question: the books are often the target of protests, appearing in the top ten on the American Library Association's frequently challenged books lists in 2002, 2004 and 2006. Some of the charges leveled against them are that they are low, vulgar, scatological, rude, and trashy. Adults also worry that the books encourage disrespectful behavior in readers. Despite the fact that some adults protest the content, however, it is clear that they do occupy the category that most people would label "for children."

This conclusion seems simple enough on its face. But the *Captain Underpants* books also provide ample opportunities to disrupt such a facile categorization. Perhaps this might seem an odd task for a children's literature scholar.

GENRE XLI - SPRING/SUMMER 2008 - 171-202 COPYRIGHT © 2008 BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA. ALL RIGHTS OF REPRODUCTION IN ANY FORM RESERVED

After all, my career has been built upon examining what many adults unproblematically call "children's literature." But like many other such "obvious" categories, neither children's literature nor the distinctions between adult and child are as unproblematic as they might seem. I started to think carefully about this when I read the *Captain Underpants* books and found myself wondering, "could these books also be classified as satire?" Attempting to answer this deceptively simple question plunges us headlong into ongoing debates regarding definitions of children's literature, representations of childhood, vexed adult-child relationships, and all the varied ideological baggage that accompanies these issues. After all, if the *Captain Underpants* books can be formally defined both as children's literature *and* as satire, how do we account for them in a culture that tends to consider these categories incompatible by definition?

From the perspective of many adults, satire is a rough-and-tumble, ill-bred form that strips away illusions, attacks hapless targets, and flays the world open to reveal humanity in all of its ugly glory. As George A. Test puts it, "The emotions that are thought to give rise to satire are generally acknowledged to be the least admirable human emotions—anger, malice, hatred, indignation. […] The view of humanity in satire is a negative one—tumultuous, crowded, aggressive, cynical, pessimistic" (1). In opposition, children's literature is, for many adults, supposed to be a gentle exercise in entertaining and lovingly instructing innocent children, feeding their curiosity without exposing them to the harsh realities of life.[1] Further, satire is often seen as depending for full effect upon deep knowledge of arcane facts about the period in which the text is written or complex understanding about human failings. Thus, to fully appreciate Swift's satire on the Lilliputian court, the reader must know that the emperor may repre-

[1] See, e.g., Bennett; Guroian; and Krauthammer. Not surprisingly, academics tend to resist such generalizations; after all, we are trained to be suspicious of simplistic categories. But every semester for nearly a decade, I have been faced with upwards of seventy students in my children's literature courses who, almost to a person, resist seeing "adult" and "child" as problematic, slippery categories. They enter my classroom with strongly rooted beliefs in the innocence of childhood and a clearly defined, easily laid out set of differences between adults and children. It takes a lot of discussion to get them to problematize their assumptions that childhood is a simple time of curiosity, creativity and, above all, innocence. Some students eagerly embrace the idea that childhood and adulthood are far more complicated than is immediately obvious, while others remain skeptical to the end of the course. But they almost all seem to start from the same place. Throughout this essay, when discussing assumptions that adults make about childhood, it is generally adults like my students that I have in mind. Such cultural conceptions of childhood, have, of course, been the subject of much debate among scholars. For further discussion, see Giroux; Higonnet; Hodgson; Kozol; Males; and Postman. *The Children's Culture Reader*, edited by Henry Jenkins, is also an excellent resource containing many perspectives on these issues.

sent King George I and that Swift's description of the emperor's handsomeness may be an ironic jab at the king's own unattractive appearance. Similarly, to understand the full weight of the Brobdingnagian king's comment that "I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth" (11:132), one must know enough about human nature to be, like the king, horrified by Gulliver's discussion of English society. It is presumed that children do not possess such knowledge or understanding and therefore will be unable to grasp or enjoy such satire.[2] Finally, some of the most pungent and effective satire turns upon innuendo or direct, open sexual analogies and references, while many adults prefer to believe that sexuality is mostly absent from children's lives and hence, should also be absent from the literature that is appropriate for them. In short, as Leonard Feinberg argues, "most readers do not like to be exposed to unpleasantness—or, if they are, they want to be comforted and reassured about the unpleasantness. Satire, far from comforting or reassuring, exaggerates the disagreeable elements to a distressing degree" (266). And as much as we desire comfort and reassurance for ourselves, adults are even more adamant that providing such consolation is the appropriate task of literature for children. Our modern conception of childhood as a time of innocence (as erroneous as this conception may be), makes it distressing to think of children interacting with satire, which tends to reveal—even revel in—disturbing facets of human nature.[3]

But of course, both types of literature and their underlying ideological components are far more complicated than such assumptions can explain, as suggested by the mere fact that we can easily point to children's texts that are partly or wholly satiric (though, as we will see, even this is not as simple a claim as it might seem). When we put aside our common perceptions of childhood, children's literature, and satire and consider them as concepts in relation

[2] This assumption, of course, ignores the fact that many adults readers also lack such knowledge and understanding.

[3] In her article, "'Irony?—But Children Don't Get It, Do They?' The Idea of Appropriate Language in Narratives for Children," Sue Walsh delineates and critiques the debates that have long swirled around the idea that satire and irony are either inappropriate for or incomprehensible to children and incompatible with our concept of childhood. She creates a convincing argument for the fact that these assumptions are both lively and persistent in our culture. For another discussion of such debates, see Richardson; for discussion of such debates specifically in the context of revising Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for children, see Stallcup. For more general discussions about cultural assumptions regarding childhood, see Cable 107-119; Coveney 29-90; Giroux; Greven; Hardyment 77, 201; Hays 22-50; Higonnet; Jenkins 2-37; Lurie 1-15; MacLeod *American Childhood* 143-156; Margolis 30; Nodelman; O'Malley; Pollock 96-142; Rose 1-65; Schorsch 151-169; Stone 255-260; and Zipes.

to each other, it becomes clear that, in fact, there are a number of interesting and hitherto unremarked parallels. Pilkey's *Captain Underpants* series, while seemingly simplistic and hopelessly overrun with potty humor, provides a deep well of material for exploring the implications of these parallels. Conflicting reactions of adults and children to the books suggest that they participate in a rich history of subversive literature that has long been feared by the dominant culture—literature that has been dismissed or suppressed by those who fear its effects. I will show that the *Captain Underpants* books *are* satire and that they are anarchic, disrespectful, subversive, exuberant—everything that a good satire should be—but contrary to conventional assumptions about children not enjoying or understanding satire, kids devour the books eagerly while adults attempt to ban them. In fact, it is *because* they are satirical that children and adults have these responses. To understand this, we must carefully investigate the books' subject matter and satirical targets to see how they expose and exploit disturbing kinds of category fluidity. Examining how the *Captain Underpants* books quiver about the boundaries of such apparent dichotomies as adult/child and literature/children's literature explains both the laughter and the disgust that the books can trigger and uncovers the covert boundary work that children's literature performs in maintaining a literary status quo.

Normative and Subversive Functions

Our first parallel between satire and children's literature relates to function. In itself, a satirical children's book might not cause discomfort in adult readers. After all, satire can function conservatively to uphold traditional power relationships—precisely the task that many adult-approved children's books perform. In exploring functionality, some critics have focused on the aim of literary satire, asking "What effect is satirical writing *intended* to have?" and "What effect (if any) does it *actually* have?" From this perspective, satire may be presented as a mode with reform at its heart—a didactic form that seeks to reveal folly and/or to make readers recognize and reject vice. The element of judgment or attack that is basic to satire is generally enacted upon personal or cultural failings that the satirist wishes to have amended.[4] Like satire, with its avowed (if not always genuine) aim of reforming the world, children's literature is strongly marked by a didactic bent and even assessed by some adults solely by its intended effect.

[4] For discussion of this basic element of satire, see Bloom and Bloom; Griffin *Satire* 24; Highet 20; and Lee 5.

Or, as my students sometimes put it when they evaluate a text, "This is a good children's book because it teaches a good moral lesson." At some level, thus, both children's literature and satire can be normative and corrective forms.

As compelling as the conception of satire as a "didactic art" has been, there are at least two problems with it. First, many doubt its efficacy. Swift's comment in the preface to "The Battel of the Books" that "Satyr is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their Own" (1:140), is one famous expression of such doubt. He is certainly not alone—other critics and satirists have expressed concern that satire falls upon deaf ears[5]—but at the same time, the concept that it is meant to teach persists.[6] We will return to the issue of efficacy later when we consider more deeply the problem of audience, but for now, let us move to the second problem with the concept that satire is meant to reform. As Dustin Griffin notes in *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, defenders of satire as a moral art were forced by their position to "largely repress or suppress any notion that satire could be subversive or even disruptive of public order or private peace" (25). In his 1990 book *Satire in Narrative*, Frank Palmeri makes a useful distinction regarding satire's subversive potential:

> If the utopian vision implied by a satire looks backward toward a golden age in the past, and if it subjects to satiric parody a recently emerging, subversive position, then the satiric work defines its position as reactionary or conservative. On the other hand, if a satire's implied utopian vision looks forward to necessary changes in the future, and if it parodies a long-standing, well-established institution, set of beliefs, or practice, then the work defines its perspective as subversive or progressive. (6)

This subversive potential suggests that satire not only can uphold specific moral values (that is, conserving and defending widely-accepted conventions of appropriate behavior) but also can undermine and criticize such values.[7]

Paralleling discussions of the subversive potential of satire, children's literature critics also explore how works written for children may question adult values. In her 1990 book *Don't Tell The Grown-Ups*, Alison Lurie argues that while most children's literature is designed to inculcate such values, there are

[5] For further discussion, see Griffin *Satire* 154ff.

[6] As George A. Test points out, "Despite the lack of evidence to support the claim of reform through satire, both the justification and the convention persist, as a short tour through articles and reviews in scholarly journals and popular magazines and newspapers will show" (11). See, e.g., Bloom and Bloom 12ff; Feinberg 9; and Paulson 14.

[7] See also Feinberg 9; Ingram 137; Seidel 1-25; Test 28; Weisenburger 3. Also, Dentith discusses this specifically in the context of parody (19ff) and Olson discusses it in the context of comedy 11ff.

what she calls the "sacred texts of childhood, whose authors had not forgotten what it was like to be a child" (x). Lurie contends that

> these books, and others like them, recommended—even celebrated—daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups. They overturned adult pretensions and made fun of adult institutions, including school and family. In a word, they were subversive. (x)

Like subversive satire, subversive children's books by authors such as Mark Twain, P.L. Travers, Roald Dahl, Louise Fitzhugh, Ed Emberley, and Philip Pullman challenge conventional assumptions about appropriate and inappropriate behavior and seek to overturn the regulations that govern our social relationships. Perhaps not surprisingly, these books make adults uncomfortable (just as satire often makes readers uncomfortable) and thus become the focus of challenges in libraries and classrooms, as adults seek to limit children's access to such potentially destabilizing works.[8,9]

Pilkey is among those who engage the subversive traditions of both satire and children's literature, particularly in relation to adult representations of "childhood" and, more generally, adult-child relationships. A brief comparison with Roald Dahl's novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* will help distinguish between the use of subversive and didactic satire in children's literature. Dahl's work is subversive on many levels, but his commentary on human nature in *Charlie* tends toward the didactic; thus his satire is conservative rather than subversive. After all, the bad children are satirized for moral failings such as greed and ill-temper, while Charlie is the "perfect" child: quiet, sweet, self-effacing and completely honest—and he is the one who triumphs. Pilkey, on the other hand, uses satire to subvert precisely those romantic conceptions of childhood. For example, in

---

[8] For discussions of the normative or subversive functions of children's literature, see: Benson; Hollindale; Hunt; Jenkins 2-37; Kincaid; Lurie 1-15; Metcalf, "Civilizing"; Mickenberg; Myers; Nodelman; O'Malley; Rose; Savelsberg; Stephens; Sutherland; Trites; and Zipes.

[9] Relatedly, though tangential to the point of this paper, humor can function subversively (though not always satirically) for subordinate groups, including children. Gail Munde offers a thoughtful comparative study of adults' and children's choices in relation to humorous books. According to Munde, humorous books selected by children tend to speak to children's anxieties and fears, and they often include portrayals of young, small, or undervalued characters getting the best of adult or adult-like characters. Books chosen by adults for children are less often simply humorous and tend toward the didactic, educational, or "broadening." Though Munde does not discuss the Captain Underpants books (the first book in the series was published the same year as the article), the study illuminates the appeal of the series and also suggests that children would benefit from more books like them. For more information on children and humor or general discussions of humor, see Cart; Chapman and Foot; Cleary; Davies; La Fave et. al; McGhee and Chapman; Metcalf, "Tall Tale"; Russell; Shultz and Robillard; Spector; Tower and Singer; Vallone; West; Wolfenstein 12; and Zillman and Cantor.

Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants, the eponymous professor has been "laughed out of every major scientific institution in the U.S." (50) because of his name, Pippy P. Poopypants. He decides to become a science teacher at an elementary school because he is convinced that this is the one place that he will not be derided for his name: "'Kids are so accepting and loving,' he said. 'You can always count on the sweetness and innocence of children!'" (52). The next chapter, titled "The Sweetness and Innocence of Children" is filled with the uncontrollable hilarity of the children and the Professor's unsuccessful attempts to stop them laughing at his name. Throughout the *Captain Underpants* series, Pilkey satirizes as inaccurate—even foolish—adults' syrupy assumptions about childhood, making a trenchant point in *Perilous Plot* about children's ability to extract cruel humor out of situations that adults, by and large, have learned not to laugh at. Like many writers for children, Pilkey is offering subversive commentary here; in the vein of Swift and Rochester, the vehicle he is using is satire. Finally, the target he aims for most often is adults—specifically adults who abuse their authority over young, rambunctious boys.[10]

It is important to note here that—perhaps paradoxically—satire can function simultaneously in conservative and subversive modes. A subversive critique of a social institution can be grounded upon an underlying moral code that the satirist implies the institution is disrupting and rejecting. For example, Rochester's Scepter Lampoon, "A Satyr on Charles II," can be read as an extremely subversive satire that deconstructs and (literally) deflates not only Charles II personally, but the entire institution of kingship, particularly with its closing couplet: "All monarchs I hate, and the thrones they sit on,/From the hector of France to the cully of Britain" (61). But at the same time, one could argue that implicit in Rochester's savaging of the king and his proclivities is a critique of such "merry" and "scandalous" behavior—that is, that a more conservative moral code than one might expect underpins Rochester's subversive satire.[11] Thus,

[10] Other examples of children's writers who employ satire (whether conservative or subversive) include Harry Allard and James Marshall, L. Frank Baum, Lewis Carroll, Roald Dahl, Louise Fitzhugh, Astrid Lindgren, Robert Munsch, Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, Dr. Seuss, Lemony Snicket, Mark Twain, and E.B. White. For discussions of satire and children's literature from various perspectives, see Anderson and Apseloff 72; Cadden; Connolly; Knapp and Knapp; Metcalf "Tall Tale"; Richardson; Sherman and Weisskopf; Stahl; and Walsh. For an excellent discussion of two books that are specifically *subversive* satire, *Out of the Oven* and *Wagstaffe the Wind-Up Boy*, see Stephens 147-155.

[11] For further discussions along these lines (both of Rochester in general and the Scepter Lampoon in particular), see Chernaik 1-2 and 56-60; Combe 111-114 and 132-135; Griffin *Satires Against Man* 89; and Farley-Hills. For a counterargument regarding the Scepter Lampoon, see Webster.

critics wrestle with the question of whether satire is, at its roots, a conservative form.[12] A similar debate exists among children's literature critics. For example, in *American Childhood*, Anne Scott MacLeod notes "I cannot agree with those who claim that [children's] literature is purposefully subversive" (viii). And in *A Moral Tale*, she argues, "Children's stories are almost invariably prescriptive, to a greater or lesser degree; they present the approved values of society to children" (10); in a footnote, she adds "This is true even of the least realistic, least didactic of fiction. Alice plainly represents those English qualities of character Charles Dodgson admired: self-possession, pleasant manners, and an unshakable independence of mind" (161). In other words, even children's texts that might be seen as subversive (Alice is outspoken and certainly not deferential to the adults she encounters in Wonderland, for example), may also be seen as having underlying messages that uphold certain cultural values.

For my purposes here, the problem is one of scope. Instead of arguing that a text is wholly subversive or wholly conservative, it is more useful to narrow the argument and examine potentially subversive or conservative elements of the text—a method that acknowledges the complexities of a text, allowing for it to be simultaneously subversive and conservative. Annette Wannamaker takes this approach in her book *Boys in Children's Literature and Popular Culture* (2008), arguing that although Pilkey satirizes adult figures and undermines adult authority, his books also "reify normative gender identity" (95) and thus work to sustain traditionally gendered behaviors in boys and girls. Boys, she suggests, may enjoy the books precisely because they define and reassert the masculine body in opposition to abject feminine bodies. Thus, while the books might be subversive of adult-child relationships, at the level of gender relationships, the books can be read as culturally conservative.[13]

Even in regard to adult-child relationships (the specific element of the texts that I am interested in examining), the very subversiveness of the satire in the *Captain Underpants* books can point the way toward less-than-subversive conclusions. A brief examination of the presentation of several adult characters will make this distinction clear. In many ways, adults are the butt of the satiric jokes throughout the series, inevitably portrayed as sadistic, irredeemably stupid and petty, or completely insane and out to take over the world. The gym teacher is mean and the science teacher pathetically unable to see through George and

[12] For further discussion, see Griffin *Satire* 25ff; and Palmeri 6.
[13] McGillis also notes that the books can be seen as both conservative and subversive (69).

Harold's pranks on him. A typical example of adult behavior in Pilkey's texts comes in *Talking Toilets* when the boys get into trouble yet again. All the teachers gather around to laugh at them, but despite the teachers' cruel taunts, the boys try to warn them not to open the gym door, knowing that murderous talking toilets are lurking outside. In response, the gym teacher, Mr. Meaner, snarls, "We can do whatever we like." He dashes over and opens the door and is promptly swallowed up by a toilet (63-65). Mr. Krupp comes off particularly badly as "the meanest, sourest old principal in the whole history of Jerome Horwitz Elementary School" (*Adventures* 18). The narrator goes on to elaborate: "He hated laughter and singing. He hated the sounds of children playing at recess. In fact, he hated children altogether!" (*Adventures* 18). His desk has a sign stating "Kneel here," suggesting that he sees himself in a God-like position and expects children to worship him. When he uses secret surveillance tapes to gain the upper hand with George and Harold (briefly), he blackmails them into "catering to [his] every whim" (*Adventures* 41). This includes washing his car, weeding his yard, and cleaning his house's rain gutters and windows, (39) and then later vacuuming his office, shining his shoes, polishing his desk, clipping his nails and ironing his tie (41). Mr. Krupp is clearly someone who hates children and is only out to get what he can for himself, even if it means resorting to criminal activity. Of course these are all subversive portrayals of adults, undermining conventional expectations that adults in children's books will generally be portrayed as helpful, kind, loving and even noble.[14] But at the same time, one could argue that there is a conservative moral undergirding the satire. In the scene outside the gym door, for example, the boys are acting far more responsible than the teachers, who not only are enacting stereotypical child-like behavior in taunting the boys and rebelling against their warnings, but also are promptly and thoroughly punished for it. And clearly implied in Mr. Krupp's behavior is the idea that blackmail, abuse of authority and bullying are wrong—an upstanding "adult" moral message if ever there was one.

However conservative the underlying moral message may be, Pilkey subverts our expectations by enacting the messages through the bad or stupid behavior of adults. My favorite example of this technique is embedded in a recurring joke: as the boys and Captain Underpants are in the most unbelievable

[14] I am referring specifically to representations of adults in children's literature. Of course, since the late 1960s, adults in literature for adolescent readers have often been represented as uncaring, sadistic, solipsistic and cruel, as many critics have noted.

and ridiculous situations, a little boy tries to tell his mother what he sees. She inevitably laughs at him and dismisses his story without even looking. This is probably a typical adult response to a child's imaginative recreation of the world around him, but Pilkey undermines this position by suggesting that adults are a lot more gullible than we'd like to think we are. Not only is what the boy is describing really happening, the mother who laughs at him is reading something that is both commonplace and also ridiculous. For example, in this scene in *Talking Toilets*, the mother is reading a book titled *How to Lose 20 Pounds in 3 Days* (72), and in *Adventures*, she is reading a newspaper with the headline "Bigfoot Gives Birth to 200 Pound U.F.O. Baby" (71). Clearly, despite her dismissive comments to her son, she *is* gullible, and further, because this is fairly typical reading matter for real adults (just scan the covers of the magazines, books, and newspapers that line checkout stands at your local supermarket), any adult who has just been reading such material is going to feel the sting of satire: "Just how gullible are *you*?" Pilkey seems to be asking. A socially conventional message—don't be gullible—is there for all to learn, but the specific target of the satire is, subversively, the adult.

Dirt and Disgust

Like many other satirists, Pilkey uses scatology to create satiric effects, which brings us to our second parallel between satire and children's literature: both forms employ dirt and disgust to various ends, including sheer grimy enjoyment. Children are in the throes of boundary enforcing as they absorb cultural taboos and learn to tame their unruly bodies, forcing them to conform to social standards of cleanliness and invisibility. Many of these boundary explorations revolve around bodily functions. Thus it makes sense that, at certain developmental stages, shit jokes and boogers are just plain funny to kids—as any middle school teacher or parent of a pre-teen child can attest.[15] Satirists can also use scatology to forward satirical purposes—Swift being an obvious example. As Robert Rawdon Wilson argues in *The Hydra's Tale* (2002), "satire often turns upon the power of filth to disgust, embarrass and shame" (15).[16]

Developing conceptions of disgust have specific social functions to serve, as Wilson demonstrates. He argues that "disgust is a regulating affect, a method

[15] For discussion of such issues in relation both to life and literature, see, e.g., Chodorow 57-76; Daniel; Douglas 110; A. James; K. James; Kristeva; Lee; McGillis 64; Rushdy; Stephens 121-157; Thomas; and West.
[16] For further discussion, see Douglas; Howe; Kristeva; Miller; Wilson 54ff.

that societies promote to control individual behaviour, but it is also a bully's device for gaining control over others" (13). Wilson outlines five different models that have been proposed to explain disgust, three of which are particularly useful for this discussion. The first is the "moral-legal model" which suggests that disgust performs normative, regulating functions for a culture. In such a conception, Wilson suggests, "disgust constitutes a moral weapon. Expressing disgust, you may be delivering a reprimand, a refusal or a rebuke. Most importantly, you will be making a judgement that an act has fallen beneath a standard or has ignored an accepted norm. It may be a complex judgement, but it will always be pointed towards the correction and regulation of other human behaviour" (51). Second is the "social-constructionist model"—the idea that disgust is constructed through the process of socializing the young; children are taught cultural values and taboos in part through being taught what is considered disgusting within a culture (54).[17]

Wilson's fifth model takes rather a different direction. The moral-legal model suggests that "there is a deep, significant purpose for human disgust. It regulates behaviour, limits excess and makes human social life bearable" (70). The fifth model, in reaction, suggests that

> such a regulated and delimited society is scarcely worth living within. It stunts human potential, racking the person into a deformed caricature of human life, and imposes restrictive boundaries on human experience. In this view, you will have been trained, formed and limited by many social agencies, all of them working to bind your joys and desires if not exactly with thorns at least with conventions, rules and law. You will have been given a social consciousness, a personal censor, a superego, a deeply encoded fear of transgression or at least habits so rigidly conditioned that they will seem "natural" (which is to say, unbreakable). You will not have been told how to enjoy yourself fully or how to realize your latent desires. (70)

Wilson points out that this last model has "a long philosophic and literary tradition, always functioning as a counter-voice to society's dominant versions of itself" (72). Many forms of satire participate in this subversive tradition, using disgusting images and elements as a way of shocking readers into examining social restraints and boundaries.

To link these ideas with children's literature, we might consider that the first two models that Wilson discusses suggest that adults are invested in using disgust reactions to control transgressive impulses in children, often through the literature we write for them. Disgust reactions can be used to teach us, as children, to control ourselves for the sake of social cohesiveness. Those who

[17] See also Stallybrass and White 164.

have been so trained seek to pass down these values to the next generation. But the fifth model allows us to imagine children's texts which disrupt the cultural boundaries set by such disgust reactions and to see how such texts could provide young readers with a sense of freedom through transgression. In fact, Pilkey gleefully uses bodily material and other disgust triggers to critique adult interactions with children, marrying disgusting imagery to the judgment that is the critical component in distinguishing crude comedy from satire. Many other children's books, notably the *Black Lagoon* series of picture books written by Mike Thaler and illustrated by Jared Lee, revel in eliciting the kind of disgust reactions that Wilson discusses in *The Hydra's Tale*. However, a comparison of one text from each series—focusing on cafeteria food and the ladies who make it—demonstrates how Pilkey uses such material for subversive satirical effect while Thaler and Lee do not.

Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Invasion of the Incredibly Naughty Cafeteria Ladies from Outer Space (and the Subsequent Assault of the Equally Evil Lunchroom Zombie Nerds)* features three hideous aliens, Zorx, Klax, and Jennifer, on a mission to take over the earth. They pose as cafeteria ladies at George and Harold's school, serving up such delicacies as "freeze-dried worm guts, boston baked boogers, and zombie-nerd milkshakes" (59). Sure enough, any child stupid enough to eat in the cafeteria emerges as a blank-faced, fanged zombie nerd, and Principal Krupp must become the heroic but ridiculous Captain Underpants to defeat the evil cafeteria ladies. Presumably, the old (earthling) cafeteria ladies return when the aliens have been vanquished, but we must remember that their food is so disgusting that, in an earlier book in the series, *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets*, it makes evil, carnivorous toilets vomit and fall down dead. In neither of these two books are the cafeteria ladies (alien or earthling) redeemed: their food remains inedible and their personalities as repulsive as their food.

Mike Thaler's and Jared Lee's *Black Lagoon* books invite child readers to speculate about the hideous secret nature of adults, but with significantly different outcomes from the *Captain Underpants* books. In *The Cafeteria Lady from the Black Lagoon*, the new cafeteria lady has a risqué name that evokes a bodily function: Wanda Belch. Throughout the book, before they meet her, the children at her new school worry that she is a kid-torturing troll who will make their lunchtime a horror show. They imagine that she will drive to school in a garbage truck and that she will use their classroom pets for "furry fritter fricas-

see and mice-a-roni." The suspense builds for characters and readers, until the children finally go through the cafeteria doors and pick up their trays, wishing for a blindfold—only to find that Ms. Belch actually is smiling kindly and has made them food (hamburgers and french fries) that they are likely to enjoy. The children decide that lunchtime is going to be their "favorite class" and even imagine returning for dinner.

Clearly, Thaler and Lee are courting the pleasurable disgust reactions that many children enjoy, but they also seem to be interested in appeasing rather than vexing parents. Despite the children's wild imaginings, Wanda Belch is not an alien from outer space who turns them into zombie nerds, but is a pretty nice adult whom the kids immediately adore. The message to the child readers is that they ought to just give adults a chance and, gee whiz, they'll find out how nice we really are. Perhaps the outcomes of the two books aren't so different after all—after reading Pilkey's text, one could argue that anyone who wanted to eat dinner in the school cafeteria would have to be a zombie nerd. Whereas Pilkey's characters are overtly turned into zombie nerds and later rescued, Thaler's and Lee's characters achieve this state subtextually and apparently permanently, with the conclusion suggesting that the child reader, too, ought to strive for the same condition. Pilkey's text, on the other hand, offers a satiric commentary on such an outcome. The difference in the two texts thus lies between *enacting* a particular cultural concept (adults, including cafeteria ladies, aren't so bad) and *satirizing* such concepts by suggesting that anyone who buys into such an idea must have lost all sense of self and soul and become a zombie nerd. Unlike Thaler's and Lee's text, which offer a reversal of perception—the kids are wrong, adults are nice—there is no reversal at the end of Pilkey's text. These two quite different conclusions suggest the difference between using scatological elements for comedic purposes and using them for satirical purposes. There is no target of attack in the Thaler and Lee books. The children display fairly typical anxieties of childhood, but they are not criticized for this, and they learn in the end that adults are pretty nice people whom they just ought to trust. In contrast, in Pilkey's books, adults are quite clearly the target of scathing satire.

Adults vs. Children

Here we turn to our third parallel: both satire and children's literature can comment upon power dynamics at work between centralized and marginalized groups. Theoretical conceptions of how humor functions offer insight into

these power dynamics and how they are played out satirically in Pilkey's work. Experiments by Dolf Zillmann and Joanne R. Cantor examine how people respond to jokes in relation to their affiliation groups. They argue that an individual may feel more or less affiliated with any particular group and that the individual's level of affiliation will affect the response he or she has to jokes that involve such groups. Their work experimentally confirms what may seem logical: people find jokes funnier the more they identify with the disparaging agent and the less they identify with the butt of the joke (99-101). In other words, blonds are a lot less likely to find blond jokes funny than brunettes might. Republicans are likely to find jokes much funnier if a Republican gets the best of a Democrat and not at all funny if the joke involves a Democrat humiliating a Republican. This suggests that many adults may be discomfited by *Captain Underpants* and not find the books very funny, as adults are often the butt of jokes perpetrated by children. They are also likely to enjoy the books less and less the more they identify with the adult characters.

We see this dichotomous response in *Perilous Plot* when George and Harold monkey with a school sign board. Originally, it reads, "Pizza Palace Field Trips are Today" and they change it to read, "Please Don't Fart in a Diaper." The principal, Mr. Krupp, doesn't think this is funny: "I think it's rude and offensive," he says. To this, George replies with impeccable logic, "That's why it's funny" (29). When George and Harold protest that the punishment that Mr. Krupp goes on to inflict upon them is "cruel and unusual," he snarls, "That's why it's funny" (30). Pilkey uses inversion and comparison to suggest that child humor and adult humor are quite different and that each strikes the other as inappropriate and unamusing: what is funny to an adult is merely a transparent abuse of power to a child. Adults and children occupy separate affiliation groups and Pilkey's satiric humor is expressed at the expense of the dominant group, adults. This nudges his child audience towards seeing themselves as an affiliation group opposed to adults.

The Audience of Satire

It is easy to see, then, that adult-affiliated readers of the *Captain Underpants* books might feel ill at ease. Older theoretical conceptions of satire assumed that readers would easily find a position to occupy on the side of the satirist and opposite the satirized subject. That is, although one conception of satire suggests it is meant to reform its audience, at the same time, it is thought that the

butt of the satire will not see him or herself in the text. The reader is expected not to identify with the satirized subject, but instead to gain pleasure in seeing the person who is the butt of the joke as different from himself. Gerald L. Bruns notes, "When reading satire one is always looking for a position to occupy […]. Inevitably you will hear a critic say that satire moves us to laugh at ourselves, but not once in a hundred times will he really mean it. He will always read the text so as to be on the side of the satirist, that is, behind or on the right side of the veil of irony: somehow in the know—nestled among the laughing gods" (128). Therefore, a paradox arises with respect to the effect that satire might actually have: although the point of satire is said to be to enact change through forcing people to confront the satirized actions or thoughts as their own and to change their ways, at the same time, the reader is expected not actually to identify with the satirized object. Further, if the reader cannot easily find a place on "the right side of the veil," the satire may backfire. In *The Difference Satire Makes* (2001), Fredric Bogel notes that readers often resist satire when they cannot find a secure position to occupy in relation to it: "finding themselves outside rather than inside, confronting their own uncertainty rather than their mastery, readers may readily become hostile toward the satirist" (27-28).

This paradoxical indeterminacy leads Bogel to explore other possible aims of satire, including the creation and maintenance of boundaries. According to Bogel, in order for satire to work, the boundaries between the satiric object and the writer or reader must be more ambiguous than previous theory has suggested. In other words, the satirist and satiric object or the butt of the satire and the reader of satire are not as unambiguously polarized as assumed. He draws upon anthropological accounts of scapegoating and pollution, examining how we create and affirm boundaries between humanity and monstrosity, between insider and outsider. In such cases, identification with the object is an important part of its rejection:

> On the one hand, there is an agent of exclusion or expulsion—a satirist, a social group, a socially authorized representative. Moreover, the act of exclusion or expulsion requires a firm line to be drawn between inside and outside, expeller and expelled, a line whose clear establishment or reestablishment is often, one could say, a principal object of the expulsion, as one might argue that the point of arresting and incarcerating criminals is not only to restrain them but also to clarify the line between legal and illegal behavior. On the other hand, there are also links between expeller and expelled, inside and outside, and these compromise and complicate both the expulsion and the clarity of difference on which it is allegedly based. (68-69)

According to Bogel, satire functions like scapegoating in creating and maintaining such boundaries—boundaries that require constant policing due to inherent ambiguities connecting the reader with the satiric object.[18]

Similarly, Perry Nodelman argues that adults utilize adult-privileging assumptions about childhood to create texts that maintain and enforce categorical boundaries between adults and children. In so doing, he argues, "We characterize the other as other in order to define ourselves. […] We adults can see ourselves as rational, virtuous, mature, and normal exactly because we have irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different children to compare ourselves to. We need children to be childlike so that we can understand what maturity is—the opposite of being childlike" (32). Such polarized conceptions require the kind of boundary policing that Bogel discusses, and conventional children's books use scapegoating to enforce boundaries in ways that authorize adult views. On the other hand, subversive children's satire exploits the ambiguities inherent in definitions of "adult" and "child."

The *Black Lagoon* books provide excellent examples of conventional children's texts: in each, child characters have "child-like" concerns about the terrible things that adults might do to them, but are reassured that adults have their best interests at heart. Thus, readers are encouraged to put away their childish fantasizing and embrace the adult world, even as they are not quite allowed to join it just yet. It is no accident that the final illustration in *The Cafeteria Lady from the Black Lagoon* features the children imagining themselves in the adult world, participating in a dinner party. They are still children, and this is merely fantasy, but it is the first step to putting away "childish things." These disparate groups, though separated by strongly delineated boundaries, are at the same time inextricably intertwined. And in adult-sanctioned children's texts, it is the child-like aspects of the self that are scapegoated, rejected by child characters in an effort to encourage child readers to be more adult-like and thus less threatening.

Pilkey's books, in contrast, perform boundary enforcing by scapegoating adults. A quote from *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby* hammers this home. On one of the Flip-O-Rama pages, George starts to explain how to work the page and then digresses (not incidentally, another satiric technique employed to great effect by Swift, among others): "You know, since nobody reads these pages, we

[18] For further discussion of scapegoating and satire, see Elliott 84. Richard Nash also discusses how satire functions to create behavior boundaries, focusing on how "the satirist, often characterized as a figure of rage and violence, serves through his attacks the social function of establishing the limits of social behavior" (98). See also Justman; and Seidel 9ff.

figured they'd be a good place to insert subliminimal [sic] messages: Think for yourself. Question Authority. Read banned books! Kids have the same constitutional rights as grown-ups!!! Don't forget to boycott standardized testing!!! (*Super Diaper Baby* 76). Here, Pilkey blurs conventional boundaries between adults and children, suggesting to his child readers that they are the same as adults under the U.S. Constitution.[19] At the same time, he scapegoats adult-oriented agendas by encouraging the reader to question authority and to reject standardized testing that attempts to press all children into the same one-size-fits-all mold. Further, returning to the idea that both satire and children's literature are expected to have some kind of corrective function, similar messages throughout the texts suggest the corrective function that Pilkey's satire serves. He satirizes adults and our penchant for using labels to deny children basic, fundamental liberties. But aiming the satiric correction at adults means that the corrective function in relation to children's literature is topsy turvey to our expectations. Adults expect children's literature to perform correctively—to teach—but we do not expect the form of the literature to be satire, and we certainly do not expect to be the subject of that satirical correction. Child readers, on the other hand, may delight in such subversive expressions of child solidarity.[20]

But *Adults* Buy These Books…

So far, we have seen why many children delight in the *Captain Underpants* series and why adults may be vexed by the books. Troubling issues now crop up. To start with, despite outcry over the books, they are, in fact, bestsellers. Child buyers cannot account for the millions of books sold; for the most part, children's books are purchased by adults. However, there are at least three ways to explain adults tolerating (and buying) the books without actually liking them. First, many adults believe that if certain books encourage children to love reading, this outweighs problematic elements within the books. Second, public librarians can purchase the books on the principle that libraries are not for elevating taste but for providing the public with what we want to read—and children clearly want to read these books. A third explanation for adult tolerance is rooted in Mikhail Bakhtin's suggestion that carnival (and by extension,

[19] Whether or not they actually are is debatable, of course, but is beside the point here.

[20] There are other parallels between satire and children's literature, many of which are likely to disturb adults, such as the use of rule-violating language play. But space does not permit their exploration and we must turn our attention elsewhere. I hope that I have at least pointed the way toward recognizing them, however.

carnivalesque texts like *Captain Underpants*) function as safety valves. In discussing the Middle Ages, Bakhtin argues that the "intolerant seriousness of the official church ideology made it necessary to legalize the gaiety, laughter, and jests which had been eliminated from the canonized ritual and etiquette. Thus forms of pure laughter were created parallel to the official forms" (74). He also notes that "it was precisely the one-sided character of official seriousness which led to the necessity of creating a vent for the second nature of man, for laughter" (75). Similarly, some adults may view the *Captain Underpants* books as parallel to but outside of the category of official (that is to say, "good") children's literature, functioning as a safe place for children to indulge anti-authoritarian impulses under the watchful eye of an adult.[21]

Carnivalesque Appeal

There are myriad other reasons why adults might hold their noses and buy the books. But this does not account for another category of adult readers and buyers. If the books are designed, as I have suggested, to appeal to children at the expense of adults, how do we explain the category "adults who simply enjoy reading *Captain Underpants*"?[22] A useful place to start wrestling with this question is with Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque as a mode that allows "the folk" to laugh in the face of cosmic terror. He says that "an obscure memory of cosmic perturbations in the distant past and the dim terror of future catastrophes form the very basis of human thought, speech, and images. This cosmic terror is not mystic in the strict sense of the word; rather it is the fear of that which is materially huge and cannot be overcome by force" (335). For children, adults may evoke a complicated response related to this fear: at the same time that children depend upon adults for security, adults also may appear formidably impervious to a child's anger and frustration. But children, of course, are not the only ones who suffer such fear. Though we learn to cope, adults (as Bakhtin implic-

[21] For discussion of how this aspect of carnival undermines its potentially subversive functions, see Stallybrass and White 13ff. See also Griffin's discussion of political satire as a "safety valve" *Satire* 156ff. Palmeri also discusses this in the context of the use of parody in satire (2). For further discussion of how carnivalesque elements in the *Captain Underpants* books may explain their appeal to child readers, see Wannamaker. For more general discussions of carnival and children's literature, see K. James; Stephens; Stallcup; Thomas.

[22] How, for that matter, do we explain how an adult could write them? Pilkey himself problematizes the seemingly secure boundaries between adult and child. In this context, it is useful to examine his responses to adult critics of the books. See, for example, "Dav Pilkey"; and Hatty. The content and tone of his responses suggest that, although an adult by chronological age, Pilkey aligns himself with the heroic and subversive child characters of the books, not with the adults who criticize his work.

itly is discussing) also experience this sense of cosmic terror, and he argues that it is carnivalesque laughter that can defeat it: "Cosmic catastrophe represented in the material bodily lower stratum is degraded, humanized, and transformed into grotesque monsters. Terror is conquered by laughter" (336). Many of the alarming forces that George, Harold, and Captain Underpants face are fashioned out of such materials as excrement and snot and thus represent an earthy, humorous extension of the human body—that is, they are both deeply personal and ultimately containable: our heroes can conquer them just as we learn to control and contain the bodily substances out of which they are constructed. In this way, the books can appeal across the seemingly-impassable adult-child boundary: children and adults both may enjoy the *Captain Underpants* series as a terror-defeating belly laugh in the face of all that is fearsome.

More complicated reasons for the potential appeal of the Pilkey's texts for different audiences manifest gloriously in the figure of Captain Underpants. While on one level, the books assert clear boundaries between bullying adults and heroic children, on another level, Captain Underpants demonstrates category fluidity that undermines these distinctions. When the straitlaced principal is turned into the heroic but goofy Captain Underpants, he rips off his adult façade (clothing and a toupee) and dons a red cape and nothing else besides a really big pair of underwear. He then races around saying such ridiculous things as "I fight for Truth, Justice, and *all* that is Pre-Shrunk and Cottony!" (*Adventures* 65, emphasis in original). In this mode, he looks like a hugely overgrown bald baby that the boys must try to control as if he were their younger brother (albeit, an idealized younger brother who can take them on thrilling adventures). We might read him as a child-like id run amok, giving free rein to childish behavior that the adult is supposed to have rejected or at least repressed. Children may find this revelation of adult interiority transgressively revealing and thus subversively hilarious, while adults may be uncomfortable not simply with this perception of themselves, but also with its being revealed to tittering children. Children, we think, are supposed to revere us adults as wise, mature, and self-controlled, not as seething with potentially eruptive and disruptive impulses. Adults may first see themselves as the butt of the satiric jokes about their cruelty and disregard for children and then experience an unconscious push-pull response with Captain Underpants, identifying with him at the same time they are horrified by what he reveals about themselves. Bogel notes that "the real readerly work, and discomfort, arises from confronting a satirist—and a satiric object—whose ambiguity

and difficult relation to our readerly selves impede the security of easy identification or easy distance" (66). Many adult readers of *Captain Underpants* will not perform this work and perhaps will not even admit the work is there to be done, preferring simply to dismiss the text as beneath notice.

But for those adult readers who are willing to do this work (even if unconsciously), the dual image of the grotesque, joyful body (for Captain Underpants, with his silly grin and triumphant cry of "Tra-La-Laaaaa!" is always filled with boundless *joie de vivre*) can be appealing in a specifically carnivalesque sense. Bakhtin argues that the material bodily principle is one of ambivalence, of change and renewal, of circularity rather than linearity. In relation to terracotta figurines of "senile pregnant hags," he notes that this is a "pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness" (25-26). Such, precisely, is the figure of Captain Underpants. In his bald rotundity, he is both decaying adult (losing his hair, growing fat) and flourishing newborn (sprouting peach fuzz and chubbily bursting with life). He is both vitalized childhood and grotesque adulthood, suggesting the timelessness and circularity that Bakhtin argues is part of the extra-official appeal of the carnivalesque. Again, we bump up against category fluidity here. Perhaps adult readers who enjoy the cutting satire instead of flinching at it are less strongly affiliated with the category "adult" and more strongly affiliated with other categories that cut across adult-child boundaries. As Bakhtin notes, part of the appeal of carnival lies in its reversal of high and low and its "suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10). With the figure of Captain Underpants, Pilkey strips away the trappings of adulthood and mixes top and bottom to reveal a different, unofficial representation of the world to the reader—a subversive reality that undermines the official story about adults and children, people with power and people without. Adults who are not strongly affiliated with adulthood can gain pleasure from this carnivalesque reversal.

Such reversals also lie at the heart of the pleasure these books may provide to children's literature scholars in particular and the discomfort this essay may impart to other academics: seriously addressing these books challenges long-entrenched boundaries in academia and provides another enjoyable/disturbing reversal and mixture of high and low. Children's literature has long been used

to mark the borders of "true" literature, functioning as the scapegoat whose polluting presence must be excluded. Felicity Hughes, in "Children's Literature: Theory and Practice" shows how in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

> novelists in a bid for critical respectability, tried to dissociate the novel from its family readership and redirect it toward what was seen as art's traditional elite audience of educated white males outside the home, at court, the coffee house, or the club. The "serious novel" would have to earn its laurels, or win its spurs, at the cost of being unsuitable for women and children—beyond their reach not only because it dealt with facts of life from which such people had to be "protected," but because it was too difficult, requiring not only maturity but discrimination beyond the reach of all but the highly educated. (544)

According to Hughes, we came to assume that the best literature is, by definition, that which cannot be read by children. Beverly Lyon Clark further explores the relationship of children's literature to the canon in *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (2003). She traces how modern critical approaches to analyzing texts specifically marginalize children's literature, and she shows that, although children's literature had been taken seriously in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth, it "simply dropped off the cultural radar screen" (76).[23,24]

The shifting place Rabelais' work occupied in the canon parallels that of children's literature, as Bakhtin's discussion of his significance suggests. When humor was perceived as a legitimate means of conveying philosophical arguments, Rabelais could use scatological satire to create "literature." But by the end of the sixteenth century, his work had been shifted lower and lower until finally it was driven out of the canon:

> The attitude toward laughter of the seventeenth century and of the years that followed can be characterized thus. Laughter is not a universal, philosophical form. […] That which is important and essential cannot be comical. Neither can history and persons representing it—kings, generals, heroes—be shown in a comic aspect. The sphere of the comic is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about man cannot be told in the language of laughter. Therefore, the place of laughter in literature belongs only to the low genres. (67)

As scatological satire written for children, the *Captain Underpants* series occupies a low cultural station, and literary criticism analyzing the texts may be viewed with suspicion: seen as precisely as lacking in depth and seriousness of

[23] Clark's chapter "Kiddie Lit in the Academy" is of particular relevance to my point here.

[24] Julia L. Mickenberg points out one advantage of this exclusion: because children's literature was devalued and thus virtually ignored, leftist writers could disseminate subversive ideas in children's texts even when other outlets were severely limited (14-15).

purpose as the texts themselves. So why am I not only addressing these texts, but positively enjoying myself in doing so? Here we can circle back to explore how disgust and its sister emotion, contempt, may explain the appeal of *Captain Underpants* to certain adult audiences. William Ian Miller, in *The Anatomy of Disgust* (1997), notes that "contempt is the emotional complex that articulates and maintains hierarchy, status, rank, and respectability" (217). Many of us who work in the field of children's literature can tell of situations in which contempt (often quickly suppressed) has marked reactions to our work, both by other academics and by the general public. This "downward" contempt delineates the boundaries of the acceptable, appropriate, and valuable. Miller also discusses "upward" contempt, felt by those who are lower in the hierarchy for those who are higher. One type of upward contempt utilized in satire finds

> the high's standards of conduct and virtue and the social institutions which maintain them silly, a cause for general mirth. […] Here the strategy is not to paint the higher as knaves, but to see them as clowns and fools. This is the feast of misrule. In this setting the standards and virtues of the powerful are meaningless. Only their power matters. The glee, mirth, laughter, the giggles, deny for the moment the forms of constrained deference. (222-223)

It is clear how this relates to the subversive pleasure that children feel upon reading *Captain Underpants*: the satire turns powerful adults into clowns and fools. But this also explains one way that children's literature scholars may gain pleasure from the books. I can enjoy the upward contempt that Pilkey utilizes not by displacing it upon *all* adults (as a child reader might) but by aiming it at colleagues who regard themselves as superior, who view as contemptible the literature I value. This boundary is not between adults and children (as it is usually constructed in discussions of children's literature), but between high and low; between those who occupy lofty positions and those who lack overt power but are happy to seize an opportunity to mock putative superiors. That is, I can identify with George and Harold not as a child (for I can never be a child again), but as someone having a cheeky good time tweaking the noses of the powerful.

But more is at stake than simply explaining an adult's pleasure in a children's text. Consider for a moment your initial reaction to this essay. Perhaps you think of *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (if you think of it at all) as the lowest rung on the already-debased ladder of children's literature. Perhaps you find it shocking that an article about such an ephemeral, silly, disgusting text is appearing in *Genre*; perhaps you even wrinkled your nose in the classic "face-

work" of disgust.[25] With such a reaction, you participate in the boundary patrolling required to maintain the division between high and low. Patrolling is crucial because such boundaries are always in danger of shifting, slipping, becoming indeterminate—and this indeterminacy threatens those who are safely inside. After all, as Miller notes, "the low by virtue of being low are always a risk to threaten and misbehave, to harm and contaminate the high who know they are high because the low are there to provide the necessary contrast" (45). Further, Wilson suggests that such contaminating misbehavior can be deliberate: "an important purpose of all shock art is to puncture conformity's protective balloon. Transgression is a strong, upsetting way of making someone else, hidden within the protective covering of social conformity, face both the absurdity of any particular social habit and the sad recognition of how much has been missed" (71). He later notes, "people on the safe side of boundaries may feel disgust, but those on the outside, consciously engaged in shock tactics, will already have taken that disgust into account. Its presence, and the fact that it might be aroused even to the point of destructive revulsion, may be the most important motivation for the shock action in the first place" (92). Merely writing about a text such as *Captain Underpants* (let alone sending the essay to a journal that does not specialize in children's literature), is the academic equivalent of George and Harold monkeying with school signs—a way of thumbing my nose at the establishment. Knowing that it is still relatively rare for an academic essay on children's literature to appear outside the excellent journals that focus on the subject, and that those that are published in more general academic periodicals often examine "respectable" children's literature (texts that have achieved some level of historicity and high cultural status, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*),[26] I deliberately chose to write about a series that shrieks of low status, that revels in its carnivalesque rolling about in the muck and that satirizes its own low place in the academic pantheon.[27] Bakhtin argues that Rabelais' "images have a certain undestroyable non-official nature. No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded serious-

[25] In fact, it has been interesting to observe the reactions I have encountered while developing this article: I have encountered such facework from family, friends, students, and faculty members who would potentially be on my tenure committee. For discussion of this facework, see Miller 85-87, 218-219; and Wilson.

[26] A clear counter-example, of course, is Laurie Langbauer's recent *PMLA* essay, "The Ethics and Practice of Lemony Snicket: Adolescence and Generation X" (2007). Though her essay takes up quite a different topic from mine, at some level we are both interested in problematizing the boundaries between adult and child and between literature and children's literature.

[27] See, for example, Pilkey's tongue-in-cheek comparison of his books with *Moby Dick* in *Talking Toilets* (90).

ness can coexist with Rabelaisian images: these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook" (3). Of course, Pilkey's texts function this way for children in opposition to adult culture, but they also do so for children's literature scholars in opposition to the academic establishment. Shifting one's perspective highlights the "narrow-minded seriousness" used to maintain long-entrenched boundaries for the benefit of the powerful. But even more, it calls attention to the constructed condition of these boundaries and the price one pays, professionally, for spending one's mental energy on *Captain Underpants* instead of, say, Shakespeare or Milton.[28]

Thus, although I started this project, long ago, simply from an interest in the intersections between satire and children's literature, I conclude it by making a broader point about the place of children's literature in the academy and the function that it serves. An underlying—and hitherto unrecognized—motivation for me in writing this article and sending it to the wider academic world outside the boundaries of children's literature scholarship is to use what Wilson calls shock tactics to persuade you to reconsider some of the boundaries that have marked our world. I don't wish to do away with the category of children's lit-

[28] To be sure, there are important material benefits as well, not least of which is the recent phenomenon of a growing job market for children's literature specialists, coupled with a relatively small field of qualified applicants. In itself, this suggests that long-entrenched attitudes are gradually changing. I also wish to note here that as I explored my motivations during the writing of this article, I realized that they were predicated upon a particular perception of the marginalization of children's literature—and that there is controversy among children's literature scholars about this perception. In a footnote, Langbauer describes herself as "a critic from outside the field" of children's literature and draws upon a 2002 article by Jerry Griswold to briefly raise the issue of the field's insularity. This is a subject that is virtually guaranteed to generate heated debate among children's literature critics and is tangentially relevant to my point in this essay. Why aren't articles on children's literature published more regularly outside of children's literature journals? Are we limiting ourselves by only sending our work to journals specific to the field? Or are more general academic journals truly disdainful of work on children's literature? Though this is how the debate has sometimes been framed, I think it is also important to note the logistics of tenure. Young scholars who need to demonstrate productivity within a relatively short time period logically will send their work to editors who are likely to be open to their subject (and thus more likely to publish their work) and to journals that allow them to document their participation in a clearly defined field. Those considerations aside, however, I can point to various personal experiences that suggest lingering doubts in mainstream culture about the value of children's literature; I do not believe that it is simply that we children's literature scholars are isolating ourselves. For example, in recent discussions with more than a dozen American literature colleagues from across the country, I found that not a single person suggested teaching a single children's books in any American literature course spanning from 1607 to the twenty-first century. While most professors are very careful to include in their courses texts written by or about women and minorities, children's literature does not yet seem to be perceived as similarly important and integral to the larger field of "literature." Finally, I would like to note that it was Griswold's article that originally prompted me to seek wider dissemination of my work.

erature, of course; boundaries *can* provoke valuable questions and provide useful schemata. But I do encourage us all not to use these boundaries reflexively as a way to define "true" literature, and I hope that the first half of the essay has pointed toward the myriad ways in which children's texts can be integrated into fruitful discussions of literature of all kinds.[29] In closing, consider Bakhtin's point about laughter that opposes intolerant, dogmatic seriousness:

> True ambivalent and universal laughter does not deny seriousness but purifies and completes it. Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. Laughter does not permit seriousness to atrophy and to be torn away from the one being, forever incomplete. It restores this ambivalent wholeness. Such is the function of laughter in the historical development of culture and literature. (122-123)

Perhaps it is time for analyses of *Captain Underpants* and other children's books to infuse academic discussions with the fresh air of such restorative laughter.[30]

WORKS CITED

Anderson, Celia Catlett and Marilyn Fain Apseloff. *Nonsense Literature for Children: Aesop to Seuss*. Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1989.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Bennett, William J., ed. *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.

Benson, Linda. "The Hidden Curriculum and the Child's New Discourse: Beverly Cleary's *Ramona Goes to School*." *Children's Literature in Education* 30.1 (March 1999): 9-29.

Bloom, Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom. *Satire's Persuasive Voice*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979.

Bogel, Fredric V. *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from*

[29] In a useful discussion historicizing the struggle to bring children's literature into mainstream critical discussion, Katharine Jones wrestles with this problem of maintaining a separate but included category for children's literature. Ultimately, she suggests it be recast as "child literature" and that we use this term to "open up significant issues about age role construction frequently neglected or ignored by broader theory and philosophy" (305). For a related discussion of the importance of incorporating children's literature into general theoretical discussions, see Thacker, who argues that "the transformation of critical theory over the last few decades has meant that theory needs children's literature" (1).

[30] A Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity grant from the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects at California State University, Northridge enabled me to develop and complete this essay. I am very grateful for this support and that of my colleagues.

Jonson to Byron. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001.

Bruns, Gerald L. "Allegory and Satire: A Rhetorical Meditation." *New Literary History* 11.1 (Autumn 1979): 121-132.

Cable, Mary. *The Little Darlings: A History of Child Rearing in America.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.

Cadden, Mike. "'Hey, I Get It!' Parody in Children's Literature." *Five Owls* 18.4 (2006): 86-91.

Cart, Michael. *What's So Funny? Wit and Humor in American Children's Literature*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

Chapman, Antony J. and Hugh C. Foot, eds. *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications*. London: John Wiley and Sons, 1976.

Chernaik, Warren. *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003.

Clark, Larra. "'The Chocolate War' Tops 2004 Most Challenged Book List." 11 Feb. 2005. American Library Association. 23 May 2005 <http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=pressreleases&template=/contentmanagement/contentdisplay.cfm&ContentID=87971>.

---. "Harry Potter Series Tops List of Most Challenged Books Four Years in a Row." 13 Jan. 2003. American Library Association. 23 May 2005 <http://www.ala.org/
Template.cfm?Section=archive&template=/contentmanagement/contentdisplay.cfm
&ContentID=9404>.

---. "Harry Potter Tops List of Most Challenged Books of 21st Century." 21 September 2006. American Library Association. 6 January 2008 <http://www.ala.org/ala/pressreleases 2006/september2006/HarryPottermostchallenge.htm>.

Cleary, Beverly. "The Laughter of Children." *Horn Book Magazine* 58.5 (October 1982): 555-564.

"Colorado Children's Book Award." 2005. Literature Resources Online LLC. 4 May 2005. <http://www.literatureplace.com/awards/award_title.asp?AwardTitleID=74>.

Combe, Kirk. *A Martyr for Sin: Rochester's Critique of Polity, Sexuality, and Society*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998.

Connolly, Paula T. "Cinder-redo." *Five Owls* 18.4 (2006): 96-97.

Coveney, Peter. *The Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: a Study of the Theme in English Literature*. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books,

1967.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. New York: Knopf, 1964.

Daniel, Carolyn. "Hairy on the Inside: From Cannibals to Paedophiles." *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 13.3 (December 2003): 5-21.

"Dav Pilkey." 2003. Scholastic. 4 May 2005 <http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-pilkey-dav.asp>.

Davies, Christie. *Ethnic Humor Around the World: A Comparative Analysis*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1990.

Dentith, Simon. *Parody*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. 1966. London: Routledge Classics, 2004.

Elliott, Robert C. *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960.

Farley-Hills, David. *Rochester's Poetry*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978.

Feinberg, Leonard. *Introduction to Satire*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State UP, 1967.

Giroux, Henry A. *Stealing Innocence: Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

Greven, Philip J. *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

Griffin, Dustin. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.

---. *Satires Against Man: The Poems of Rochester*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1973.

Griswold, Jerry (Jerome). "The Future of the Profession." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 26.2 (April 2002): 236-242.

Guroian, Vigen. *Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child's Moral Imagination*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

Hardyment, Christina. *Dream Babies*: *Three Centuries of Good Advice on Child Care*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

Hatty, Michele. "Interview: USA Weekend." Dav Pilkey's Extra Crunchy Website O'Fun. 23 May 2005 <http://www.pilkey.com/int2.php>.

Hays, Sharon. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Highet, Gilbert. *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962.

Higonnet, Anne. *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.

Hodgson, Lucia. *Raised in Captivity: Why Does America Fail Its Children?* Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1997.

Hollindale, Peter. *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*. Gloucester: Thimble

Press, 1997.

Howe, Frederick C. "The Child in the Elementary School." *Child Study Journal* 23.4 (1993): 227-363.

Hughes, Felicity A. "Children's Literature: Theory and Practice." *ELH* 45 (1978): 542-561.

Hunt, Peter. *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991.

Ingram, Allan. *Intricate Laughter in the Satire of Swift and Pope*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

James, Allison. "Confections, Concoctions, and Conceptions." Jenkins 394-405.

James, Kathryn. "Crossing the Boundaries: Scatology, Taboo and the Carnivalesque in the Picture Book." *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 12.3 (December 2002): 19-27.

Jenkins, Henry, ed.. *The Children's Culture Reader*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Jones, Katharine. "Getting Rid of Children's Literature." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 30.3 (September 2006): 287-315.

Justman, Stewart. *The Springs of Liberty: The Satiric Tradition and Freedom of Speech*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1999.

Kincaid, James R. *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*. 1992. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Knapp, Mary, and Herbert Knapp. *One Potato, Two Potato…: The Secret Education of American Children*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976.

Krauthammer, Charles. "Hiroshima, Mon Petit." *Time* 27 March 1995: 80.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.

La Fave, Lawrence, Jay Haddad, and William A. Maesen. "Superiority, Enhanced Self-Esteem, and Perceived Incongruity Humour Theory." Chapman and Foot 63-91.

Langbauer, Laurie. "The Ethics and Practice of Lemony Snicket: Adolescence and Generation X." *PMLA* 122.2 (March 2007): 502-521.

Lee, Jae Num. *Swift and Scatological Satire*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971.

Lurie, Alison. *Don't Tell The Grown-ups: Subversive Children's Literature*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990.

MacLeod, Anne Scott. *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994.

---. *A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture 1820-1860*. Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1975.

Males, Mike A. *Framing Youth: Ten Myths About the Next Generation*. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999.

Margolis, Maxine L. *Mothers and Such: Views of American Women and Why They Changed*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984.

McGhee, Paul E. and Antony J. Chapman, eds. *Children's Humour*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1980.

McGillis, Roderick. "'Captain Underpants Is My Hero': Things Have Changed—or Have They?" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 27.2 (Summer 2002): 62-70.

Metcalf, Eva-Maria. "Civilizing Manners and Mocking Morality: Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 20.2 (1996): 201-216.

---. "Tall Tale and Spectacle in *Pippi Longstocking*." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 130-135.

Mickenberg, Julia L. *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.

Miller, William Ian. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.

Munde, Gail. "What Are You Laughing At? Differences in Children's and Adults' Humorous Book Selections for Children." *Children's Literature in Education* 28.4 (1997): 219-233.

Myers, Mitzi. "Socializing Rosamond: Educational Ideology and Fictional Form." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 14.2 (Summer 1989): 52-58.

Nash, Richard. "Satyrs and Satire in Augustan England." *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*. Ed. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 95-105.

Nodelman, Perry. "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17.1 (Spring 1992): 29-35.

Olson, Kirby. *Comedy After Postmodernism: Rereading Comedy from Edward Lear to Charles Willeford*. Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech UP, 2001.

O'Malley, Andrew. *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Palmeri, Frank. *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

Paulson, Ronald. *The Fictions of Satire*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967.

"Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award." 2005. Literature Resources Online LLC. 4 May 2005. <http://www.literatureplace.com/awards/award_

title.asp?AwardTitleID=79>.
Pilkey, Dav. *The Adventures of Captain Underpants*. New York: The Blue Sky Press/Scholastic, Inc., 1997.
---. *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2002.
---. *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.
---. *Captain Underpants and the Invasion of the Incredibly Naughty Cafeteria Ladies from Outer Space (and the Subsequent Assault of the Equally Evil Lunchroom Zombie Nerds)*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1999.
---. *Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2000.
Pollock, Linda A. *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. 1982. New York: Random House, Inc., 1994.
Richardson, Alan. "Nineteenth-Century Children's Satire and the Ambivalent Reader." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 122-126.
Rochester, John Wilmot, Second Earl of. *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*. Ed. David M. Vieth. 1968. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1974.
Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. 1984. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.
Rushdy, Ashraf H.A. "A New Emetics of Interpretation: Swift, His Critics and the Alimentary Canal." *Mosaic* 24.3-4 (Summer-Fall 1991): 1-32.
Russell, David L. "The Comic Spirit and Cosmic Order in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 117-119.
Sauerwein, Kristina. "In Complaint to Riverside Schools, Toilet-Humor Book Doesn't Amuse." *Los Angeles Times* 3 June 2003: B1+.
Savelsberg, Joachim J. "*Struwwelpeter* at One Hundred and Fifty: Norms, Control, and Discipline in the Civilizing Process." *Lion and the Unicorn* 20.2 (Dec. 1996): 181-200.
Schorsch, Anita. *Images of Childhood: An Illustrated Social History*. 1979. Pittstown, New Jersey: The Main Street Press, 1985.
Seidel, Michael. *Satiric Inheritance: Rabelais to Sterne*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.
Sherman, Josepha, and T.K.F Weisskopf. *Greasy Grimy Gopher Guts: The Subversive Folklore of Childhood*. Little Rock, AR: August House Publishers, Inc., 1995.
Shultz, Thomas R. and Judith Robillard. "The Development of Linguistic Humour in Children: Incongruity Through Rule Violation." McGhee and

Chapman 59-90.

"South Dakota Prairie Pasque Award." 2005. Literature Resources Online LLC. 4 May 2005. <http://www.literatureplace.com/awards/award_title.asp?AwardTitleID=56>.

Spector, Cecile C. "Children's Comprehension of Idioms in the Context of Humor." *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 27 (October 1996): 307-313.

Stahl, J.D. "Mark Twain, Master Satirist." *Five Owls* 18.4 (2006): 94-95.

---. "Satire and the Evolution of Perspective in Children's Literature: Mark Twain, E.B. White, and Louise Fitzhugh." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 119-122

Stallcup, Jackie E. "Inescapable Bodies, Disquieting Perception: Why Adults Seek to Tame and Harness Swift's Excremental Satire in *Gulliver's Travels*." *Children's Literature in Education* 35.2 (June 2004): 87-111.

Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Abr. Ed. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979.

Sutherland, Robert D. "Hidden Persuaders: Political Ideologies in Literature for Children." *Children's Literature in Education* 16.3 (1985): 143-157.

Swift, Jonathan. *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*. Ed. Herbert Davis. 14 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957-.

Test, George A. *Satire: Spirit and Art*. Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991.

Thacker, Deborah. "Disdain or Ignorance? Literary Theory and the Absence of Children's Literature." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 24.1 (2000): 1-17.

Thaler, Mike. *The Cafeteria Lady from the Black Lagoon*. Ill. Jared Lee. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.

Thomas, Joseph T., Jr. "Child Poets and the Poetry of the Playground." *Children's Literature* 32 (2004): 152-177.

Tower, Roni Beth, and Jerome L. Singer. "Imagination, Interest, and Joy in Early Childhood: Some Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Findings." McGhee and Chapman 27-57.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000.

Vallone, Lynne M. "Laughing With the Boys and Learning With the Girls: Humor in Nineteenth-Century American Juvenile Fiction." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 127-130.

Walsh, Sue. "'Irony?—But Children Don't Get It, Do They?' The Idea of Appropriate Language in Narratives for Children." *Children's Literature*

Association Quarterly 28.1 (Spring 2003): 26-36.

Wannamaker, Annette. *Boys in Children's Literature and Popular Culture: Masculinity, Abjection, and the Fictional Child*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Webster, Jeremy W. "Rochester's Easy King: Rereading the (Sexual) Politics of the Scepter Lampoon." *ELN* 42.4 (June 2005): 1-19.

Weisenburger, Steven. *Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel, 1930-1980*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1995.

West, Mark I. "The Grotesque and the Taboo in Roald Dahl's Humorous Writings for Children." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (Fall 1990): 115-116.

Wilson, Robert Rawdon. *The Hydra's Tale: Imagining Disgust*. Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2002.

Wolfenstein, Martha. *Children's Humor: A Psychological Analysis*. 1954. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1978.

Zillmann, Dolf and Joanne R. Cantor. "A Disposition Theory of Humour and Mirth." Chapman and Foot 93-115.

Zipes, Jack. "Second Thoughts on Socialization through Literature for Children." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 5 (1981): 19-32.