
Writing for Parents about Children's Literature in Mass Market Publications, 1900-1950

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ABSTRACT

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, various women have written about the genre both within and outside of their vocational fields. This article examines the writing of significant women in librarianship, education, politics, and publishing. Their advice to parents in mass market publications is of paramount interest. It reflects a desire to create moral children and competent parents, while teaching parents how to instill in their children a love for books and reading. Theoretically, the article takes a feminist perspective with an attempt to uncover the voices of women that might have been forgotten. Suggestions for further research are included.

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Kay Vandergrift's (1993) call for a feminist research agenda for youth literature informs a great deal of the impetus for this study. In it, Vandergrift advocates for an examination of the women who create youth literature and for an examination of the voices of those who act as intermediaries between books and the people who use them. She sees a variety of people who function as intermediaries: the agents who get the books to the publishers; the publishers who get them to reviewers; the reviewers who provide significant data and analysis for those in libraries responsible for book selection; and the librarians and teachers who serve as intermediaries in perhaps the most important positions—to parents and children.

Vandergrift (1993) writes that "women's work has often been described as the work of caring" (p. 26). Work with children is certainly considered women's work, evidenced by the high percentage of women in positions involving children and children's literature. The consideration of children's literature work—writing, publishing, teaching, and librarianship—as a "pink collar" profession is important to explore, particularly in a culture which is male dominated and functions from the standpoint of those who have, throughout our history, made decisions and constructed the world in which we live.

Further, Vandergrift (1993) asserts that it would "be interesting to examine reviews from the history of youth literature to determine whether texts by or about females received favorable reviews" (p. 26). As intermediaries, the influence that women reviewers have on those selecting books for children is great. This is not to minimize the significance of male reviewers. Nonetheless, an examination of the women who served in this capacity is important, because it might shed light upon the kinds of teaching, learning, and development that women advocated in the first part of the century.

In their important work entitled *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al. (1986) describe the various styles that women exhibit in learning and making meaning. Women's learning styles are described as "receiving," "subjective," "procedural," and "integrated." An understanding of the distinctions among these processes will serve as a backdrop for understanding some of the writing examined in this article. As receivers, women take in knowledge from a variety of sources, allowing some authority to impart information to them. These women lack a certain voice, not viewing themselves as significant enough in their understanding to create meanings for themselves.

Subjective learning is an intuitive way of going about the process. These learners believe only what feels right to themselves—that which they can experience alone—and subsequently shut out a good deal of other information or ideas that might be of use. These women, "in contrast to the women at the position of received knowledge, who allowed the words of others to guide them, . . . described themselves as avoiding the words of others" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 74).

Procedural learning, according to Belenky et al., is a process in which "women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge" (p. 15). These women seem to be so concerned with objective knowledge and testing things in order to find truth that they commit the exact opposite of subjective learners: they trust nothing other than analysis. They do not respect their own feelings or experience as ways of knowing.

The integrated way of knowing is the most collaborative and probably represents the most mature way of learning. The integrated learner

balances the subjective with the procedural methods, applying analytic frameworks to a passion for knowing. The learner relies on his or her own experience and the knowledge and expertise of others as well as testing and analyzing to come to a consensus about what information is sought.

A central role of mothering is that of teaching the next generation. Belenky would argue that it is *the* central role of motherhood. It is important in this context to be aware, however, that many feminists speak of "mothering" as separate from biological motherhood. Whether it is the ultimate, or only one, aspect of motherhood, teaching children is certainly an important aspect. The concern with this issue is of great interest in attempting to hear and understand the voices of women. While it is not the only authentic voice (for there are many women without children), it is one that is of great interest in this article, since the women who were receiving and applying the knowledge purported in the pages of a number of mass market publications were mothers seeking good reading for their children.

The amalgamation of Vandergrift's (1993) call for an examination of the voices of women, and of Belenky's (1986) continuum of learning and the voice of motherhood is that which informs the theory driving this article. For to simply look at what women wrote is in itself important, but what is significant is to examine it with a mindfulness of women as learners and teachers, as members of a wholly "caring" gender, and as those who have been too long silent. Interestingly, it is within the pages of a number of parent's and women's magazines throughout the middle years of the twentieth century that a few women, writing as teachers, librarians, and mothers, wrote to many mothers. The voices of the women writers and the learning done by the mothers who read their advice is that which is under investigation here.

Anne Thaxter Eaton's (1956) article, "Reviewing and Criticism of Children's Books," is a short biographical sketch of those who reviewed from Anne Carroll Moore's beginnings at *The Bookman* to Ethel C. Ince's contributions in 1950 to the *Christian Science Monitor*. Eaton's work simply names reviewers and their respective publications and concludes that the abundance of reviews helped children's literature to win "its own special and recognized place in the world of books" (p. 58). This article will not examine all of the women named in Eaton's work as space is a limitation. However, it will provide a more in-depth inquiry into the nature of the reviews of a few of these women, with the intention of seeking answers to a number of sociological constructs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

An investigation of writing about children's literature is always interesting to those who work with children and books. There are a number

of questions significant to this particular study. First, what was being written for parents about children's reading in the first half of the twentieth century? Related questions here regard the content of the material from a cursory perspective. Which mass market magazines and newspapers carried significant advice to parents regarding children's reading and literature and what commitments on the part of these magazines are evident toward children's reading? Most of the magazines investigated are included in Figure 1. What kind of writing did children's literature and learning professionals do outside of the territory of their own scholarly and professional pursuits, and what did it communicate?

Year	Personality	Occupation	Topics	Publication
1900-1919	Mary Mapes Dodge Elizabeth McCracken	Children's book author Not known	Prescriptive advice about the classics	<i>The Outlook</i>
1919-1934	Anne Carroll Moore	Librarian	Instilling a love of books in children	Various
1926-1930	Emily Newell Blair	Feminist/Political activist	Instilling a love of books in children	<i>Good Housekeeping</i>
1926-1931	Maude Dutton Lynch	Children's book author	Literature as a part of daily life	<i>Parents' Magazine</i> (and others)
1934-1936	Josette Frank	Educator/Child Study Association	Books as "avenues of expression" for the young	<i>Parents' Magazine</i>
1937-1945	Blanche Jennings Thompson	School Librarian	Morality and literature	<i>Catholic World</i> , <i>Commonweal</i>

Figure 1. Personalities and publications.

Second, one must question their intent. What was the intent of those who did this writing? How did their professional stature inform and influence their writing? Was it primarily to reach out to others (a particularly feminine way of communication) or was there an alternative mission? Alternatives to the mission of reaching out, or "caring" as Vandergrift (1993) calls it, might have been that of simply selling children's books. Another might have been to inculcate society regarding the "right" morals or methods of child rearing that were believed to be most appropriate for children of the time period.

Third, how did this writing reflect the contours of history? Was there a significant connection between society at large, American ideals, politics, and education and that which was written by women regarding children and literature? What was being communicated to the mass culture,

the general citizen, about these things through women's writing about children and reading?

Fourth, how did these women function as intermediaries? Did they communicate knowledge about children, about literature, about educational theory? Did these intermediaries have an influential nature? What, essentially, is the nature of influence? Did the women writing these articles influence parents or the larger society and how? What are the markers of influence? How can one decide whether or not those who knew about children and literature influenced parents (specifically mothers) regarding these issues?

Surely one can see that there are a number of questions here and a plethora yet unexamined. The objectives of this article are to provide an initial investigation into these issues and to provide a heuristic for further research.

METHODOLOGY

A number of factors contributed to the chosen methodological approach for this article. First, the objective, as stated earlier, is to begin to uncover territory yet unexamined regarding serious questions about scholarly women in this field. In doing so, the first method was to uncover and gather the writings of women about children's literature in its application to children, reading, and learning. This meant disregarding the work of men from the same time period about the same topics. Few men did any writing of this kind, however, so it would be interesting to examine questions relative to this phenomenon at a later time. The decision to isolate women and examine their writing alone reflects a portion of a larger research design in which there might be comparisons of the kinds of things men wrote with those written by women.

The time period investigated also reflects the fact that this study is only a small part of a larger picture. The decision to limit this discussion is due to the limitations in length of the journal format. Later, it might be interesting to examine the second half of the twentieth century and compare the number and kinds of things written. For this article, works by women about children's reading and literature, written between 1900 and 1950, are included. It is important to examine this time period because it includes the "birth" of children's literature as a unique genre. The creation of the first children's book imprint at a major American publishing house occurred in 1919 when Louise Seaman Bechtel took editorship of a separate children's department at Macmillan.

Women from a variety of professions are included in this article. They are not solely librarians, because there were a variety of women writing and all of their voices are significant. This means that educators, publishers, and

editors are included with librarians. It provides a rich area of interest in the different types of things these women wrote and how they communicated.

The original literature search was conducted by using a standard print edition of the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. This was the most informed starting point since it provides information regarding mass market periodicals. The search terms that provided the greatest number of citations were "children's literature" and "children's reading." From the citations gleaned therein, it was important to weed out many of the writers. This means that the material included in this study is not exhaustive, but it is representative of those who perhaps had the greatest influence. Those who wrote less than four articles in their career, as indicated by the *Readers' Guide*, were not included.

The list of references at the end of this article includes only the sources drawn upon most directly in the actual writing of the article. However, the database from which articles were chosen was very much larger. Hundreds of citations were gleaned from the original search of *The Readers' Guide* for the inclusive years of 1900-1950. As stated earlier, the women included were chosen because of the number of articles authored.

Availability of material also played a part in the decision-making process. Unfortunately, the nature of historical surveys means that some material is lost. The fact that this discussion is concerned primarily with women's magazines provides a further difficulty. Many academic libraries do not collect "popular" mass market magazines, and the public libraries that subscribe do not save them for long periods of time. The unfortunate factor here is that some of the voices that deserve to be uncovered might be lost and impossible to find. The final database used for this study included approximately one hundred articles, and approximately sixty of these were read in order to make the observations and conclusions suggested. The articles specifically cited simply represent the most salient examples of the common themes in the entire body of research.

The content of the literature was analyzed by the reading and analysis of common themes. Connections have been made regarding the kinds of writing—the style, the content, and the attitude. A strict content analysis was not applied to this material and in future examinations might provide further insight. This is significant in the examination of this material since there are a variety of ways of reading and learning about what and how people wrote, specifically in a different time period than our own. There are many biases that researchers bring to the material they investigate. An attitude of scholarly disinterest is almost impossible to cultivate in a feminist study, as one of this nature has as its goal the realization of the voices of an unheard minority. Feminist scholarship is cognizant of the fact that all research is value-laden, and this study is not immune. For this reason, readers are invited to examine the material of interest to them and read for meanings perhaps not included in this study.

DATA

The specific women under investigation in this study are: Anne Carroll Moore, Emily Newell Blair, Josette Frank, Maude Dutton Lynch, and Blanche Jennings Thompson. Also, because to my knowledge no women published widely in this area before the 1920s, two women who only appeared once in the database of articles are included from the early years of the twentieth century. These women were Elizabeth McCracken, about whom no biographical information is available, and Mary Mapes Dodge, children's author and critic.

This analysis is approached from a topical perspective in order to provide clear responses to the research questions asked from the start. Historical and biographical information is provided within the texts of the discussions about specific women. Figure 1 is a timeline of personalities and publications in the development of writing about children and reading.

MORALITY AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

Much can be learned about the change in society's understanding of the nature of childhood as reflected in these early writings. This section speaks to the earlier research question involving the intent of these writers. Clearly, as evidenced through many of the following examples, some of the women writing, especially during the early part of the twentieth century, were concerned with the inculcation of good morals. For instance, early in the century, articles written about children and books were very prescriptive and didactic. As society changed and childhood was considered a significant period of the life course, one can see the change in the kind of writing done in this regard. Mary Mapes Dodge (1901) (author of *Hans Brinker; or the Silver Skates*, and editor of *St. Nicholas Magazine* for children) wrote that "the healthy child may be allowed to browse in a well-selected library with entire safety. Those things which it ought not to know, it will not, as a rule, understand; its innocence will protect it . . ." (p. 866).

Her reference to a child as "it" in the above quoted section from her 1901 *The Outlook* article is interesting. For what reason would anyone ever refer to a child as "it"? Could it be that this was a way of avoiding gendered pronouns? Perhaps, but a more likely assumption is that, although children were regarded in some circles as worthy of consideration and intellectual endeavor, they were, perhaps, thought of as less than whole people.

Dodge went on to say that it is impossible to make one list of good books for children (whom she deemed those people between the ages of six and twelve) since each child is six different people during those six years. However, she did provide a list of good authors. These included Rudyard Kipling, Joel Chandler Harris, Hans Christian Andersen, and

Howard Pyle—all decidedly “children’s” authors before there was a “children’s literature” in the United States.

Elizabeth McCracken, also writing early in the century, discussed children who love books and why. She cited children throughout her work and discussed their likes and dislikes. McCracken wrote in a decidedly descriptive manner regarding the reading habits of children. Like Dodge, she wrote for *The Outlook*. Her article, entitled “What Children Like To Read” (1904), is representative of much of what was written in this part of the century. In it, she reported the answers that children gave her regarding her question about what books they would take to a desert island.

Children in her informal survey reported that they would take Shakespeare’s works or *The Wizard of Oz* or *Black Beauty*. McCracken (1904) continued by saying that children “preferred certain kinds of books because they had first preferred the certain kinds of people and things set forth in those books” (p. 828). An interesting historical note should be considered here regarding the kinds of language used to describe the voices of children. McCracken wrote in such a way when she cited children as to indicate that the children were good little Victorian types—i.e., respectful and naïve. One wonders if McCracken’s style is truly indicative of the way children spoke or if it reflects an adult attitude toward how the ideal child should sound.

These two women are interesting to consider in seeking clues to the attitudes about children in the early part of our century. Dodge’s statement in reference to a child’s safety in a library reflects an attitude that we still face today in children’s librarianship. Parents and community activists are perennially concerned with the safeness of the library and its collections. Adults’ attitudes about children have certainly changed over time, and more librarians and child advocates are vocal about unrestricted access to collections in libraries; however, there is still an underlying desire to protect our children. While Dodge advocated for the child’s right (though she would not have worded it thus) to access an entire library’s collection, she assumed that any library would contain only materials that protective adults deemed safe for children.

Dodge’s vocation as writer for children and editor of a children’s magazine might have informed a great deal of her position and perspective on such issues. Obviously, she was someone who cared about children and reading. In the early part of the twentieth century, *St. Nicholas Magazine* included many articles which Dodge hoped would “make the spirit of St. Nicholas (Santa Claus) bright in each boy and girl in good, pleasant and helpful ways, and . . . clear away clouds that sometimes shut it out” (Sinnetee, p. 134). So, while Dodge had a great deal of respect for children and their reading, she also had a motive regarding the creation of good little boys and girls.

While Dodge was concerned with providing proper moral choices for children and then giving them the opportunity to choose from among these limited conditions, McCracken might have believed somewhat differently. Her concern was primarily centered on providing children good reading materials because they demanded just that. There is a fine distinction here between Dodge and McCracken in that Dodge was willing to provide a variety of choices to children, but these choices had to be from a very specific perspective. McCracken, on the other hand, believed that children truly demanded the best in literature and would read only that which was best. This is evident in her description of children who like to read certain books because they first like the kinds of things that are in those books. Of course, McCracken (1904) was not simply an advocate of giving children trash if they asked for it—this was all said as an aside from the first and best book in her opinion—the Bible. “Happily, to most little children, *The Bible* is a book apart from other books; a book to be kept in ‘a separate place,’ to be read during ‘a quiet hour’” (p. 831).

The Bible was not relegated to the earliest years of the century. Maude Dutton Lynch, writing in 1926, also exhibited a sort of dichotomous way of thinking. Lynch wrote rather prolifically in a variety of magazines before authoring a regular column in *Parents’ Magazine*. Her *Forum* article entitled “The Five Mile Book Shelf” was an extended plea to parents to begin a home library for each child at birth, and to let that library grow throughout childhood until it took up all the wall space available. Lynch (1926) suggested that children need a variety of books as much as they need food. “Make it as indispensable to your children as the roof above their heads, or as much a part of their daily lives as the gathering three times a day at the family board. For books are the everlasting friends that fail not” (p. 891).

While attempting to advocate for a never-ending flow of books at the hands of children, and while resisting the temptation to make recommendations (other than not to buy single volume “collections”); Lynch (1926) could not resist the Bible. “I would make a plea equally strong for The Bible and the lives of Saints. I do not mean *The Children’s Bible*, or the *Story of the Bible*, or *The Modern Bible* but I mean *the Bible* in the Good Old King James Version” (p. 896). Lynch told parents that their children need not read it verse by verse, but that the folk stories of the Jewish people and the poetry of the Psalms were literary experiences that no child should miss.

This reflects a phase change in the adult attitude toward children and morality. While McCracken and Dodge were decidedly pro-child, they were also interested in providing correct moral choices for children. Lynch provides a glimpse into a directional shift in attitude regarding children and morality. Certainly Lynch would probably have advocated

for the creation of positive morals in children, and her inclusion of the Bible cannot have been done *only* for literary purposes (though we cannot know that for sure). However, her disclaimer that reading the Bible need not be done verse by verse but simply for the beauty of the poetry and the folklore of the stories is significant. Lynch's concern was to assist children in experiencing the wonder of words and books.

I do not want to represent this as the end of a discussion in American children's literature or parenting history of a concern for the morality of children. For there are still those who for good reason are concerned about faith, ethics, and morals before good books and who attempt to instill these things through books.

Blanche Jennings Thompson, a high school librarian by vocation, began writing about children and books for Catholic magazines shortly after the period in which Lynch wrote. Her articles in *Catholic World* and *The Commonweal* reflect the continuing concern of people of faith to raise good and moral children.

Thompson's opinions were strong, and her advice to parents did not leave room for discussion. She wrote in 1937 that "we are living in the midst of a pagan culture; we are surrounded by a cult of naturalism—and *your* children are not escaping. . . . Something must be done . . . by every parent and educator who believes in God and remembers the sixth commandment" (p. 89). Thompson uses this frightening rhetoric to procure the attention of parents. She goes on to discuss important issues in reference to magazine advertisements in which young girls are told that they must make themselves objects of desire—an issue not unimportant to us today. She feared Mae West and songs that promote sexuality; she cautioned against violent stories and comics.

Thompson sounded, in 1937, like many parents today. However, her answer for curing society's immoral ills was perhaps more straightforward than those which many seek in the latter part of the century. In addition to calling parents to write to magazines whose advertisements were questionable, to protest movies, and to organize in school and church groups, Thompson (1937) believed that parents ought to "make good literature attractive to them, and with faith and prayer and patience [parents] may save this generation from the poison of paganism" (p. 90).

Like Maude Dutton Lynch, Thompson's beliefs were somewhat inconsistent. In a 1940 article for *Catholic World*, Thompson wrote advice for parents regarding appropriate Christmas gifts. Her concern was primarily the declining literacy rate among the young and the societal ills that might result from such a problem. The time period in which she wrote seems particularly informative for the topic of her article, as it was essentially a treatise on the throwing away of toy guns in exchange for books as a peace cure for the world. The cure for the declining literacy rate, she claimed, would not be easy. She encouraged parents to require

that their children practice reading like they would the piano. She claimed that "for the peace of the world and the integrity of our nation it must be accomplished" (p. 174).

However, in claiming that the need for literacy recovery in children was necessary for the survival of the world, Thompson invokes violent imagery. The tongue-in-cheek style of this admonition still leaves a reader in our era somewhat ambivalent about her approach: "Obviously, there are plenty of books, but how [to] get child and book together! . . . Sound Assembly Call. Disarm offspring. Stack guns in [a] corner (parent retaining one for himself). 'Now then' (laying rifle across knees), 'Once Upon a Time'—and no fooling! the first one who peeps gets nicked with this rod. See?" (p. 179). This is perhaps the most striking of the examples in this study in reference to how people wrote at different periods of history. In 1940, the horrors and atrocities of war were constantly on the minds of all people. Perhaps Thompson invoked this violent imagery in order to make her point regarding reading seem as important to parents as the desire to end war. Another explanation might be that the use of such metaphor simply infiltrated everyone's speech and thought. Regardless, this is a fine example of how writing—any kind of writing—follows the natural contours of the world's history.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXPERTS

The above mentioned article by Maude Dutton Lynch reflects a change in the kinds of recommendations made regarding children and books throughout the early part of the century. Lynch's move toward supplying children with many books on many subjects for them to choose indicates a desire to help parents create independent learners in their children. The writers who served as intermediaries between books and parents in the time period from the 1920s to 1940s were concerned with not only the types of things the children read, but also with that which the parents believed and followed.

Parents' Magazine ran regular columns written by these women for decades. The essential goal of these columns, evidenced by the nature of the writings, was to help parents (mothers, that is) feel comfortable in providing the best literature and learning environments to their children. It is interesting to note that the format of an instructional magazine for parents is one that, in Belenky et al.'s (1986) notion, would promote learning as receiving. That is, persons who read magazines for advice and instruction receive that information at the value at which it is given.

The only way to challenge the material in such a format, as all readers know, is to hold it up to one's own ideas or empirical testing or to discuss it with others. *Parents' Magazine* made significant attempts to help women become integrated learners. Each issue ran a special column (often related to the column on children and reading) in which women

were invited to gather together with a number of their friends and discuss questions that might lead them to thinking about the material in new ways. This very method of reaching out to mothers to help them make meaning more clearly through discussion and companionship with other mothers is interesting to consider.

Similarly, Emily Newell Blair, in writing for *Good Housekeeping*, frequently recommended other reviewers and experts of her time. She advised parents to seek out books by Anne Carroll Moore and May Lamberton Becker in their attempt to educate themselves about their children's reading (1926, p. 51; 1928, p. 199). This desire to give parents various sources also seems to have been an attempt to allow mothers to become learners in some mode other than that of simply receivers. Perhaps this desire to help rather than simply impart wisdom might have been a precursor to the development of modern children's work, in which the best librarians and educators seek various ways to provide parents with guidance among the many available options (Jerrard, 1980).

This understanding of Blair's desire to help women as learners is interesting in light of her personal background. Blair began her adult life as a wife and mother, and out of that lifestyle grew a desire to move into a larger realm of society. She was a significant player in the woman's suffrage movement, helping to procure women's right to vote. Later, she served as vice-president of the Democratic National Committee. Always mindful of the desire she had to make her life as a woman more full, and to remain faithful to her family, Blair served as associate editor of *Good Housekeeping* magazine from 1925 to 1933, a position in which she could have a great deal of influence in the kinds of materials that women read. She also published books of fiction and nonfiction. Blair's work as a mother, a feminist, and as a writer truly reflects her intent to help women see that they could make their lives more meaningful for themselves and their world. Hers is the clearest indication that this work of writing for parents grew out of a professional and personal desire to empower women.

Reading for Its Own Sake

Anne Carroll Moore served as head of children's services at New York Public Library in the early years of the development of children's departments nationwide. Until the early part of the 1920s, libraries were restrictive and did not allow children to partake of their services at all. With the advent of children's departments, serious changes took place in the development of attitudes regarding children and their reading. Moore serves children's librarianship to this day by her example of caring and service to the young. She was known to have been all over the city of New York, from Harlem to the Bronx to Staten Island, where she told stories and provided programming to diverse young children throughout the city with the notion that reading should be promoted to children for the sheer joy of the experience.

Moore contributed to *The Bookman* via a column entitled "My Roads to Childhood" for a sustained period of time. Likewise, she also wrote "The Three Owls' Notebook" for the *Horn Book Magazine*, contributing significantly to its development as one of the best critical reviewing magazines of children's literature. Her reviews, like much of what is examined in this article, "far outreach the term 'review.' Every critic worth [her] salt is read not alone for [her] appraisal of titles. . .but for [her] account of the tilt of the world as [she] feels it" (Sayers, 1972, p. 211).

Moore's (1930) writing to parents reflects an attitude which the best children's librarians still hope to instill through innovative collection development and promotion. She advocated, as did Maude Dutton Lynch, for an abundant supply of good literature for every child. She claimed that "the crucial point in any guidance of children's reading lies in having certain books at hand at the psychological moment" (p. 66). In providing many books for many situations, Moore (1930) believed that a parent could give the best literature and illustration to a child during "the most impressionable years of life" (p. 66).

Josette Frank (1936), educator and leader in the Child Study Association of America, was a significant advocate for the importance of reading for pleasure. She empathized with parents who wanted their children to love the same things they did. Still, she warned against this and claimed that the best favor parents could do for themselves and their children was to allow the children to read what they wanted. "We will save ourselves many heartaches if we think of our children's reading not in terms of 'culture'—of good books or bad, or of more books or fewer—but rather as an avenue of expression and inner satisfaction for each according to his needs" (p. 24).

Frank's honest assessment of the needs of child readers and non-readers seems ahead of her time. She even advocates introducing children who did not like to read to "trash" (p. 25). She realized that to many parents and educators a suggestion like that might seem ludicrous, but she reminded her readers that the only way to connect children and books is to find things that will interest them. Her progressive viewpoint that good books are really just those that serve the specific child's needs speaks to the promotion of reading for enjoyment and edification of the reader alone. Her disregard for didacticism in relation to children is a refreshing thing to see in the 1930s and represents perhaps the most liberal viewpoint of all the women studied herein.

Maude Dutton Lynch provided sage advice to parents who wanted to help their children learn to read. Her ideas seem so progressive that it is as if she were writing today. In 1935, she told parents that learning to read is more about a child's attitude than aptitude (p. 22). Lynch suggested that parents not push their children to learn from "readers" but from everyday literary experiences, such as road signs and cereal boxes. She advocated the use of play rhymes for the sheer enjoyment of allowing

the words to play over the lips and tongues of children, reminding them of the joy of discovery in words.

The point is to let the child whom you want to help learn to read take the initiative [and] just keep continually in your mind . . . that there is no one set of basic readers that all children must go through in their elementary school years . . . that drill work and forcing a child to read the same story over and over again until he has mastered every word often create an antagonism to books that is definitely harmful. (p. 65)

Emily Newell Blair was also concerned with giving books to children which would instill a love of reading. She did not think, necessarily, that reading would change the world, but she valued it and wanted to be sure that children not be turned off from it. Blair (1926) wrote for *Good Housekeeping*, a magazine still strong in its ability to apply relevant information to women in the home. She used her experience as both a mother and a grandmother to inform much of what she wrote and to assure her readers that she wrote from a specifically practical stance. Her advice was simple: "It is obvious that you can not make children like books, enjoy reading, unless you give them books they will enjoy" (p. 51).

Blair, Lynch, Frank, and Moore were certainly among the best advocates for instilling in children a love of reading. It seems that fifty years later, educators are bringing back their ideas in educational pedagogy. These women wrote like those who advocate the whole language movement today. The cyclical nature of thinking is apparent in this examination. One wonders why their voices were not heard during the time that they wrote, and why their advice was not heeded in educational pedagogy.

Booklists: Recommended Reading for the Young

While a large number of the women writing in the 1930s and 1940s were advocates for the pleasure of reading for its own sake, many of them still recommended specific books. Reasons for this abound and are probably the same reasons as those used today: while librarians seek to instill in parents an attitude of open-mindedness about their children's reading, parents still need guidance in order to distinguish between literature that is well written and age appropriate and that which is not. It is interesting to consider, as above, the discussion of the Bible as *the* book which experts believed could produce morally sound children. Maude Dutton Lynch's move toward including the Bible as simply good literature certainly exemplifies the attitude throughout much of the first half of this century that the Bible truly was considered good literature. Almost everyone writing about literature for children included it in their booklists for parents and children.

The Bible was not the only book recommended. In 1934, Josette Frank recognized the change that had taken place since the 1880s

regarding what children should and should not read. She claimed that the change was due to the small steps parents took in allowing their children more pleasure in what they read. She noted that the beginnings of this movement were punctuated by stories about good little boys and girls who suffered and wept and by stories in which the good died young. "We seemed to feel that copious weeping was good for the young reader's soul" (1934, p. 24). The change in the kinds of books published for children was, she claimed, a direct result of the way parents thought about childhood.

Maude Dutton Lynch was also cognizant of the fact that children's literature went through significant changes in the 1920s and 1930s. She cites the women who started children's divisions of major publishing houses as those who were in large part responsible for the change. Her (1930) *Parents' Magazine* article about this issue is remarkable, as it introduces to parents the women in those publishing positions. She included photographs and very brief descriptions of women who still hold places of prominence in the history of children's literature: Louise Seaman [Bechtel] of Macmillan; Virginia Kirkus, Harper and Brothers [and later Kirkus reviews]; Ernestine Evans, Lippincott; Helen Dean Fish, Frederick A. Stokes and Company; among others. Lynch advised parents to check the publisher if they sought a book to purchase and recommended those listed above as the best. She claimed that these women were responsible for making children's literature truly responsive to the needs and desires of children.

After these introductions, Lynch set about recommending specific books for children. She did this in consecutive articles in *Parents' Magazine* in which she recommended specific book sets—first fiction and then informational.

The following list enumerates the most frequently recommended books throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Note the number of books that are, to this day, recognized as important literary works for children:

The Bible; *The Wizard of Oz*, L. F. Baum; *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, L. Carroll; *A Child's Garden of Verses*, R. L. Stevenson; *The First Days of Man*; *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, J.C. Harris; *Peter Rabbit*, B. Potter; *Millions of Cats*, W. Gag; *Little Women*, L. M. Alcott; *The Fairy Books*, A. Lang; *Just So Stories*, R. Kipling; *English Fairy Tales*, J. Jacobs; *Huckleberry Finn*, M. Twain; and various works by The Brothers Grimm, Aesop, Dickens, Shakespeare, Walter de la Mare, and the Mother Goose rhymes.

It is fascinating to note the high percentage of recommended books that have stood the test of time. While some of the books mentioned have moved from children's books to books for young adults or adults (as the novels of Charles Dickens), most of those that were recommended heavily throughout the first part of the twentieth century have remained

favorites—at least among adults who think and talk about children's literature. This raises a number of questions regarding the people doing the recommendations and the books being published at the time, and now, for children. Did the women who were writing about books for children have a particularly well developed ability to spot a classic and name it thus? Or, were good books written for children during the time period simply easier to spot since there were not as many books published at the time specifically for children? Further, one might consider those books that practitioners today recommend. It would be interesting to consider the books most frequently recommended in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and to evaluate these books that are only ten to thirty years old. Would these books still stand up to critical analysis, and would they still be recommended today? These are indeed interesting questions to consider in evaluating the work of youth librarians in the present period.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of conclusions that might be drawn from a preliminary study such as this. First, one might consider some of the questions which drove this study from the beginning. In response to the question regarding the nature of the writing that was done for parents, one can conclude that there were various perspectives presented throughout the mass market publications. In Thompson, we see strong reactions to society and its ills. In almost all the women, one must note a significant desire to instill in parents great respect for children.

This was a pleasant surprise, for one might not have expected to see such respect for children during the time period examined. As noted, some of the writers were somewhat ambivalent in their commitment to child advocacy. However, from the very first writers (except in perhaps Mary Mapes Dodge's case), one can see that women who cared about children and books cared first about children—a tradition that continues as we enter the end of this same century. At the same time, one must recognize the limitations of the voices of these women. If the voices of women advocates for children and literature had been heard by those other than other women (at the time living in an inherently oppressive world), perhaps we would boast greater respect for children today. This is material for conjecture, and readers are encouraged to seek answers themselves.

A second significant factor to consider in examination of these writings is that, for most of the women investigated, this was an avocation. Anne Carroll Moore, while contributing significantly to this literature, made her major impact in the field of children's librarianship. According to her biographers, she was beloved by children and serves as a cultural icon in the field of children's librarianship today. Josette Frank was an educator and a major player in the educational leadership of her day.

Her long stint at *Parents' Magazine* is evidence that her expertise reached far beyond the boundaries of the strict definition of her vocation. These women worked from a specific knowledge base which informed their recommendations to parents. The sustained endeavors were major contributions to the parenting that took place during the hey-day of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

While it is not evident at this point whether their professional stature influenced how they wrote about children's literature, further investigation might prove useful in continuing this pursuit. However, the desire to reach out, to do the women's work of caring, is evident throughout their writing. These women worked from a professional knowledge base and, as evidenced by those who we know were mothers (for instance, Emily Newell Blair), believed in the benefits of sharing that knowledge with others. The advice provided by the writers who were also mothers was particularly authentic to those who were reading and using that advice.

Their desire to reach out was certainly informed by the desire of a number of these women to help create good little boys and girls. Blanche Jennings Thompson is the most obvious of these, but there is certainly evidence that, while these women had a great deal of respect for children and children's literature, and reading for its own sake and sheer joy, they were concerned with providing children the best joys in order to create the best children.

As intermediaries, these educators, librarians, writers, and parents helped others to select and use materials that might have changed a number of generations. Their influence must certainly have been felt, evidenced simply by the fact that every magazine studied herein was a subscription magazine, driven in large part by the money made through those subscriptions and advertising. Had the articles not had an impact, the editors would not have run them for long periods of time. A theoretical construct of the nature of influence has not been created for the purpose of this article but doing so will lead others to further study in the area.

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are a number of directions in which others can build upon the material from this study. First, space constraints limited this article to a few women who wrote in mass market periodicals, primarily for women. Many other articles were written for sustained periods of time in daily and Sunday newspapers. Significant among them are Anne Thaxter Eaton's *New York Times Book Review* articles from 1930 to 1946, Anne Carroll Moore's *New York Herald Tribune Books* reviews from 1924 to 1934, May Lamberton Becker's contributions to the same paper after Moore's departure, and Ethel C. Ince's children's pages in the *Christian Science Monitor* from 1935 to 1950. Certainly, there are many more things to learn

from this wealth of material. Further, some of these women wrote books for parents similar to the tools used today to advise parents in libraries. Among these books were volumes by Josette Frank, May Lamberton Becker, Anne Carroll Moore, and Nancy Larrick. An examination of these other formats might prove interesting for comparison purposes. One might seek to investigate the differences between these publications and the magazine articles examined here that were written specifically for women.

This investigation might be further highlighted by an examination of the many voices that appeared only one or two times in the literature. Perhaps an exhaustive search of a smaller window of time—for instance, the decade of the 1920s or 1930s—would show us something different still.

One might also consider a number of comparisons of this material to that written by the same women in their professional journals. A search through library literature and educational literature will perhaps reveal many of the same names. Investigations of this kind will provide further information and answers concerning the informed perspective from which these women worked. Comparisons might also be made between these women and their male counterparts. This would certainly be of interest to the feminist scholar, as it will provide us with a clearer picture of the presence of a difference between men and women writers and their style of teaching and learning, if, in fact, there is a difference.

Finally, one might consider the nature of motherhood as an identity issue. A theoretically and historically informed perspective on the identity of mothers might be enhanced by examining the types of communications available to women through mass market publications. The nature of mothering has changed drastically throughout the history of the twentieth century. To re-examine this material, *vis-à-vis* the suffrage movement in the 1920s, and the ERA in the 1960s and 1970s, might provide further insight into the type of material written for women about children and reading.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that many directions exist for further research. It is also clear from this initial investigation that a number of women in our history made significant contributions from which one can still learn. Perhaps the most interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the uncovering of silenced voices can provide ways for us to examine the voices of women today.

To understand the history of women's writing and leadership is to begin to make changes in the ways that women's voices are heard in the latter part of the twentieth century and beyond. As Vandergrift writes, the uncovering of these voices is important in order to begin to truly understand the impact that women have made and can continue to make in youth literature.

Some of the women studied in this investigation are familiar to those in children's librarianship and education. Some, however, seem to have disappeared from view. Perhaps, with further investigation, more of these women will be uncovered. Their voices might then be heard again and their advice re-examined. We need to continue to extract the best of what they wrote and to seek patterns of advice to parents about children's reading throughout history. In doing so, we can reappraise the common motifs that emerge and examine them in our unique historical and cultural place in the late twentieth century. We can use this information to attempt to create new ways of teaching parents, and to help them become integrated learners, as described by Belenky et al. In doing so, we can create the most effective means by which to teach a new generation of professionals in service to children and to advise a new generation of parents.

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