

AN IDEOLOGICAL READING OF
UNCLE ARTHUR'S BEDTIME STORIES
USING CRITICAL LITERACY

© Rhys Nicholls, November 2003

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Faculty of Education
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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rhys Nicholls', is written over a horizontal line.

RHYS NICHOLLS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated firstly to my grandfather, Harold Brown, who taught me never to take someone else's word for it. I only wish I'd listened and learned sooner.

ALSO

To anybody who has only ever taken someone else's word for it and is now suffering as a result. Know that there are appropriate and reasonable alternatives: the world is *not* flat.

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ABSTRACT

Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories stands as the principal and archetypal Seventh-day Adventist children's literature text. It is heavily inscribed with distinct ideologies, which are specifically referential to Seventh-day Adventist dogma and faith. As children read these texts they are exposed to, and affected by these ideologies. This thesis seeks to expose the overt and covert ideologies of the text so that their power can be negated and their value evaluated. This is accomplished through a brief investigation of the author and the publishing institution that conceived the texts, then through an explanation of the development and aims of critical literacy reading processes. These reading processes are then applied to the text in order to render explicit the belief structures that sustain the stories' proposed 'truths' and 'meanings', and which were constructed into the text by the author and the institution.

This investigation has revealed that *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* assumes levels of authority over truth, interpretation and the reader, which it does not intrinsically command. The recognition of this assumption of authority allows the text to propose and defend questionable 'truths' and spurious arguments, and also to justify unethical behaviour. The thesis shows that critical literacy argues that both the author and the institution are complicit in the generation and transmission of these messages.

The thesis also presents and explains a body of evidence it has discovered that points to the negative effects *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* have had on some readers.

CHAPTER ONE

The dominant discourses of our time are rarely challenged, so much so that we are often in danger of forgetting that alternative discourses even exist.

(J. Watson, 1986, 70)

This chapter begins by highlighting the growing awareness of the importance of children's literature both in the education and socialization of children, and as an area of academic study and criticism. It then introduces the text under scrutiny, *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, and explains why this text is of particular significance to critical investigation, and what the thesis hopes to achieve through this investigation. The chapter then offers an explanation of the title before conducting a brief historical review of the texts, the author of the texts, and the institution which published and distributed the texts.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Since the civil rights movement there has been an increasing awareness of the pivotal role children's literature plays in the education and socialisation of children (Boutte, 2002). While the intention has not been to remove favourite books from shelves (though this has happened to some extent to various texts of authors like Walter de la Mare and Enid Blyton), there has been a significant shift towards the reappraisal of children's literature and learning materials, especially in the contemporary societies of Europe and the United States (Boutte, 2002; Klein, 1986).

Initially, children's literature was largely rejected by the English Literature and academic establishments. With the exceptions of a few "borderline authors", whose works were legitimised by time, there was very little recognition of the literary worth of children's books, which were "only studied either as historical footnotes or as biographical curiosities" (Hollingdale, 1992, 6-7).

The push for the reappraisal of children's texts came from the realisation in modern literary criticism that "no work, even the simplest book for children, can be without some ideological freight" (Hunt, 1992, 18; Boutte, 2002). Theorists and educators

recognised that because most children's literature is written by adults, it acts as "a repository, in a literate society almost the quintessential source, of the values that parents and others hope to teach the new generation" (Musgrave, 1985, 22). This is because children's books reflect and convey society's "deepest hopes, fears, expectations and demands" (Boutte, 2002). Just as children in a classroom learn more about life from the teacher than what is communicated explicitly by the teacher, so to do they learn more from a book than the overt messages proffered in the text (Boutte, 2002). All texts utilise, refer to, and convey ideas about the nature of the world, thus subjecting the reader to certain ideological perspectives. These perspectives commonly come to constitute the reader's subjectivity, explaining and justifying those behaviours and beliefs considered appropriate within a particular culture. (Boutte, 2002; Christie & Misson, 1998).

It is the existence of this 'ideological freight' that necessitates the closer, more critical examination of children's literature. The task becomes even more vital for texts that are considered 'favorites' or are used by parents and/or educators for the fulfillment of a specific task, such as indoctrinating into children a particular system of values and beliefs (Boutte, 2002). This is because a text that is employed for a specific purpose is often only evaluated on its effectiveness in achieving that purpose. Also, favorite books, and those intended for a particular purpose are commonly read to a child more often and so the child may be more intensely exposed to negative and potentially damaging messages (Boutte, 2002). Without the knowledge or skills to recognize the harmful ideologies contained in a text, children are unable to diffuse the power of these messages, instead reading and assimilating them into their own perceptions of their "place in the larger scheme of things" (Christie and Misson, 1998, 12).

Significantly, the 1950, five volume, compiled edition of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, fulfills these criteria. It has a specific intended purpose, which is made explicit both by the author in the preface of the books, and by the editors and publishers, who included a "Lesson Index" at the very beginning of the text. It is also arguably a Seventh-day Adventist children's literature favorite, with a "phenomenal" circulation that spans almost eighty years, and includes publication in 21 languages (Neufeld, 1996, 44; Jean, 1983; Herrera, 1971).

Aside from any *potential* damage that *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* might cause to young readers, is the *actual* damage done to individuals and ideologies as recorded and in a small body of evidence discovered by this thesis. This evidence is presented and discussed in Chapter Two, and consists of either personal testimonies or propaganda texts. A critical examination of the revealing accounts identifies how *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* has informed and/or distorted attempts by individuals and groups to negotiate their 'place' in the world. It is hoped then that this research paper might provide opportunity and justification for some readers of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* to reflect upon the experience of engaging with the text, allowing them to perhaps reinterpret the text from a critical perspective so that a more balanced and better-informed interpretation might be achieved.

It is also anticipated that a critical literacy reading of what can safely be considered the cornerstone of Seventh-day Adventist children's literature, will provide insight into how the challenge of creating worthwhile texts for Christian, and specifically Seventh-day Adventist children, can be undertaken with greater care, sensitivity and honesty. It is hoped that somebody with an understanding of, and sympathy for the Seventh-day Adventist faith, who has the necessary skills and the determination, will recognize this need and will take up this challenge. A new tradition of quality reading material, that incorporates and espouses a particularly Seventh-day Adventist perspective on life and God, for Christian, Adventist, and secular children is certainly long overdue.

EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE

The nature of the theory employed in this thesis requires that the approach to the text be problematising and "tendentious" (Christie & Misson, 1998, 11), so that "powerful institutional contexts... [which] act as regulating institutions for knowledge and resources" (Hagood, 2002) might be exposed, along with "extrinsic and intrinsic assumptions... fallacious arguments, ambiguity and manipulative reasoning" (Langford, 2001).

From the outset the title of this thesis recognizes that this study is one possible reading of the text. It is not supposed that the perspective taken is the definitive interpretation of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* but rather an interpretation that is legitimized via careful application of a theory of literature, learning and sociopolitical

concerns, and through consistent and logical questioning of ideologically driven representations of truth and meaning.

As has been noted, through research into the use and associations of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* a small body of evidence has been discovered which indicates the damaging effects of the ideologies and messages contained in the texts. This ideological power exerts itself through a suggested universal ethic "which inevitably condemns those who do not belong to it" (Reynaud, 2000, 4). It is intended that a critical literacy interrogation of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* will make the texts' deep ideological beliefs and structures obvious. By rendering the 'naturalized' beliefs systems and structures of the text explicit it is expected that the assumed authority of the texts, and of the institution and author from which the texts were conceived, will be negated.

The investigation of the text will not be a haphazard process based on a purely subjective response but will be an examination using appropriate critical questioning and reasoning. The study is based on a contemporary literary and critical theory, known as *critical literacy*, which has specific applications to pedagogy and children's literature (Antsey, 2002; Boutte, 2002; Christie, & Misson, 1998; Comber, 2001; Comber, Thomson & Wells, 2001; Gee, 1997; Hagood, 2002; Harris, 1999; Harste, & Leland, 2000; Langford, 2001; Lewison, et. al., 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1997, Rogers, 2002). It is acknowledged that the reading is not without some level of subjectivity, however this subjectivity will not exceed the expectations of critical literacy's allowance for "interrogat[ion] from multiple viewpoints" (Lewison, Flint, Sluys, & Henkin, 2002). The theoretical foundation and aims of critical literacy are discussed in detail in Chapter Three of the thesis, as is the manner in which critical literacy is employed as a reading framework.

As the pseudonym 'Uncle Arthur' is attached to a number of children's publications, which will not be included in this enquiry, it is essential to stipulate that the texts published under this name which will be analyzed and discussed are those previously mentioned: the 1950, five volume, compiled edition of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. The reason for this is that these books represent the first ten years of the *Bedtime Stories* collection and as such constitute the stories with the largest and widest circulation (Herrera, 1971; Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996; Schwartz, 1983). In addition to this, the

stories from these volumes have been incorporated into a number of other compiled editions including *Uncle Arthur's Best Stories* (1991) and *Uncle Arthur's Story Book*. Before proceeding with the study it is useful and relevant to briefly examine the historic cultural context in which the texts were created, including the texts themselves, the author who wrote the texts, and the institution which played a fundamental role in the conception, publication and distribution of the texts.

HISTORIC CULTURAL CONTEXT STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories, written as it was in the post-war period of the 1920s came in an era of fragility and upheaval (Havighurst, 1962). The realization of the actual cost of World War I led many to have serious doubts about both the past optimism of the upward progress of humanity, and about prospects for the future (Cochrane, 1999; Havighurst, 1962; Medlicott, 1967). For the Seventh-day Adventist Church however it was a time of significant growth. In the first decades of the twentieth century the church evolved from being situated primarily in North American to achieving globalization, as it spread the three angels messages around the world. A major contributor in this mission endeavour was the church's publishing arm, which was responsible for evangelizing people into the faith through the production and distribution of Adventist literature (Knight, 1993; Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000). Appointed to a number of high profile and influential positions in Adventist publishing, Arthur S. Maxwell was able to make substantial contributions to the church's mission through his literature, the most widely circulated of which being *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*.

UNCLE ARTHUR'S BEDTIME STORIES: AN ADVENTIST LITERARY INSTITUTION

Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories are arguably the most popular and influential example of Seventh-day Adventist children's literature ever distributed. First published as a ten volume set in 1928, the books had achieved a total circulation of over forty million books in twenty-one languages by 1982, including English, German, Japanese, Arabic and Icelandic (Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996; Schwartz, 1983). Part of the reason for this broad appeal comes from the texts' ability to traverse denominational lines. This has meant that the books have been endorsed and advertised by people of varying faiths (Jean, 1983; Schwartz, 1983). The success of the books has meant that since their first

publication they have been reprinted almost a dozen times, and have been included in various compilation editions including *Uncle Arthur's Best Stories*, and *The Children's Hour* (Neufeld, 1996).

Designed and written as character-building children's storybooks, the texts aim, as Maxwell states in the preface to volume one of the 1950 edition, "to lead boys and girls to choose the good way of life; to help them to be kind, honest, truthful, and obedient, and above all to love God with all their hearts" (p. 12). Supposedly "founded on fact", the stories are claimed to be "true to life... about things that actually happened to real boys and girls" (vol.2, p.10-11). The stories in the volumes are highly moralistic (Jean, 1983), with narratives that include simple linear stories, allegory, poetry and editorial style dialogues, most often focusing on religious themes such as salvation, faith, and prayer (Jean, 1983).

Given their appeal it might be argued that the texts served the purposes of both reflecting the ideologies of their time, whilst also informing and shaping these same worldviews for the future. They certainly serve as an indicator of the worldviews of the author, Arthur S. Maxwell, and to a large extent of the religious institution from which they came, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For this reason it is necessary to provide a brief overview of these two paradigms, which were essential to the construction of the texts, and to the inscription of ideologies in the texts.

ARTHUR S. MAXWELL: AN ADVENTIST CULTURAL "GIANT"

It is unquestionable that Arthur S. Maxwell played a significant role in the Seventh-day Adventist church and its publishing operations from the early 1920s right up until his death in 1970. From the time of his graduation from the Adventist university in Britain, Stanborough College, in 1915, Maxwell worked in various capacities for the church. The majority of his career was spent as editor of the premier Adventist periodical, *Signs of the Times* (Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996). As the *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996, 44) notes, "It would be hard to conceive the history of SDA publishing without him", especially considering that "during the 1970s one fifth of all Seventh-day Adventist publications bore his name." To argue that Maxwell's place as valued representative of Seventh-day Adventism for the middle decades of the twentieth century is prudently valid.

Despite his iconic status as “a ‘giant’ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” however (Herrera, 1971, p.6), there is precious little detailed biographical information available about his life, his beliefs, or his actual ideological influence on Adventist culture. The majority of the information provided in the following paragraphs has been gleaned from four primary sources which, when combined, total only seventeen pages.

Maxwell began his work for the Seventh-day Adventist church when he joined Stanborough College in the capacity of copyreader for his future wife, Rachel Joyce. In 1920 he was promoted to editor of *Present Truth*, a position he held for 16 years. In this time he was also appointed as editor of two other Adventist journals, *Missionary Worker* and *Good Health*, was pastor of the Watford church, and in 1925 took over as manager of Stanborough Press. Before being invited to travel to America for the post of editor for *Signs of the Times* in 1936, Maxwell also served as religious liberty secretary for the British Union, becoming involved in opposing proposed calendar reform and representing the British Union and Seventh-day Adventist church before the Preparatory Committee of the Transit and Communication Section of the League of Nations in Geneva (Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996).

As editor of *Signs of the Times* Maxwell was extremely successful. In his first decade with the magazine circulation increased by almost six hundred percent, from 55,000 to 300,000. It was a position he would hold for almost 34 years. As author however, Maxwell was even more effective, publishing a total of 112 books - 79 of which were for children - in 32 languages. While his books for adults sold very well (*Your Bible and You* sold 1.6 million copies up until 1996, and is still available for purchase from Adventist booksellers) it was his children's books which achieved the most “phenomenal” sales. Aside from the *Bedtime Stories*, Maxwell's *The Bible Story* series, which he completed in 1952, had sold more than 22 million copies also by 1982 (Herrera, 1971; Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996).

Maxwell's books were sold, along with other Seventh-day Adventist literature, by the colporteurs trained in the publishing houses from which the books were distributed. This strategy meant that Maxwell's writings could be effectively marketed to families outside of the Adventist faith, including those within other denominations and in secular society. Jean (1983, 30) notes that Maxwell's children's stories won the endorsement of

“many religious and political leaders in many countries around the world”, including the archbishop of Canterbury, Queen Elizabeth II, and American President, Ronald Reagan. It also meant that Maxwell’s worldviews regarding the way the world and God operate became representative of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs to people both inside and outside of the church. These beliefs Maxwell himself attributed largely to a single personal experience in the Outer Hebrides where he thought he was going to die after becoming trapped between two islands by the incoming tide. He put the experience and his survival down to providence, and “thereafter believed God had preserved him for a special purpose” (Jean, 1983, 24; Neufeld, 1996). This worldview of God’s direct intervention in human experiences formed an intrinsic and foundational theme which ran through many of his Children’s stories (Jean, 1983).

Maxwell’s influence, whether for good or bad - or both - is felt posthumously by people who continue to interact with his literature. His relatively high profile position in the Adventist system was consistently consolidated both by his success as a publisher and editor, and through his role as Seventh-day Adventist ideology representative under his own name and under the assumed name of ‘Uncle Arthur’.

THE ADVENTIST CULTURE 1900-1940: GLOBALIZATION AND PUBLISHING

The expansion and prosperity of the church during the first decades of the twentieth century was quite remarkable. In the period just prior to the publishing of *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories*, the Adventist vision for the spreading of the three angels’ messages shifted beyond the boundaries of North America “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”. Despite the difficulties that the events of World War I and the Great Depression created for Western evangelists and missionaries in foreign countries, the church experienced substantial growth. This growth can be largely attributed to the church’s active publishing division, which supplied an enormous volume of literature that was sold by colporteurs door-to-door. As has been noted, it was via this marketing strategy that the *Bedtime Stories* came to be distributed to a truly global audience of young readers (Jean, 1983; Knight, 1993). It was also by this strategy that the Adventist worldview was allowed an “entering wedge” into the homes and lives of countless families around the world (Knight, 1993, p.110).

The publishing institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church offer the best examples of the globalization of Adventism in the first four decades of the twentieth century. They were the first denominational enterprises to become international (Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000). As the work of Adventist ministries spread around the world so to did Adventist publishing houses proliferate in diverse localities from Germany, London and Sweden, to Australia, South Africa and Argentina. Despite this apparent decentralization of the distribution of Adventist literature, Schwarz and Greenleaf (2000, p.310) note that as late as 1940 “the overwhelming majority of Adventist publications were still coming from the large centers that were functioning on their long-standing policy of producing literature in different languages and shipping it where it was needed.” As such the publishing division of the church became a central and vital part of the mission program both in the United States and around the world.

Adventist publishing houses were used not only to publish Adventist literature but also as training institutions “both in their walls and out in the field”. They also had the largest number of trained workers in their employment for the entire denomination (Olsen, 1925, p.742). A considerable part of this trained workforce consisted of a large ‘army’ of literature salespersons known as colporteurs, whose profession was as recognized as denominational teachers, doctors and ministers. Not only was their purpose to sell books and periodicals, their impact, as propagators of Adventism was also readily perceived (Knight, 1997; Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000).

In light of the effectiveness of the books to reach their audience, and the extent of their obvious appeal to that audience, it is fair to assume that the texts carried no small amount of influence as they reflected and informed societal and religious ideologies both of the time they were written and throughout the twentieth century. While a discussion of the overt and covert worldviews of the texts, and of the value of these worldviews, does not occur until Chapter Four, a glimpse of the darker side of the texts’ ideological influence is evidenced in the preceding chapter, which details the body of evidence discovered by this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

In Chapter Two the body of evidence alluded to in Chapter One is presented. This is done by breaking the evidence into two categories – testimonial and association evidence – and then clarifying the significance of each example to the ideological influence of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. Finally the chapter explains how the fact and nature of this evidence warrants further investigation into the ideological effects of prolonged exposure to *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*.

INDICATORY EVIDENCE: DAMAGING SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS EFFECTS OF *UNCLE ARTHUR'S BEDTIME STORIES*

While this body of evidence is not by any means exhaustive, it does indicate some degree of the distorted perception of readers who have, and/or do engage with *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. This is largely due to the limited scope and size of the investigation. Despite the evidence here being predominantly anecdotal, the ease with which it was located warrants further investigation.

The evidence uncovered falls into two categories. The first is testimonial evidence that recounts the experiences of individuals who have interacted with the texts, or who still do engage with, and actively promote *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. It is appropriate to read the testimonies as given, and accept the experiences recounted, and the interpretation of those experiences as legitimate and/ or true as the testimonies provided gain significant validity through either the fact of editorial ratification, or through the legitimacy of the account on its own merit.

The second category contains clear associations that exist between *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* and the indicative evidence. This category contains examples where *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* are aligned with distorted social and religious ideologies. These belief structures are reflective of the attitudes contained in the texts, and they indicate how the text can be logically and legitimately employed to justify destructive and dangerous worldviews.

From the first category is a response to an article by J. M. Berecz (1996). In the article Berecz (1996, p.10, 12) questions the validity of ‘Uncle Arthur’s’ “interventionist God”, who “dispatches guardian angels to keep approaching drunk drivers from swerving over the yellow line and snuffing out... life.” He goes on to argue that the “three major problems with such deliverance stories [are] probabilities, selective sampling, and linear theories of causality.” The response, which came in the preceding journal, emphatically supports Berecz’s arguments. In her personal testimony, McNiely (1996, 64) recounts the confusion she felt as a direct result of the tension between her lived experiences and her engagement with *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories*. Having grown up with the texts in the mission field she states that the tragedy of a family of fellow missionaries experience “was a shock to me... I was never the same again.” For McNiely the problem created by *Bedtime Stories* was so significant that when she became a mother she began writing her own stories that attempted to rectify the imbalance of ‘Uncle Arthur’s’ “vivid scenarios of divine intervention” (Berecz, 1996).

Another testimonial that can be read ‘with the grain’ comes from an internet website entitled *Whitefuture.com*. While this testimonial is not legitimized by an editorial process, the merit of the arguments raised validate a concurrent reading. Interestingly, this testimonial emphatically agrees with what it sees to be the views and attitudes of *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories*, and in doing so implicates the books in the testimony’s own dangerous worldviews. As is suggested by its name, the website is a propaganda text for a white supremacist organisation. In the online article entitled “What About Your Kids: Are You Willing to Fight for Them”, the author, whose name remains conspicuously absent, begins by stating,

When I was a child I spent many hours reading *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories*. These stories had a major impact on the way I viewed the world. They taught the difference between right and wrong, through the many examples that they provided. It would be difficult to overestimate the impact these stories had on my young mind.

The author then systematically and effectively deconstructs pictures from *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories* to prove that apart from their “rock solid call to honesty, and other noble character attributes”, are the racist “portay[als] of society”. The author states,

There are no non-white faces jumping up here and there, and everywhere, trying to invade the pleasant and relatively safe environment of White society . This makes perfect sense to anyone who has ever lived in an all-White society, and been able to compare that with what has been forced upon America today!

While this is obviously an extreme reading of the texts it does indicate a dynamic that exists within *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. It is also not the only site where such a reading of the texts can be found..

From the category of evidence that contains clear associations between Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories and destructive worldviews is another website, which in this case advertises the texts for sale. The web page, entitled "Christian Character Building Books for Children", contains a list of turn-of-the-century character building and children's Bible storybooks including *Best Stories from the Best Book, Keep Yourself Pure*, and of course *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. At the bottom of the page is another advertisement, not for a character building, or Bible based children's storybook, but for the "Speak Softly Spanking Stick", which is promoted as, "serv[ing] the... purpose in teaching children good old-fashioned discipline. Each 16" x 1 1/2" stick is imprinted with Scripture verses." Constructed by the *Kingdom Identity Ministries*, the site to which the page belongs is another white supremacist propaganda text. A telling example of the messages and cause they promote has been provided as part of this thesis (Appendix A). It is a single cartoon frame which represents and intentionally seeks to demean "white liberals", African Americans and Jews through caricature, inflammatory rhetoric and referral to racially prejudice stereotypes. While the page and site do not offer criticism or commentary of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, they implicate the text in their toxically pernicious worldviews. The significance of this example is given greater significance in light of the previously mentioned web page, which likewise associates the books with white supremacist worldviews.

While the number of examples is not huge, the gravity, and legitimacy of the interpretations of the texts do point to the relevance of further investigation to better establish the effects that the text has had on different individuals and their worldviews. That a Seventh-day Adventist children's storybook series can be effectively and

legitimately utilised to defend worldviews as destructive and offensive as these warrants a detailed and critical investigation of the social concerns of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. In addition, a study that indicates the extent, if any, of confusion arising for children (especially those from within Adventist culture) out of the belief systems regarding God's intervention in the world would likewise be valuable.

CHAPTER THREE

The new philosophy calls in doubt.

(John Donne, 1572-1631, 10)

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to critical literacy. It postulates that critical literacy is more a philosophy than it is a stringent educational methodology, and that it is informed by three different areas of theory: literary, critical and learning theories. It then traces the generation of critical literacy through these literary and critical theories, before exploring the aims and objectives of critical literacy reading. Finally the chapter establishes, explains and justifies a number of critical questions which will be used to interrogate *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*.

CRITICAL LITERACY: A METHOD FOR READING, LEARNING AND REVEALING
INTRODUCTION

Though becoming an integral element of literacy research and education in the last decade, it is commonly recognised within the community of critical literacy theorists that the concept of critical literacy is a difficult one to package into a neat and consistently tight definition (Langford, 2001). Unlike the majority of previous orthodoxies for reading and learning, critical literacy is characterised by difference rather than consensus. Theorists and commentators who attempt the task of demarcating critical literacy tend to do so by describing not so much what it is but rather where it comes from, what it does or aims to do, and how it works. As such critical literacy is more a philosophy of, or attitudinal approach to reading and learning than it is a distinct method or system (Boutte, 2002; Cervetti, Pardales & Damico, 2001; Lewison, M., Flint, A. S., Sluys, K. V. & Henkin, R., 2002). It involves a fundamentally different stance toward reading, wherein rather than extracting meaning from a text, a reader imbues meaning into it. So, "textual meaning is understood in the context of social, historic, and power relations, not solely as the product or intention of an author." (Cervetti, et al., 2001).

In light of this, it is useful then to explore critical literacy in the same fashion, moving from the modes of thought and theories which inform critical literacy, to the "grand" ambitions it strives to achieve, onto how it works to realise these ambitions,

until finally arriving at an appropriate description and valorisation of critical literacy (Comber, 2001).

CRITICAL LITERACY: WHERE THREE REALMS OF THEORY INTERSECT.

OVERVIEW

Critical literacy is widely applied as both a process and a practice (Misson, 1998, cited in Langford, 2001). As a process it operates as an approach to reading and understanding texts (Boutte, 2002; Christie & Misson, 1998; Comber, 2001; Harris, 1999; Langford, 2001; Leland, 2000) while as a practice it involves the development of specific literacy skills in students (Comber, 2001; Langford, 2001; Lewison, et. al., 2002).

At its most foundational level, critical literacy has three major concerns: reading, learning and emancipation (Antsey, 2002; Boutte, 2002; Christie, & Misson, 1998; Comber, 2001; Comber, Thomson & Wells, 2001; Gee, 1997; Hagood, 2002; Harris, 1999; Harste, & Leland, 2000; Langford, 2001; Lewison, et. al., 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1997, Rogers, 2002). These three concerns are born for critical literacy out of three major realms of theory, namely: literary theory which is primarily concerned with reading and text (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Rogers, 1999); critical social theory, which is concerned with “championing ideas of liberation, equity, and social justice of subordinated groups” (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Hagood, 2002); and learning theories, which obviously focuses on learning and education (Rogers, 2002). In order to understand what critical literacy achieves, it is necessary to establish the development, intent and relevance of these theories.

As this thesis employs the process of critical literacy in its investigation of a particular text only, it is especially important that literary theory and critical theory be explored as it is these theories essentially, which inform critical literacy process. The learning theories which inform critical literacy on the other hand pertain solely to its practice, and so will not be investigated as a part of this study as they bear no relevance to the thesis.

LITERARY THEORY: WAYS OF READING

INTRODUCTION

The manner in which texts are negotiated and comprehended has developed over time. In order to fully appreciate the way in which critical literacy process generates meaning in text it is worthwhile exploring the changing ways that texts have been understood and interpreted. Such an exploration is also significant for enhancing an understanding of the approach taken during the construction of the text that is being interrogated by this thesis: *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. Reynaud (2000) notes that one appropriate way to delineate the development of literary theory is to see it in terms of three broad stages. For the purposes of this study these stages are referred to as the traditional literary or author-centred approach, textual approach and postmodern approach.

TRADITIONAL LITERARY APPROACH

At the heart of the traditional or author-centred literary approach was the notion that the meaning and truth of a given work were found in the domain of the author because the work was a product of the author. Literary criticism involved then, a study of the author, the author's life, and the author's intent in order to discover the 'truths' which the work contained (Reynaud, 2000; Webster, 1996). The works were viewed as inseparable from their creators (Webster, 1996). Such was the focus of this approach that as Webster (1997, p.17) points out, "Criticism and biography became at times virtually indistinguishable from one another." He cites as an example a lecture entitled *Shakespeare the Man* (1904), delivered by A. C. Bradley, which proposed to construct an account of Shakespeare's sensibilities from studies of his plays. Webster (1997, p.17) explains that though the fact of very limited biographical information of Shakespeare was conceded by Bradley, it did not "inhibit his conjecturing on intimate aspects of character and the attitude towards life, of the human being who seems to us to have understood best our common human nature." The essential implication of this approach is then that the author is the holder of what Virginia Woolf (1928, p.5) somewhat derisively described as "nugget[s] of pure truth" (Reynaud, 2000, p.2).

This approach to literary criticism predominated up to, and through the early decades of the twentieth century. At about this time however, debate began to occur on a much larger field than literature. Ferdinand Saussure, a French linguist central to these new

theories, recognised the arbitrariness of language. He challenged the assumption that language was a neutral tool and 'natural' phenomenon. He argued, for example that the word "dog" had no intrinsic or "natural" connection to the object it described apart from the conventions which are agreed upon by a particular society. He proved this by noting that "hund" stands for the same thing in Germany and "chien" in France. The ramifications of this understanding on literature were that critics began to ponder whether literature might be identifiable by its linguistic characteristics and the structures that carried them. These observations were later applied more specifically to Russian folk tales by the Russian Formalists and through their investigations they identified deeper structures within the text that underpinned language, literature and 'reality'. It wasn't until the 1960s however that radical shifts away from author-centred literary approaches became the norm. Literary criticism at this time recognised and elucidated the flaws of the traditional literary approach and in the process, moved the focus from the author onto the text (Webster, 1996).

TEXTUAL APPROACH

Theorists working from the textual approach to literature dismissed author-centred approaches, proclaiming instead that the text itself was the site where truth and meaning were to be discovered (Reynaud, 2000; Webster, 1996). The textual approach evolved out of linguistics and the literary and cultural criticisms of Russian Formalists such as Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev, New Critics such as William Empson and T. S. Eliot, and later through the Moral Formalism of F. R. Leavis. Though complex, and often seemingly contradictory, at the heart of the textual approach was a "profound, almost reverential regard for literary works themselves". They saw literary works "as icons of human value deployed against twentieth-century barbarism". These methods, for the most part, worked in reaction to late Romantic poetics which were regarded as objectively insubstantial and "limp". They adopted instead an approach to literary texts, deemed by them as worthy of elevation and study that was scientifically detailed and empirical (Selden & Widdowson, 1993, p.10-45). Such was the force with which some veins of the textual approach extolled this critical attitude that Selden and Widdowson (1993, p.103) argue, "It would not be misleading to use the word 'anti-humanist' to describe structuralism" (one of the subcategories of the latter term of textual approach). This argument certainly gains impetus from the rhetoric of the title from structuralist critic Roland Barthes' definitive essay, *The Death of the Author* (1968). In this essay

Barthes challenges the assumptions of the traditional literary school, refuting especially the author's authority over the meanings contained in a text. Barthes argued that "it is language which speaks not the author" (Barthes, 1968, cited in Webster, 1996, 18). This sentiment was largely shared by theorists from other coteries of the textual approach, including Marxists, formalists and semiotics.

To substantiate his claim, Barthes argued that once a text was published and circulated, any connection it had to the author no longer existed. In a move which predicted the sentiments of the postmodern approach to literature, Barthes concluded that "a text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination", which is of course the reader (Barthes, 1968, cited in Webster, 1996, p.18). He described the traditional view of the author as a fallacy that operated as a mechanism of cultural control. Maintaining perspective, Webster (1997) notes that it needs to be recognised that this anti-authority sentiment displayed in Barthes' writing is itself a product of the culture within which the essay was written, remarking that 1968 saw many such challenges to established authority, especially in cultural and educational spheres.

Another prominent critic working from a textual literary approach, Michel Foucault (1969), expanded on Barthes' view of the inhibitive role of the author in his essay *What is an Author?* For Foucault, the 'presence' of the author remained attached to a text, not through an intrinsic connection with the text, but merely as a result of western cultural ideals of ownership and property. To support this hypothesis Foucault pointed out that prior to the emergence of these bourgeois caprices, texts were accepted anonymously because the stamp of the author was not necessary to validate the authenticity or authority of the works. Thus for Foucault, what he called the "author-function" was simply a means of circumscribing the modes of reading, and therefore possible meanings of a text: essentially a containment strategy which "maintained knowledge and consequently power in specific dominant sections of society" (Webster, 1996, 19-20).

As has been noted, traditional approaches to literature emphasised interpretation through the study of both the author's life and their intentions for their work. For the textual theorist, the view that an author's intention was central to understanding and explaining a text became increasingly problematic. Indeed, for theorists of the textual

school, the very act of establishing the author's actual intent was fraught with difficulties, firstly because most authors do not communicate the intentions they had in creating a particular text. In fact, as Webster (1997, p.21) points out, it is not unusual for contemporary authors to wilfully avoid commenting on their published works, "as if they had no more right to comment on them than anyone else." To add to the argument of the common lack of explicit statements from authors about the intent for their work is the recognition in this post-Freudian era of the determining role of the subconscious on the creative and imaginative expressions of the mind. The strength of this argument is such that it can be duly proposed that even if an author has provided such a forthright statement, how can the interpreter of the text be certain that this is the only, or indeed real purpose the author had for the text? Textual theorists saw the role of 'intention' in much the same way they saw the 'author function'. It became another means for limiting interpretation to a "definitive, uncontested point or source" (Webster, 1996, p.21). It also implied that every reader had access to the same "universal and expressed general truths" of a text (Selden & Widdowson, 1993, 1). For textual critics the purpose of this focus on an author's intent was again clearly a way of maintaining power through the organisation and control of knowledge. It can also be seen as a way of ensuring the promulgation and endurance of a limited set of ideas and understandings about the world (Webster, 1996, 21).

While this move from author to text can be regarded as a progression in literary theories, it did not completely avoid creating for itself its own set of theoretical problems. The most notable, and indeed the least reconcilable of these problems stems from the 'deification' of text as the centre of meaning. By advancing this view, textual theorists were in one sense perpetuating aspects of the traditional theorists' regulation of truth and meaning. This is because the textual approach to literature implies that truth remains universal and transcendental regardless of the reading context. If meaning is to be found in the "characteristic qualities" and "structural features" (Reynaud, 2000, p.2) of texts then it is possible for the interpretive process of the reader to go wrong, or to put it another way, for the reader to misread the work. The dilemma that arises from this concept however, is of establishing a categorical or 'correct' reading. It essentially denies the fact that the meanings found in art change over time, between cultures and indeed amongst individual readers (Webster, 1996).

Another problem generated through textual approaches was the discriminatory and artificial promotion of some texts over others. 'Literature' was evaluated by self-appointed critics who arranged it into a 'canon' of literary works. By their action they ignored much writing, especially from the genres of 'popular' fiction, works from lower classes, and women's writing (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Webster, 1996). Ultimately this exacerbated the dilemma mentioned previously of the arbitrary regulation of truth and meaning that was created by the elevation of text over author, because truth and meaning were seen to be present only in an exclusive hierarchy of texts deemed worthy of interpretation.

To argue that Barthes was stuck, as it were, in the textual approach would be to reduce the acuity of his criticism. Barthes was pre-emptively aware of the theoretical basis for the literary approach which would develop as a result of, and reaction to, the critical seminary he had played such an integral role in. This is because Barthes shifted the emphasis not only from author to the text, but also from the text to the reader. He recognised that to reduce a text to a single reading or interpretation was to ignore the reality of the multiple discourses, and networks of meaning that were contained therein (Webster, 1996). In this sense then, Barthes and other theorists like him have been essential to the development of the succeeding literary theory approach: postmodernism.

POSTMODERN APPROACH

The basis of the postmodern approach to literature resides in the shift of the centre of truth and meaning from the text to the recipient of the text - the reader. While previous approaches have largely, and conspicuously, relegated the reader to the role of a passive receiver of meaning, the postmodern approach *problematizes* the reader and in so doing highlights the reader's significance in the generation of truth for a text (Webster, 1996). Through postmodern theories such as post-structuralism, deconstruction and post-colonialism, readers are promoted from being seen as either fundamentally identical to each other or if not identical at least able to achieve this sameness, to being complete individuals with their own set of lived experiences, expectations and ideological worldviews. A postmodern perspective argues that there is no single 'correct' or definitive reading, which can be claimed for any single text because, as Reynaud (2000, p.4) makes clear, "Each reader produces their own construct of meaning, which is not inherent in the text", and, "Each reader produces a meaning differing in some way from

every other reader". Reynaud (2000) further notes that a single reader inevitably generates a different interpretation of a text with each successive reading, because their interpretation is dependent on not only the parameters of the text, but also on the experiences through which that person has lived. It does not matter if a person immediately reads the same text through twice, they will still generate slightly differing readings because their set of experiences has changed; that is, by the second reading they have experienced something which they had not experienced in the first reading: namely, the first reading.

As well as rejecting the centrality of texts in interpretation, postmodernism rejects narratives which ignore or marginalise voices outside of dominant cultural perspectives through the universalisation of truth and meaning and the delineation of alternative discourses into mainstream worldviews (Webster, 1996). Referred to within postmodernism as '*meta-*' or '*grand narratives*', they are essentially "stories that claim to explain the world" (Reynaud, 2000, p.4).

Another note of contention between these two approaches comes as a result of postmodernism's broadly populist application as compared to elements of the previous theory's insistence of a 'canon' of texts. While some notable theorists of the textual approach such as F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot discriminated texts into a hierarchy of more valuable and less valuable texts (Webster, 1996), postmodernism "explodes" this 'high art' view of culture through the foregrounding of a wide range of non-literary texts. The focus on 'multimedia' – a quintessentially postmodern concept – means that popular music and television, advertising, magazines and newspapers, the internet, and even shopping centres and funparks become texts which are seen as containing significance and are therefore deemed worthy of study. In a postmodern context, it is in fact the texts which pertain to the commercial and global spheres of contemporary life that become the most significant because of their popular appeal (Pope, 1998, p.125).

Though differing in the above-mentioned areas, postmodernism shares commonalities with the textual literary approach. The most significant being that, like the textual approach, and unlike the traditional approach, postmodernism is not a single theory of literature, but rather consists of numerous schools of thought which contribute to textual interpretation and understanding through the generation of meaning in texts.

Just as Russian Formalism explored the deep underlying structures around which texts were created, while the Moral Formalism of Leavis was more concerned with both establishing how tendentiously chosen texts reflected experience and morality, and to demonstrating their excellence, specifically Postmodern approaches differ from one set of imperatives to the next (Selden & Widdowson, 1993). For example 'deconstruction' - a critical approach and philosophical viewpoint effectively inaugurated in 1966 by Jacques Derrida (Selden & Widdowson, 1993) - works on the premise that the Western idea that "reason can somehow dispense with language and arrive at a pure, self-authenticating truth or method" is in fact an illusion (Norris, 1982, p.19). In contrast, or rather as an extension which adds to the spectrum that constitutes postmodernism, poststructuralism augments deconstruction by pushing the disruption of naturalised language that deconstruction offers, to the point where centralisation of authority is abandoned for multiplicity and relativity of meaning (Webster, 1998). In these ways postmodernism can be considered a logical extension of, rather than an aggressive reaction to, textual practice. By considering it thus, many of the arguments and ideas that informed textual approach are sustained as reliably relevant to the continuing interpretation and negotiation of texts. Most relevant in this instance is the textual approach's critical and problematising attitude towards the authoritative role of the author, or the 'author function', and the perceived intention of a text.

While the postmodern approach to literature, and indeed life, does have serious implications for Christian claims to truth and meaning, it does provide opportunity for broader discussion of, and greater insight into textual interpretation and the generation of meaning and truth (Reynaud, 2000). It is through the opportunities that postmodernism provides for the interpretation of texts that critical literacy reading processes work in order to make explicit the ideological workings of the text.

It does need to be recognised however that postmodernism, as a "cutting-edge academic ideology" (Reynaud, 2000, p.1), is in Wilbur's (2000, p.ix, 3) words, "now met with a slow yawn and casual scorn: postmodernism is *so* yesterday." It's "self-absorb[ed] and narcissis[tic]" claims, which saw it "deconstruct[ing] everyone else's ideas, [and] leaving the wielder of this postmodernist demolition as the king or queen of the academic hill" have helped to highlight the 'catch 22' situation postmodernism creates for itself when it is seen as an end rather than a means. This situation occurs

because postmodernism's criticism and de-emphasis, to the point of annihilation, of worldviews is itself a worldview. Therefore postmodernism, by its own insistence, can destroy itself. If seen as a means with its own set of limitations postmodernism is useful, as has been stated, for the disruption and decentring of given 'norms'. The legitimacy of these 'norms' can then be examined in the light of critical theory's contributions to critical literacy so that the reproduction of disadvantage and repression through constructed images and representations, which appear 'natural' to a particular individual or group, can be disarmed (Christie & Misson, 1998).

CRITICAL THEORY: LIBERATION THROUGH CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

While postmodern literary theories do offer a degree of liberation from dominant discourses through resistant reading, the majority of force for this function of critical literacy is derived from critical social theory (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Comber, et. al., 2001; Hagood, 2002; Rogers, 2002). One of the aims of this thesis is to provide opportunity for readers to achieve some level of ideological and experiential, social and/or religious emancipation from the 'institutional baggage' of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. In order to establish how critical literacy achieves these aims it is essential that the manner in which critical theory informs critical literacy be explored.

Before beginning this aspect of the study it is necessary to explain that the terms 'critical theory' and 'critical social theory' are interchangeable in this thesis. This is made possible by Morrow and Brown's (1994) recognition that despite the convention of *critical theory* referring to a very specific social theory, its use has come to be associated with other theories of criticism including literary theory and Marxist theory. While it must be conceded that these theories are undeniably critical, they are not actually covered by the term 'critical theory'.

CRITICAL THEORY, ITS AIMS AND ITS ORIGINS.

Critical theory refers to a school of thought and a process of critique. (Giroux, 1984) It is a sub-strand of sociology with a distinctively political orientation. It advances the perception that capitalist tendencies toward science, bureaucracy and the rise of technology, rather than improving the quality of life, actually impede the development

of social equality and awareness. Ideally, critical theory works by exposing the “illegitimizing intrusion” of modern life, particularly with regards to scientific understanding and advancement, “into the realms of social norms” (Lakomski, 1988, 54). This reactionary movement away from scientific positivism inevitably leads critical theory to adopt phenomenological and humanistic approaches, and interpretive processes of inquiry which, far from being rejected within what was the domain of traditional positivism, have “gained a certain currency, even prestige, in philosophical circles and in the social sciences” (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987, 1).

The origins of critical theory can be traced back beyond Marxist theory to the conception of the social sciences, contrived to analyse the development of modern society as it evolved into and through industrialisation, scientific positivism, and capitalism (Morrow & Brown, 1994; Davis, 1995). More specifically however, critical theory reflects a neo-Marxist humanistic approach coupled with the German traditions of reason, which it utilises to criticise positivism and scientific Marxism (Knapp, 1995). This union of ideas is widely considered to have occurred within the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, hence the title of the group of theorists who coined the term *critical theory*: the ‘Frankfurt School’. Central characters of the Frankfurt School included Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer (Davis, 1996; Giroux, 1984; Lakomski, 1988; Morrow & Brown, 1994). Their commitment to problematising and exposing the world of objective relationships and apparently ‘natural’ appearances is evidenced by their examinations of notions such as money, consumption, distribution and production. Through their investigations the Frankfurt School demonstrated that these ideas “do not represent objective ‘facts’ or things, but historically contingent contexts mediated by relationships of domination and subordination”. The Frankfurt School thus “echoed Nietzsche’s (1957) warning about humanity’s unbounded faith in reason... voicing a trenchant critique of modernity’s unswerving belief in the promise of enlightened rationality to rescue the world from the chains of superstition, ignorance and suffering” (Giroux, 1984, 7-11).

CRITICAL THEORY AND EDUCATION

Certain perceptions of the Frankfurt School were eventually infused into educational spheres by critical social theorists and educators such as Paulo Freire and Jurgen Habermas (Cervetti, et al., 2001; Comber, et al., 2001; Hagood, 2002; Lakomski, 1988;

Morrow & Brown, 1994; Rogers, 2002). The most central of these perceptions is the concept of *resistance*; a term referring to the way participants in society actively negotiate and potentially fight against the cultural assumptions and structures that oppress them. Paulo Freire's seminal work, though "self-consciously tied to [the] particular historical circumstance and context" of Latin America, demonstrated a commitment to the concepts of empowerment and emancipation. His *pedagogy of the oppressed*, otherwise known as *critical pedagogy*, has since been carried beyond the Latin American context and adapted to advanced societies. This move has allowed opportunity for critical theory to be further informed by cultural studies research which in turn has led to the study and reinterpretation of popular culture. Morrow and Brown (1994) note that popular music has constituted a particular focus of such interpretive investigations. The link is thus explicitly made by Morrow and Brown (1994, 293) between critical theory and critical literacy through, but not limited to, research which "evokes the educational literacy analogy in the sphere of consumers."

CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL LITERACY

So it is that critical theory becomes the backdrop against which critical literacy theorists and educators devise their theoretical justifications for the relevance and need of a more socially aware and critical approach to literature. These same aims of critical theory - to liberate people, particularly those from minority groups or the social margins, from false assumptions which are perpetuated by the privileged select so as to maintain the status quo - likewise became the prerogatives of critical literacy educators. The critical theory approach as a means of social education, is considered a more appropriate foundation than scientific positivism and economically focussed, and therefore limited Marxist theory, because it is deemed a "socially-just education theory and practice" (Lakowski, 1988, p.54).

It is widely recognised that social sciences have played an integral role in the formation of modern democratic societies (Morrow & Brown, 1994). It is hoped by critical literacy educators and commentators that critical literacy, with its incorporation of critical theory from social science, will be a means for advancing a democratic system with a greater awareness and sensitivity to the voices of the disempowered, the disenfranchised and the 'other'.

CRITICAL LITERACY AND ITS "GRAND" ASPIRATIONS

OVERVIEW

It is recognised through literary theory and critical theory that a reader's response to a text is shaped by a variety of perspectives and experiences such as race, gender, class and/or religion (Athanases, 1998; Eagleton, 1996; Fish, 1995; Harris, 1999; Morrison, 1992; Spears-Bunton, 1990). The resistant reading and decoding of texts allowed by postmodernism, coupled with critical theory's emphasis on the liberation of the 'causalities' of scientific and capitalist 'progress' brings us to the purpose of critical literacy process. At its most idealistic, critical theory process is a reading approach concerned with making explicit the ideological workings of texts in order to negate the power of the belief systems which constructed them (Boutte, 2002; Christie & Misson, 1998; Langford, 2001). Through the negation of these power structures readers are able to negotiate and call into question the 'truth' assumptions of texts, and to interpret the texts' significance and meaning in the light of their own personal experiences. Further, as "reading is an act of coming to know the world (as well as the word) and a means to social transformation", it is hoped that the undertaking of the critical literacy process enables the "alleviation of human suffering and the formation of a more just world through the critique of existing social and political problems and the posing of alternatives" (Cervetti, et al., 2001, p.5).

In order for the critical literacy theorist (or reader) to realise these 'grand' aspirations in the criticism of a chosen text, a useful approach to the critical literacy process is to develop a range of questions and ideas which pertain to the particular focus of the criticism. Pertinent to this study are a number of critical literacy questions adapted from Johnson (1999), which deal with issues of literature, culture, and power relationships and assumptions. For the purpose of establishing what these questions are, and what they relate to in the analysis of the text, these questions and ideas are shaped and categorised into three areas of concern specific to the context of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. These categories include: author-reader relationship concerns, 'truth' concerns, and intention concerns. Though the questions in these categories are offered and explained separately in this section, in the next chapter, where the actual analysis and discussion occurs through the application of the questions to the text, these categories will no longer be separated. This is because of the inextricable relationships and

interdependencies that these three areas of concern have with each other as the texts work to create and communicate constructions of truth and meaning.

AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP CONCERNS

As has been noted the role of the author, or the 'author function', in the generation of meaning for a text was initially problematised by the textual literary critics. They recognised that rather than the author being the sight where the truth and meaning of a text was to be found, the author served merely as an arbitrarily controlling and limiting obstruction to reading and understanding.

This arbitrary functioning is all the more serious in the case of children's literature because children's texts "serve as a form of education and socialisation that conveys society's deepest hopes, fears, expectations, and demands" (Boutte, 2002). Boutte (2002) notes that where the power relationship between the author and the reader is more pronounced, then the conveyance of the author's ideologies is likewise. It is important then to establish the author-reader relationship which exists in *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*.

It is also essential for this study to establish the nature of the relationship that exists between Arthur S. Maxwell and his adopted pseudonym, 'Uncle Arthur'. This is because it is recognised that by assuming this persona Arthur S. Maxwell has gained a certain level of status and privileges which he otherwise would not have. An understanding of what these gains are is extremely useful to a critical examination of the role of the text in the communication of specific worldviews.

The critical literacy questions which will be used to interrogate the text with regards to the author-reader relationship will include: who is the intended audience of the text, and what messages are conveyed by the representations within the text of the author and the intended audience?; what is the relationship between the author and the reader?; to what extent is the nature of this relationship made explicit?; and how is this relationship maintained and reinforced by the language, literary devices, genre and structure of the text? Critical literacy will also be employed to discover whether the text builds an informal, friendly, and familiar relationship or a formal, distanced impersonal one. This dynamic becomes increasingly significant when juxtaposed with the proposed intentions

of the text because the authority of the author and/or narrator depends largely on the type of relationship the text creates between the author/narrator and the reader.

The purpose of applying a critical literacy process approach in the above-mentioned manner is primarily to establish whether the constructed author-reader relationship inevitably leads to the relinquishment of the reader's authority of truth over to the author. If it is confirmed that this is indeed the case, the reasons why this strategy might be adopted by the author and his publishers needs to be explored, because where there is an obvious but apparently 'natural' power relationship of author over reader the author's ideologies become all the more compelling (Boutte, 2002). The intent is to assess who might benefit from this relationship (certainly the author has gained at the expense of the reader), and exactly what this benefit is. Critical literacy informs the theorist that the most significant gain for the author is power over knowledge and ideology, which is essentially power over truth. Given that the books are widely identified as Seventh-day Adventist texts, a critical interrogation of this power relationship becomes increasingly imperative due to the vested interest of the institution as it seeks to extol its version of 'the truth' in a way that is universal and unquestionable (Hagood, 2002; Luke and Freebody, 1997).

'TRUTH' CONCERNS

The 'truth' concerns of the chosen text refer to the metanarratives that constitute the structure on which meanings are transmitted through the text. These universalising truth claims, while perhaps explaining one aspect of the human condition and the world, invariably "impose restrictive boundaries on an otherwise pluralist, diverse cultural formation" (Webster, 1996, p.125). It is hoped that by identifying the claims to universal truth made by the text, the author and the institution, these claims can be evaluated for their legitimacy in representing the dualities and diversity of human experience and human nature.

To this end a number of critical questions and ideas are useful and relevant. Firstly, the truth claims which run consistently through the text need to be identified and made explicit. In a referential step backwards, it then needs to be asked, from what authoritative platform or 'pulpit' are these truth claims made and to what ideological context do the metanarratives refer? Additionally to what extent are the truth claims

made to appear natural, given and irrefutable? Does the text include fundamental ambiguities which allow for discussion of, and resistance to the proposed truth claims?

INTENTION CONCERNS

Along with the destabilisation of the author's authority in the generation of meaning and the problematising approach to the 'truth' claims of the author/narrator is the critical re-evaluation of the notion that to know the intention of a work is to know the intrinsic truths that the work holds (Webster, 1996). For a text such as *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, which explicitly and proudly professes its intentions from the very beginning it is interesting and necessary to examine how the text works to realise these intentions, and how, in adopting its strategy/s, and the language used as a part of these strategies, the text betrays other deeper-seated, potentially sinister, and possibly unconscious reasons for the creation and distribution of the text (Boutte, 2002; Webster, 1996).

This study refers back to and supports the previous investigation of the author-reader relationship because it is through this constructed relationship that the text sustains much of its effectiveness in the achievement of its intentions. Without wishing to become prematurely involved in a discussion of the author's role and its effect on realising the text's intention, an example of this connection (which will be further explored in Chapter Four) is that by representing Arthur S. Maxwell as a kindly patriarchal figure the text exploits the metaphor and therefore the reader's preconceived notion of a wise and benevolent grandfather who is more aware of the truths of life and the way the world operates.

A critical literacy approach to the intentions of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* will allow for the discussion of such things as the explicitly expressed purpose of the text, the worthiness and legitimacy of these intentions in children's literature, and how the author attempts to realise these intentions. It will also be useful as a tool for determining how effective his methods are.

The discussion will also focus on the possibility of other intentions for the text, and how these other intentions might be identified. If other intentions are revealed, the appropriateness of these intentions in a young children's book will be discussed and

assessed. As is the case with the author-reader relationship discussion, in this section the group/s that might be served by these intentions will be identified, as will the ways these groups gain from the fulfilment of these intentions.

CONCLUSION

The critical literacy discussion of the texts in Chapter Four is primarily informed by the literary theory which informs critical literacy. It is hoped that by utilising the postmodern approaches to literature of deconstruction and poststructuralism, the impact of the critical social theories aspect of critical literacy, which empowers people and ideas, might be maximised through the close scrutiny that postmodern literary theory allows.

CHAPTER FOUR

Readers may rest assured that every story is true to life,
and that every one contains some uplifting, character-building lesson.

(A. S. Maxwell, 1950, 12)

...knowledge does not exist independently from people, waiting
for brilliant men to discover it and to make impartial records
uncoloured by their own opinions and beliefs... it is constructed
in accordance with the values and beliefs with which they begin.

(Spender, 1982, 2 & Webster, 1996, 78)

In chapter four the areas of concern raised by critical literacy will be applied to *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. As has been stated, while the three areas of concern (author-reader relationship, intention, and truth) are separated in chapter three, in the critical literacy discussion and analysis of the text they are combined under the title "Ideology: Author-reader, Intention, and Truth Concerns".

CRITICAL LITERACY READINGS OF "UNCLE ARTHUR'S BEDTIME STORIES".

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism's emphasis on such values and attitudes as open dialogue, meaningful relationships, diversity, egalitarianism and multiculturalism has stimulated the recognition of the spiritual aspects of humanity. Its reaction to the cold rationality of the age of scientific achievement has fostered some degree of human bonding, ecological sensitivity, and freedom from dogma, be it religious, social or scientific (Wilbur, 2000). As has been conceded, postmodernism does not constitute the 'be-all' and 'end-all' of either approaches to thinking or literary criticism. However its emphasis on 'positive relativism' coupled with critical theory's awareness and sensitivity to the plight of the disempowered and the disenfranchised, allows for the vigorous questioning that critical literacy employs. By applying critical literacy questions to *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* it becomes possible to achieve some of the same 'grand' aspirations of these two theories: freeing the reader from the institutional propaganda which

seeks to sabotage the “train[ing of] the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts” (White, 1952, p.17).

The starting point of this rigorously critical investigation needs to be an in-depth interrogation of the role of the author and of the relationship he presumes to have with the reader. This is because not only are the texts infused with his ideologies, but also because the audience to which the books are written and marketed – the ‘intended audience’ – consists predominantly of very young children (Schwarz, 1983), who are extremely susceptible to the worldviews of an authoritative adult (Boutte, 2002). This interrogation will lead into and include a critical examination of both the stated, and the underlying intentions of the texts, and how these intentions are realised through the author-reader relationship. Again, this study will lead into and include a discussion of the truth assumptions and claims of the text and its author/narrator, who seeks to create and promote a simplified and sanitised utopian world.

IDEOLOGY: AUTHOR-READER, INTENTION, AND TRUTH CONCERNS

On the grounds that postmodernism rejects the role of the author in the generation of meaning in a text, it may seem redundant to critically examine the significance of the author to the text in a study of this nature. On the other hand however, Arthur S. Maxwell - or more specifically, ‘Uncle Arthur’ - assumes for himself such a significant role in the investigation, realisation and elucidation of ‘truth’, that it is essential that his self-assumed ‘omnipotent’ and ‘omnipresent’ position be problematised. As has been previously noted, where there is an obvious power relationship between the author and the reader, critical readings become much more imperative (Boutte, 2002). In the case of *Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories* this power relationship between the author and his readership is not only very obvious, but also very much exploited, to the point where ‘Uncle Arthur’ comes to assume a God-like presence in the texts. This occurs both on an ideological level, which sees white, patriarchal, Seventh-day Adventists as the holders of the universal ‘truths’ of the human condition and the world, and on a more disturbing level for the Christian worldview, which actually works to juxtapose the image of ‘Uncle Arthur’ with that of Jesus Christ, thereby giving to the former a degree of authority and status comparative to that of the latter. The

benefits of this gain in power and position then reinforce the supposed truthfulness and legitimacy of the ideologies which the author (and ultimately the institution for which he is representative) espouses.

Before the interrogation can begin in earnest, it is necessary to establish exactly how distanced the author is from the narrator of the stories. While the answer may seem almost ludicrously obvious, it is in fact a complex problem, because as the texts denote in their title, the books are filled with 'Uncle Arthur's' bedtime stories, not Arthur S. Maxwell's bedtime stories. Despite the adoption of this pseudonym, it is valid to argue that the two figures – Maxwell and 'Uncle Arthur' – are so closely assimilated within, and outside of the text, that they are one and the same being (Jean, 1983; Neufeld, 1996; Herrera, 1971). For example, within the texts there are a number of images of Maxwell with clarifying captions that connect him to the title 'Uncle Arthur'. In Volume two of the 1950 compiled edition there is a portrait of Maxwell with the caption, "Portrait of the Artist" (p.2), while in volumes one, three and four of the same edition there are similar representations with the captions, "Uncle Arthur telling stories to a group of children" (p.2), "Uncle Arthur and his happy family at their home in California" (p.2), and, "Uncle Arthur is never so happy as when he is in the company of children. Here they are in the beautiful Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California" (p.2) respectively. Similarly, outside of the texts various Adventist references to Maxwell have explicitly made the connection by pointing out that "Thousands of [people] the world over knew Pastor Maxwell as 'Uncle Arthur'" (Herrera, 1971, 6). Because it is clear that the text, the author and the institution that published the texts assumed the author and the narrator to be the same identity, then it is acceptable for this thesis to likewise make the same connection. This in turn allows for the assumption that the ideologies exhibited and uncovered in the dialogue of the narrator are those of the author, and vice versa.

The indelible connection between the author and the narrator raises the question, why did Arthur S. Maxwell adopt the pseudonym 'Uncle Arthur'? Why not just write under his given name for these texts if he intended that everyone would know the real identity of 'Uncle Arthur' anyway? There are a number of

possible and likely reasons for this. On the surface this pseudonym refers to and utilises the Seventh-day Adventist ethos that the human-race, and especially that part of it that constitutes the Adventist community, is considered to be a worldwide family. In this cultural worldview, children become metaphorical nephews and nieces to adults, and adults metaphorical aunties and uncles to children. Obviously part of the logic behind this ideal is that such terms build familiarity, respect, and a greater sense of community amongst members of the church, as is exemplified in Gaither's (1970) praise hymn *The Family of God*. On the other hand, the creation of a culture where children are encouraged to apply these titles to their elders and 'betters' enables the privilege of this familiarity to occur between a child and an adult without the relinquishment of any of the adult's authority. Rather than an adult being Mr. Jones to a child with whom they have no real family connection for example, that adult becomes Uncle Tom: a man who now has the potential to act as a substitutionary father, with similar status and authority as an actual father. By taking on the pseudonym 'Uncle Arthur' these benefits automatically and 'naturally' fall to Maxwell. He has thus essentially breached a substantial interpersonal divide between himself and his audience, which might otherwise allow children to read his books from a more detached and sceptical perspective.

The presence of patriarchally authoritative 'Uncle Arthur' permeates the texts from cover to cover. It begins with the language of the title, which marks and defines the stories as the property of 'Uncle Arthur': these are '*Uncle Arthur's*' bedtime stories. Via the previously discussed association, Maxwell, who it can be guessed profitted substantially from the texts' distribution, is likewise implicated. This declaration of ownership is made despite Maxwell admitting within the preface of volume three of the 1951 edition that many of the stories are the experiences of his children, and of "children of many lands [who] have written to me, telling me all sorts of interesting things that have happened to them" (p.11). Likewise in volume four Maxwell states that the stories come "Out of the hearts of little children. Of course some come from their fathers, and some from their mothers, and some from aunts and some from uncles, but most come from the boys and girls themselves" (p.12). So to whom do these experiences belong? and what right does Maxwell have of assuming ownership of them? Given the

potential for these stories to not only turn over a healthy profit, but also to idolize and venerate the author, and to propagate the ideologies of the institution that they represent, it is little wonder that Maxwell calls for the continuing submission of experiences from his readers.

And children, if you should ever have something happen to you that you think might make a story in some future volume of *Bedtime Stories*, won't you write and tell me about it? I shall be so happy to hear from you.

A clue to Maxwell's justification for his appropriation of the lived experiences of young children lies in the dedication of the texts on page 10 of volume one. Here Maxwell alludes to the subjectivity of the process of writing the stories. He indicates that his own children were his original muse, providing "the ideas and the inspiration for so many stories." This recognition of the strong subjective nature of his stories runs in sharp contrast to his repeated assurances to parents and children that "every story is founded on fact" (Vol.3, p.12-13), because factuality is based on objective observation rather than subjective interpretation. This assurance is especially questionable in light of the realisation that by the time these 'facts' are communicated to the child, they have been filtered and interpreted by at least two mediums, namely the adult or child who wrote the story to Maxwell, and then Maxwell himself, as he recreated the letter into a readable and entertaining story for young children.

Through this confusion over the actual level of objectivity in the *Bedtime Stories* Maxwell adds another layer to the illusion of his authority and reliability. By blurring the lines between fact and fiction, Maxwell is able to attach a level of legitimacy and accuracy to his stories that doesn't actually exist. He claims that his stories are "true" (vol.4, p.13) and "true to life" (vol.1, p.12) because of the factualness of the accounts. However he ignores, and by implication encourages the reader to ignore, his own process of selection and rejection that must inevitably take place as he constructs the stories. What he proposes then as an objective reflection of life, and of the way the world operates and humans behave, through his conception of a genre that can be accurately described as children's "classic realism" (Webster, 1996, 54), becomes merely his own

selective and ideologically motivated spin on reality. What would happen, it can be posed, if a mother sent him a story that described the experience of losing a child in a program of genocidal extermination? Would 'Uncle Arthur' include this story in the collection? If he didn't then by his own definition he is no longer being true to life. At a more 'ordinary' and everyday level, if a child sent a letter that described the experience of divorce would Maxwell include it? Certainly a scan of the stories in the volumes suggests not, because it quickly becomes obvious that his stories largely deny pain rather than exhibiting a "radical sensitivity to suffering", the likes of which is demonstrated throughout, and which gives further legitimacy to, Biblical narratives and texts (Middleton & Walsh, 1995, 143). One possible explanation for the lack diversity of experience in Maxwell's stories is that it is conceivable that a significant part of the thematic editing process occurred at the point of the stories submission by 'Uncle Arthur's' reading audience, who was aware of the genre Maxwell had created, and so only included those experiences which appealed to that narrative style. Having engaged with his texts, these people would have perceived that any stories outside of the genre to which he adheres, would not be considered for publication.

That Maxwell engages in a process of conscious selection and rejection of stories and experiences is demonstrated in the story *Those Prayers of Your's* (vol.1, p.39-42). This narrative consists of a highly rhetorical exposition of Maxwell's belief in an interventionist God. Maxwell's theology of the nature and workings of God in the world are essentially encapsulated in this four-page statement, which proposes the argument that "Jesus cares *and* that Jesus intervenes" (Berecz, 1996, p.10). Without yet exploring the validity of this theology, a critical examination of the reasoning Uncle Arthur employs reveals not only the highly subjective and problematic evidence he uses to support his claims, but also his lack of discretion in presenting that evidence to young and impressionable minds so as to maintain a highly limiting and exclusive worldview.

He begins the segment by posing a question which he then immediately and authoritatively answers: "Does Jesus really answer children's prayers? Of course

He does" (p.39). No sooner has he answered his own rhetorical question, than he demands that the young reader not "ever let anybody try to persuade you that He doesn't." Having set the tone for the piece in such a way as to disallow any voice that might disagree on any grounds, Maxwell then proceeds to present his case for his unequivocally affirmative ideology. He explains that he has come to his conclusion because he has "had so many children tell [him] that they have had their prayers answered, [that] they couldn't all be mistaken, could they?" (p.39). Again the reader knows the question is rhetorical because of the unambiguous context in which it is asked. It is not a question of inquiry or uncertainty, as in "could they possibly be wrong?" but rather it is an unquestionable affirmation that Maxwell has come to the correct conclusion. Unfortunately, [for Uncle Arthur] he refuses to let this single assertion carry the weight of his argument. He goes on to provide for the reader a scenario where he actively engages in his own program of dubious 'data collection' when he states that when in attendance at camp meetings (it might be assumed, Seventh-day Adventist camp meetings), and he is standing in front of "a thousand children" (p.39), Maxwell poses these questions to the crowd, "How many children present believe Jesus answers their prayers?" (p.39); and, "How many children present have asked Jesus for something really definite, and found He answered?" (p.40). The "vigour" of the positive responses, in the form of raised hands is tendered as undeniable evidence that Jesus "answers every prayer that comes to Him and especially the prayers of little children" (p.42). Apparently, according to Uncle Arthur, these prayers are also always answered in the affirmative, because as Maxwell makes clear, when you have asked for the biggest thing you can think of, Jesus will go one better still" (p.42). The fallaciousness of his argument however becomes evident in the light of the conspicuous and intentional omission of what is obviously the next logical question to ask in order to receive a balanced response, "How many children have asked Jesus for something really definite, and have not been answered at all?" Even if this question were posed it can be safely assumed that given the context and environment in which the questions are asked, with what can be guessed to be considerable pressure for every response to affirm the worldview of the majority, a negative response is all but inconceivable.

The rhetoric inherent in Maxwell's testimony is extended further as he seeks to relate to his audience in a manner reminiscent of the oratorical pleadings of Mark Antony to the Romans in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Maxwell appeals for his readers complicity by promoting his connection with, and sympathy for children when he unashamedly states, "I love children very much, and I am always being told that I "spoil" them, especially when they are little" (p.40). In the process of making this forthright connection he not only elevates his status as the friend of children, he also advances his cause, which is to gain the concurrence of his readers to his point of view.

Another layer is added again to the authoritative patriarchal voice through the inclusion of a preface and lesson index at the beginning of each volume. The lesson index consists of two pages of headings such as "Cooperation", "Grumbling, Cure for", and "Temptation, Help in", with 'relevant' stories listed under each heading. The explicit function of these prefaces is to communicate a number of facts about the texts, which Maxwell feels are important for the reader to know. These facts include such things as the intended purposes of the texts, and the high level of consistency maintained in the stories. Though they were originally written almost thirty years previous, Maxwell maintains, "the stories are [almost] exactly the same" (vol. 2, p. 12). The explicit and obvious function of the lesson index is to "make the purpose [of each story] plain" (vol.3, p.13). From a critical perspective, the implicit function of these prefaces and indexes is to 'prime' the reader for the text, so that it is read in a prescribed and limiting manner. This perspective is bolstered by the fact that all but one of the prefaces directs the reader to move from the preface to the index and then to the text itself, in order to ensure that the text is read in the manner the author desires it to be read. Even the act of reading thus occurs under the direction and supervision of the author and the institution which published the texts.

More insidiously, 'Uncle Arthur' is represented as occupying the same position Christ occupies and thereby gains the impeachable and incontestable authority that Jesus patently commands. While this may seem a rather grandiose claim to make against Maxwell, the incident of this 'profanity' is demonstrated beyond a single example. In the first case, Maxwell unsubtly juxtaposes himself

against the image of Jesus by placing his claim to his connection with children immediately after pointing out the nature of Jesus relationship with children. The proximity of the claims and the similarity of the language used to make these claims is a striking revelation of the author's intent.

Of course Jesus answers children's prayers! There can't be any doubt about it.

He is the greatest lover of little children.

I love children very much...

The use of the key words "love" and "children" in quick succession work to bring the figure of Christ and that of Uncle Arthur into closer relation with each other.

The use of language to position Maxwell in Jesus' place extends beyond mere similarity and proximity. The manner in which the passage is constructed also leads to a pronounced link being made between the two figures. This can be seen where the focus of the discourse shifts from the identification of Jesus by name, to the replacement of his name with the personal pronoun "He", then to the person of Maxwell, represented by the personal pronoun "I". What in fact occurs through this transition is the blurring of the image of Jesus into the unnamed, and therefore to some extent unidentified "He", and then onto the similarly somewhat vague identification of 'Uncle Arthur' in "I". The effect of this strategy is to disseminate the identity of Christ from one direction and reconstruct this identity into 'Uncle Arthur' from the other. To test this hypothesis it is useful to add the word "also" into the final sentence and notice the extra distance that is created through the inclusion of this small word between the two personal pronouns: one representing Jesus, and the other Maxwell.

Of course Jesus answers children's prayers! There can't be any doubt about it.

He is the greatest lover of little children.

I *also* love children very much...

In this example it is no longer possible for the structure to accommodate the almost seamless metamorphosis of the identity of Jesus into the identity of 'Uncle Arthur' because with the addition of "also" comes the explicit recognition of the separateness of the two identities.

As has been indicated, this example of 'Uncle Arthur's' assimilation into the image of Jesus does not stand alone in the texts. Another two examples occur in pictorial representations that similarly juxtapose the figure of Christ with the figure of 'Uncle Arthur' (Appendix B, fig.1, fig.2). The first occurs in volume one, on page two, where the reader is presented with a heavily constructed image of 'Uncle Arthur' sitting in an armchair, engaged in telling stories to three girls and two boys who sit either on his knees or attentively on the floor in front of him. In the picture, Maxwell occupies the central position of the page. His body language towards the children is intimate and affectionate, as theirs is with him. He is positioned so that he is looking down at the children, from the readers right to left, and each of the children are looking towards his face. The primary colours of the image are yellow-green, blue, white, red, and brown, and the tone is soft and light. At the bottom of the picture is the caption, which reads, "Uncle Arthur telling stories to a group of children." Through the combination of these elements the image constructs a sense of clarity, intimacy and innocent pleasure: a message consistent with the themes of the text. In the same volume, on page 322 is another image, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the one just mentioned, however in this instance, the central space previously occupied by Uncle Arthur, is now filled with the image of Jesus. As with the previous picture, this representation contains five children, though in this case there are clearly two boys and two girls, as well as one child whose gender remains non-specific. Again these children are presented as attentive to the adult figure and likewise is the adult figure looking down at the children with his line of sight running ever so slightly from the reader's right to left of the page. The colours which dominate this illustration are yellow-green, blue, white, pink and brown, and again the tonality is soft and light. The caption at the bottom of the page reads, "Jesus, the friend of children" and the message that is communicated is again one of intimacy, innocence and limpidity. Obviously there is a strong and intentional connection between the two images, with the main areas of difference being the setting, the adult figure and the identity indicated in the caption.

The second set of pictorial representations operate in the same manner as the ones previously mentioned, however the specific devices and elements employed to make the connections in these two illustrations are slightly different (Appendix

C, fig.1, fig.2). In volume four, on page two, the reader is offered a scene thematically identical to those already discussed, however in this picture Uncle Arthur and his ever present entourage of childish companions are pictured beside a lake, with Maxwell now occupying a space to the left of the centre, as the reader looks at the page. As in the other illustrations, Maxwell is the dominating character, looking slightly down and across the heads of the children, who fan out beneath him across the page. In this instance the children represented display slightly more diversity with at least one girl appearing to have some non-European ethnicity, and another seemingly more mature than the rest of the group. The caption across the bottom of the page reads, "Uncle Arthur is never so happy as when he is in the company of children. Here they are in beautiful Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California." On proceeding eight pages through the book the reader comes to an illustration which mirrors the image a few pages previous. Here Jesus, like Maxwell before him, is positioned on the left-hand side of the frame, again looking down and over the heads of the children who spread across to the right hand side of the page. Just as Maxwell stood with his hands resting on the shoulders of the two children closest to him, so to does Jesus. In this picture water also features, though here it is not contained by a lake but rather a fountain that stands in the foreground. Like the other picture, the children in this image display a wide diversity, though in this instance greater emphasis is placed on racial difference than on age difference. The caption to this drawing is not featured at the bottom of the page, but is written in the top right hand corner. It is a quote from Luke 18:16, which says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God." While there appears to be significant differences between the two pictures, most predominant of which is that one is a colour image and the other consisting of only black, white and shades of blue, there are subtle yet important similarities which build connections in place of colour. Most notable are the repetitious patterns and images that occur in both pictures. For example, the ground on which the characters stand in both frames is made up of irregular and untidy patterns. Similarly, the sprouting plant life and the fountain in the second picture reflect the aquatic plants in the first. Again, the repetition of the swan floating on the lake with the boat on the fountain helps to build a connection between the pictures.

The messages that these visual representations contrive to inject into the text are no less powerful than the textual examples which seek to elevate ‘Uncle Arthur’ into the position that Christ occupies. While the representations of each figure are separated by a considerably larger physical distance – 320 and eight pages respectively - the polarities of God and man - perfect and flawed, sovereign and servile - are arguably more effectively diluted and meshed, because their constructedness is more subtle and appears more ‘natural’ than the textual passage (Christie & Misson, 1998). By taking each image out of the book and placing them side-by side on the same page the effect of the construction is more evident and more striking. Without the advantage of extra images and text, messages and ideas, to separate the representations, the “constructedness and ... tendentiousness” of the “naturalised image” is made apparent, and so its power is negated (Christie & Misson, 1998, p.11; Langford, 2001). That these messages were intentionally constructed into text becomes increasingly evident with the recognition that each image was featured with its corresponding double in the same book. Further, this editorial matching process happens from one volume to the next, suggesting the repetition and reinforcement of the message.

The belief that ‘Uncle Arthur’ holds the same status and authority as God is reinforced by the structure of the stories themselves and by the narrative voice used to communicate not only the circumstances of each story, but also the actions and motivations of the characters, and the meanings of the unfolding events. The over-simplification of each set of circumstances allows the narrator to present a world largely sanitised of ambiguities. In this heavily constructed environment characters act and react in a limited and predictable way and stories close with each ‘good’ action duly rewarded, and each ‘bad’ behaviour justly punished. Closure then is the narrative tool ‘Uncle Arthur’ uses to create and maintain a “utopian” world, which he rules over with a God-like presence (Webster, 1996, 54). In stories such as *The Hollow Pie* (vol.1, p.30), *Through Fire and Water* (vol.1, p.291), *Bonfire Night* (vol.2, p.38), and *Telltale Topsy* (vol.3, p.301) the reader is presented with narratives that run in tight and straight lines of cause and effect, wherein child protagonists who transgress one of the core values ‘Uncle Arthur’ is trying to teach, suffers some immediate calamity as

a direct result. One such example in volume four is *Paul's Lesson* (vol.4, p.152-157); a story of particular significance to Seventh-day Adventist children. In this narrative the reader is introduced to Paul, who is working diligently at carving a boat from a single piece of wood. When Sabbath comes Paul is struck with the dilemma of his desire to continue working on his boat against his responsibility to "la[y] aside... ordinary work" and spend the day as "a time of rest and peace" (p.152). When his mother leaves the house Paul takes the opportunity to sneak into the workshop and try to finish his project. He is so nervous about what he is doing however that he hits himself on the thumb with the hammer, then splits the boat with the chisel, before finally cutting his hand open and fainting on the floor. When he is revived by his mother, the first thing that he sees as he opens his eyes is a plaque which reads:

A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And strength for the tasks of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned
What'er may be gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow (p.157).

On seeing this Paul exclaims "to think of that in front of me now" (p.157), thus revealing his perception that, as the poem notes, and as 'Uncle Arthur' consistently affirms throughout his texts, 'bad' things happen to those who do 'wrong'. In fact, it is suggested through the narrative that not only do 'bad' things happen, but also that God is watching for children to do wrong so that they can be swiftly and decisively dealt with. It is little wonder that Paul "look[s] so worried" (p.157) when he wakes from his swoon and is immediately confronted with the moral reading of his experience. It seems to him to be providential that this coincidence has occurred.

At the other end of this narrative technique are those stories which highlight incidences where a child is recognised and rewarded, often in some material way for doing 'good' deeds. Again in these stories, God appears to take an active role in the moral closure of the narrative, by intervening at some level to maintain the moral universe Maxwell has created. One poignant example of this is *Joe's Quarter* (vol.1, p.43). This is a short story of a boy from a poor family, who is

unable to find a quarter somebody has given him. He goes to bed feeling “very much discouraged” and in his frustration he exclaims “why should I pray? I’ve lost my quarter, and what’s the use of praying any more? If God won’t show me where the quarter is, I won’t pray to him” (p.44). He is pricked by his conscience however and is unable to sleep, so decides that he’d “better say them after all” (p.45). On kneeling beside his bed his knee presses on something which he discovers to be his quarter. Though Maxwell does not explicitly state it, it is non-too-subtly inferred that because Joe got out of bed to pray, God revealed to him where his quarter was. In other words, Joe’s adherence to the belief structure to which ‘Uncle Arthur’ subscribes, and which is inscribed throughout the text, pays immediate and recognisable dividends for him. While this event, and the myriad of others presented by Maxwell, may be based in an actual experience, the problem of Maxwell’s claim to the stories being “true to life” (vol.1, p.12) arises out of the imbalance that is evident between those instances where things work out, and those where things do not. As Berecz (1996, p.13) points out when he speaks of the process of “selective sampling”, the “*institutional bias*” of ‘Uncle Arthur’ creates a narrative strategy that does “*not* include stories of failed miracles.” As Berecz (1996, p.12-13) notes, truth and honest about life, God and the human condition are lost when we leap “from one miraculous event to the other, as if there [are] no moments of ordinary living in between” and we fail to recognise that “*most of the time... miracles don’t happen.*” If ‘Uncle Arthur’ is going to claim truth, balance and objectivity in his narratives, whilst disparaging “the usual run of children’s stories” (vol.1, p.12) and “fairy tales” (vol.2, p.11), then stories which tell of such experiences are *siné qua non*.

A further problem which arises out of the creation of what appears to be a morally unambiguous universe, resided over by the figure of a humanly instituted god, is that almost any action is deemed appropriate and acceptable so long as it prescribes to the ideologies of the narrator, and works to realise the intention of the text. This includes behaviours that, it is clear to the reader, are both unethical and destructive. A powerful example can be seen in *The I-know-that Girl* (vol.1, p.105-109). In this story a young girl, who Maxwell tells the reader is aged eight years old, and who appears to be going through a phase of identity assertion and discovery, is deemed by the narrator to be unlikable because “She just wouldn’t

admit that there was anything she didn't know" (p.105). In an effort to remedy this 'character flaw' her father decides to take her to London to teach her a "precious lesson" (vol.1, p.13). He develops and employs a strategy that involves his taking her into Trafalgar Square, a place that Maxwell characterises as "cold and lonely" (p.107) and describes as having "crowds of people hurrying about" (p.107) and "hundreds of buses". While there, with his daughter's attention distracted, the father sneaks off and hides from her. Of course when the 'I-know-that Girl' realises that her father is missing she becomes distraught and calls and cries for her father. Despite her insistent pleading, the father does not reappear until the girl is led away against her will by a "big policeman" (p.108), who tells her that he is going to take her to the police station. On embracing the child the father tells her "I only wanted to see if you really did know the way home, *as you said you did*, so I hid for a moment" (p.109, my emphasis). Clearly, from this statement the father is not only explaining to the girl what happened, but also he justifies his actions by turning the focus, and therefore the blame, back on the child when he says "as you said you did". He communicates to the "I-know-that Girl", and to the reader, that the experience would not have been necessary had she not previously insisted that she could find her own way home. What the father, and indeed 'Uncle Arthur' fail to recognise is that the message communicated to the girl, more probable than the intended neat moral lesson provided at the end of the book, is that her father cannot be relied upon to support her as she grows up, and that policemen are people to be feared rather than people to be turned to in emergencies. This message is also communicated to the reader, however in this case the communication is all the more profound because despite Maxwell's claim that the child was eight years old at the time of the event, the pictures associated with the story show a girl who is clearly younger than this. The image on page 109 for example shows the child standing beside the policeman, who though described as "big" is of similar stature to the adults around him. In this image the child barely comes up to the height of the policeman's waist: more indicative of a four or five-year-old than an eight-year-old. The impact of the story on the reader, especially a very young reader, is thus enhanced by the image because the effect of the events is more dramatic when played out upon a younger child.

Despite the highly unethical, destructive and potentially dangerous actions of the father, his role is not called into question. In contrast it is all but applauded by 'Uncle Arthur' through the closure he provides for the story, which sees the child reflecting on the experience, and on the spectre of the "big policeman" and adapting her actions 'accordingly': "when[ever] the little girl was tempted to say "I know that" she thought of the big policeman and of Trafalgar Square – and didn't say it" (p.109).

Another example of the ethical dilemmas 'Uncle Arthur's' narrative style creates is seen in *Wilfred's Secret* (vol.1, p.15). The messages transmitted in this story, while not as potentially destructive as in the previous instance, are no less confusing for the young reader because of the conflict between Maxwell's good intention, and ethical behaviour. The narrative follows the actions of two children who play a game which involves their "give[ing] people surprises", by, "find[ing] people who need things done for them, and then make[ing] them wonder how the things got done" (p.16). Their good deeds include tidying the kitchen for their mother and delivering gifts to sick people: actions which are undeniably honourable and positive. The problem arises however when, in the course of fulfilling one of these deed, the children commit a felony when they enter the house of a sick elderly lady uninvited. They do this more than once, and on one of the occasions they are detected by the lady's doctor, who on finding the gift left by the children, takes it upon himself to approach them and reward them with gifts of food and toys for their kindness. While, as has been noted, the actions of the children were done with the best-of-intentions, their entering another person's private residence without invitation amounts to the crime of breaking and entering. Obviously the children do not deserve to be punished, however rewarding them without clarifying their innocent mistake actually affirms all of their actions. A confusing message is thus sent to both the protagonists of the story, and to the reader. This message is that unethical behaviour is always justified and rewarded by good intentions.

As this discussion has shown, this is the very same worldview subscribed to by Maxwell and by the institution from which the books are published and distributed. It is appreciated that Maxwell's intention, to write stories that "teach

some beautiful, character building lesson” (vol.3, p.13), and that uphold the values of “kind[ness], honest[y], truthful[ness], and obedient[ce], and above all to love God” (vol.1, p.12), is a worthwhile endeavour. However, the strategy employed by the institution of ‘Uncle Arthur’, which is born out of a specific set of ideological beliefs, works to seriously undermine both the truth claims of the author, and the effectiveness of the texts to realise the author’s intentions.

It can be argued that Maxwell was merely working within the cultural framework of the age in which the books were written, and so the texts inevitably reflect the ideologies of that framework. Additionally, Maxwell was not the only participant in the construction of the texts, and certainly not responsible for every message that is transmitted by the text, especially with relation to the visual images of photographs and illustrations. It does seem, and is viably argued that the image Maxwell saw for himself, and the one he wished to communicate was one of a kindly, interested and caring patriarch, whose best interests were firstly for the children who read his stories. Such a reading has significant validity and merit.

Also valid however, are Friere’s (1971) and Leland’s (2000) assertion that the author’s (in this case Arthur S. Maxwell’s) self-appointed role as teacher of truth and transmitter of values makes him complicit in the maintenance of a status quo which was unjust, unequal and oppressive. Though defenders of the institution may argue that his position was “neutral”, critical literacy responds by pointing out that “those who dwell in the sacrosanct, unquestioned centre... are thoroughly implicated in the unfolding of our cultural world – with all its inequities, injustices and scabrous edges” (Davis and Sumara, 1999, p.28)

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

FINDINGS

The most significant finding of this thesis has come via the critical investigation of the relationship that is constructed in the text between the author/narrator and the reader. The text consistently works very hard to establish and maintain a definite and distinct power relationship with the reader through the control of knowledge and the assumption of a degree of authority that doesn't intrinsically exist for either the author or the institution. This is done via the narrative style employed, the representations proffered, and the structures of the text itself. The uneven power relationship means that the truth claims, though contestable to the point of being spurious and fallacious, are transmitted with such authoritative force that the rejection of them is difficult, especially for very young children, in which case it seems unlikely it could occur at all.

A further implication of the relationship between the author and the reader is that the original good intentions of the author, as communicated in the preface and in associated literature about the texts, are undermined by the assumption of authorial power. The gain of almost absolute power is then used to justify behaviour, meanings and messages, which are unethical at best, and destructive and/or dangerous at worst.

Aside from the findings of the application of critical literacy to *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* is the discovery of a small body of evidence which points to some degree of distorted perceptions as a direct result of young children's heavy and extended engagement with the texts. The discovery also of unhealthy associations between the texts and destructive worldviews adds weight to a hypothesis that distortion of perceptions can occur. This small body of evidence warrants further and more stringent investigation into the likelihood of this occurring, and if it is found that it does, then it should be determined what the affects of prolonged overexposure to the ideologies are.

LIMITATIONS

The most significant and keenly felt limitation of this study has been the lack of opportunity to investigate the texts more holistically, and in greater depth, due to the necessary word limit of the honours dissertation. The original idea and plan was to include an investigation and discussion of other concerns such as postcolonial and feminist concerns in the texts. Also, the limits of the study meant that the areas of concern which were discussed, though approached with a concerted effort to delve deeply and broadly, could likewise have been significantly extended, so that more could have been gained through the critical literacy reading of the texts.

Despite critical literacy's "well honed" processes and practices (Langford, 2001), another possible limitation that is perceived with this study, and which has been alluded to a number of times in the thesis, is the problem of the theory of reading employed in the analysis of the text. More specifically, the shortcoming is a result of the postmodern literary theory, which informs critical literacy. While it has been pertinent and useful to this thesis, its increasing lack of credibility in academic spheres may cause the thesis to 'age' before its time. Unfortunately, resting as it does on the cusp between postmodernism and the new paradigm of criticism and thought, which is yet to be defined and named, but which can be loosely labelled (borrowing from Wilbur (2000)) the *Theory of Everything*, there is no foreseeable way this thesis could have avoided this shortcoming.

IMPLICATIONS

As has been noted, just as Maxwell is inseparable from his alias 'Uncle Arthur', so to is the Seventh-day Adventist church's publishing arm, which played an integral part in the message making and distribution of the texts through the editing, publishing and marketing strategies it employed. Further, it can be argued that the institution of Seventh-day Adventism is likewise implicated in the text both by the ownership of the texts' publishing companies and by their own proud admission that Maxwell, who is 'Uncle Arthur', was a 'giant' of the faith, employed for more than fifty years in positions of significant ideological influence. That the publication and distribution of this material continues today signals not only our consistent reaffirmation of the Seventh-day Adventist

traditions that the texts represent, but also that we willingly embrace and espouse the values and ideologies that exist at the principle and most foundational levels of the books. The most disturbing implication of this replacement of Christ with 'Uncle Arthur' is that it perhaps reveals a deeply held worldview that the Seventh-day Adventist Church and God are interchangeable at some levels. Under this belief system, potentially anything the institution does becomes acceptable and justifiable, just as it potentially does in *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, because the institution has the same authority as God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

On another front, the thesis has managed to indicate that "Christians are biased reporters... We leave it to pessimistic existentialists to deal with the darker side of life. In the process we fool ourselves" and unfortunately in the case of *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, we short-change our kids of an important perspective on life, and on their future. (Berecz, 1996, p.13).

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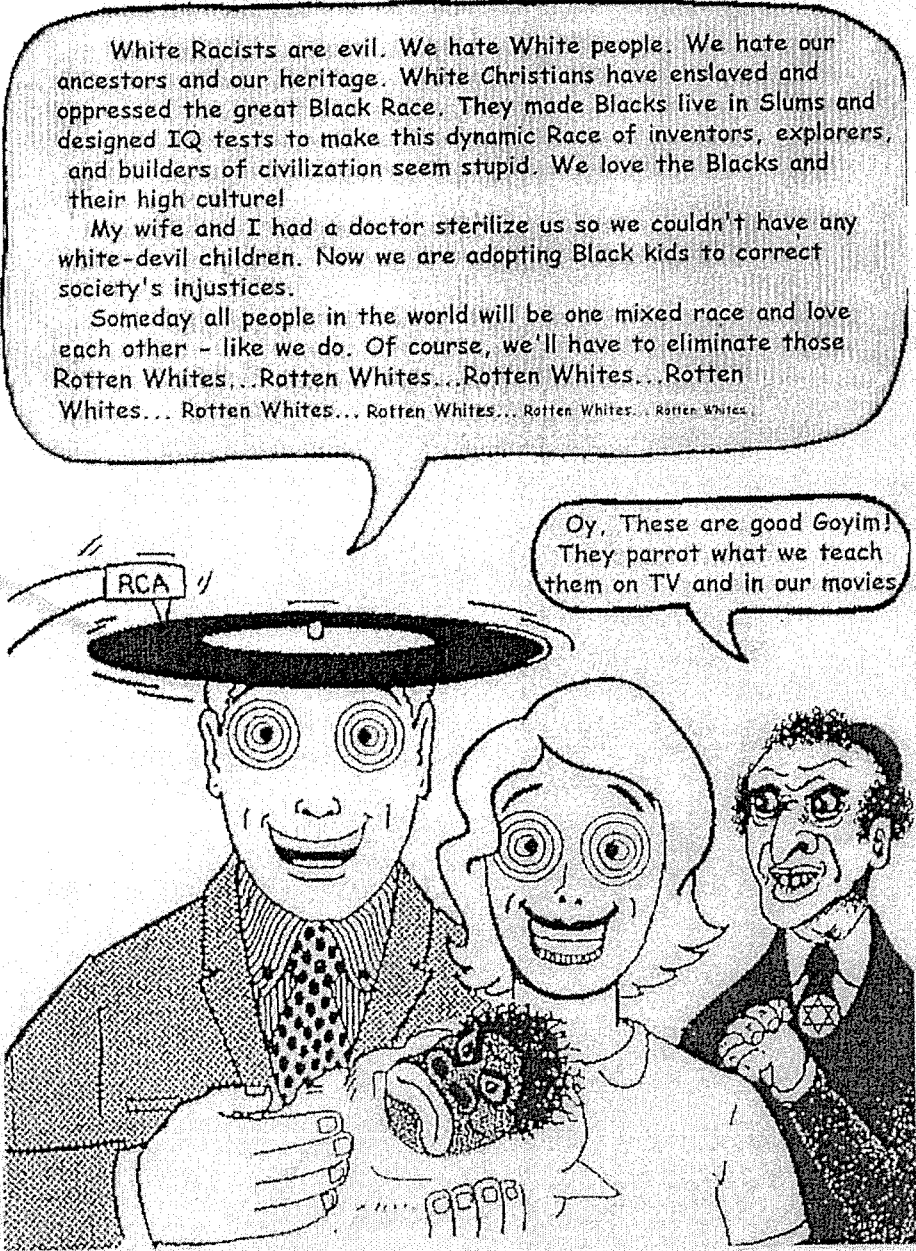
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Fig.1: Kingdom Identity Ministries: The Liberal Guilt Complex

The Liberal Guilt Complex



APPENDIX B

Fig. 1: *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* (Vol.1, p.2)

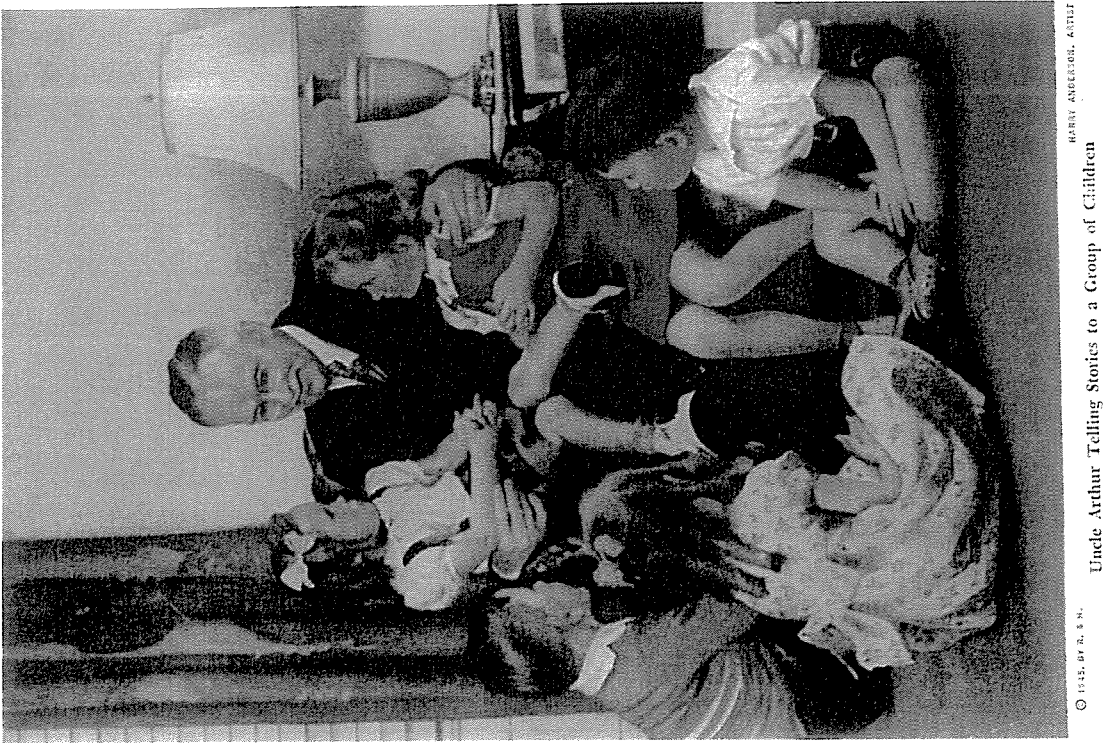
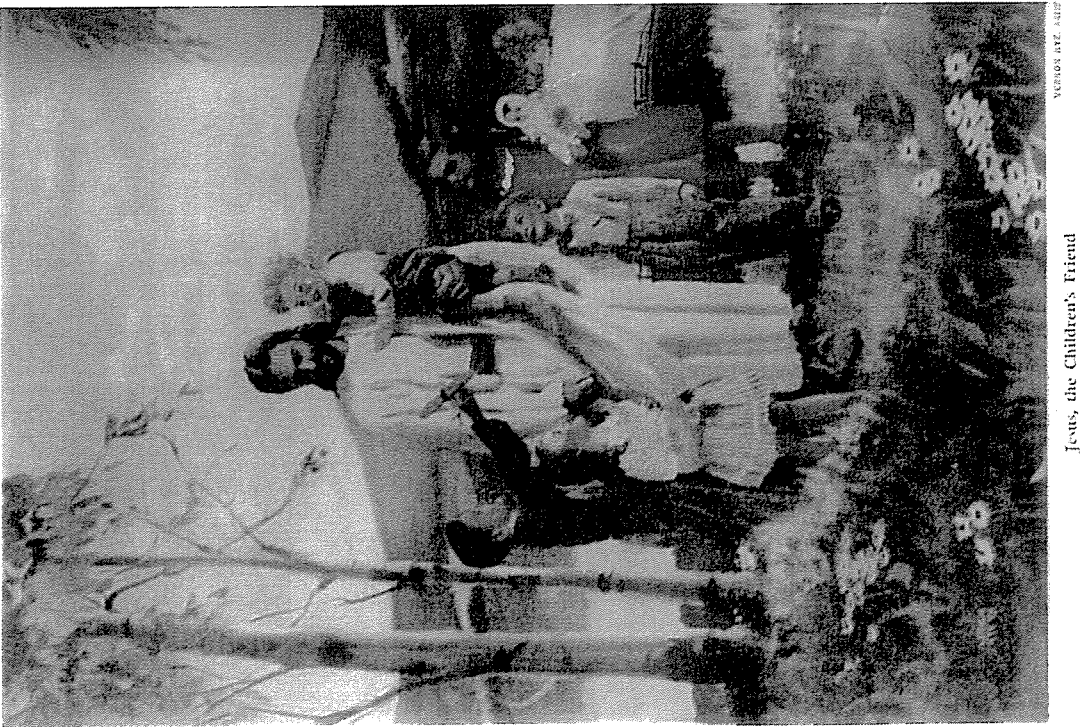
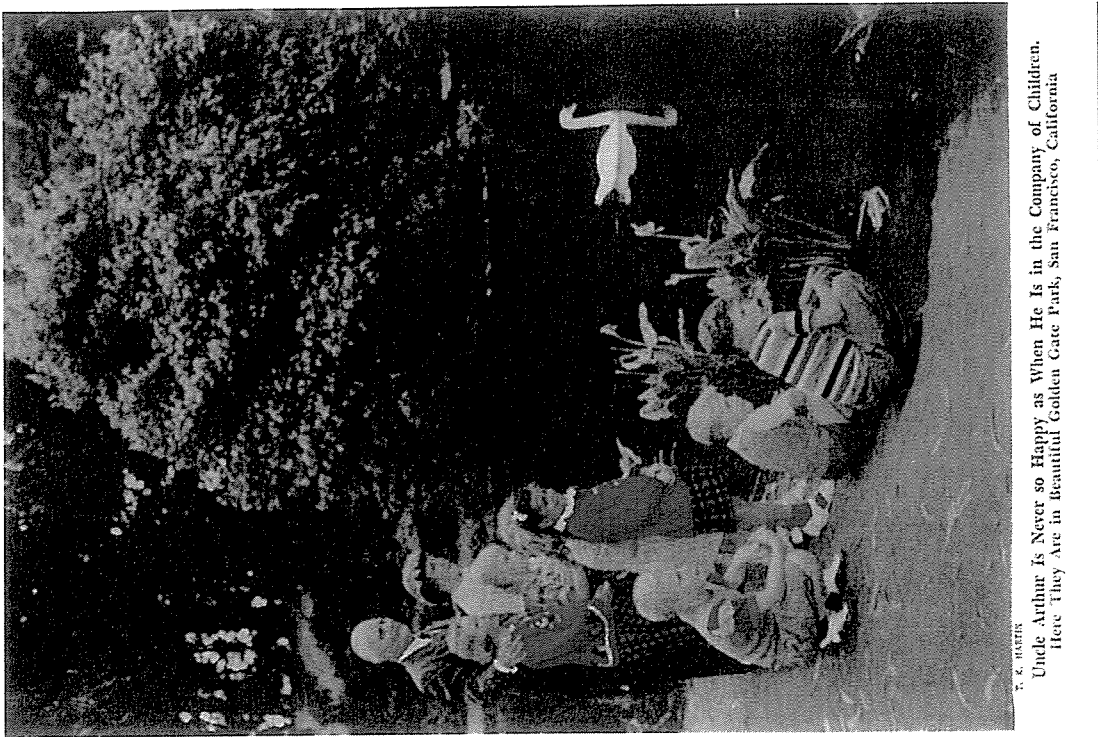


Fig. 2: *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* (Vol.1, p.320)



APPENDIX C

Fig. 1: *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* (Vol.4, p.2)



Uncle Arthur is Never so Happy as When He is in the Company of Children. Here They are in Beautiful Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California

Fig. 2: *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* (Vol.4, p.10)

