

GOLDEN MEAN:
COMMERCIAL CULTURE, MIDDLE-CLASS IDEALS,
AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

By

JULIE SINN CASSIDY

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To all the Sinns and Scheitlins

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABSTRACT.....	8
CHAPTER	
1 AN INTRODUCTION: WHY THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS	10
Emergence in Middlebrow Culture	16
Project Overview	30
2 FROM THE 1940S TO THE 2000S: DECADES OF LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS	33
3 THE GOLD STANDARD: GOLDEN AGES AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS.....	57
The First Golden Age of Children’s Literature	61
A Second Golden Age	67
4 IMAGES OF INNOCENCE: CHILDREN IN THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS.....	85
The Romantic Child and the Knowing Child	86
Innocence and Children in the Little Golden Books	87
American Innocence	102
Changing Faces and Racial Diversity.....	104
5 THE HAPPY FAMILY: GENDER DIVIDES AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS....	113
Educating Parents And Educating Children	114
Mothers and Fathers in the 1940s and 1950s.....	118
Mommies and Daddies in the Little Golden Books.....	122
1960s and Beyond.....	135
6 TRANSPORTING NOSTALGIA: Souvenirs of childhood and THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS.....	141
Nostalgia, Souvenirs, and Little Golden Books.....	142
Acquisition of Little Golden Books.....	147
Collecting and Little Golden Books	150
Recycling Little Golden Book Images	156
7 “FOR THE MASSES, NOT THE CLASSES”: AN EPILOGUE	162
APPENDIX	
A LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK ADVERTISEMENTS	169

B LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK FABRICS	172
LIST OF REFERENCES	174
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	184

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In 1942, the first twelve Little Golden Books published by Simon and Schuster marked the beginning of the longest-running series of picture books in the United States. The Little Golden Books quickly gained popularity in the 1940s during the rise of middlebrow culture through a confluence of writing, illustrating, printing, and marketing techniques that paralleled the first Golden Age of Children's Literature in the late 19th Century. During both of these periods in children's literature, publishers, authors, and illustrators joined in their commitment to higher quality writing and illustrations, which further revolutionized the design of books designated primarily for children. Since 1942, over 1,200 unique Little Golden Books titles have been published as part of their catalogue.

Purposefully or not, the majority of Little Golden Books feature children whose physical features document America's continuing idealization of innocence in children's picture books. By coupling the marginalization of ethnically diverse children with the depiction of white children in stable families, the Little Golden Books help maintain the 1940s and 1950s version of the patriarchal, nuclear family. Unlike Dr. Seuss or Maurice Sendak, whose illustrations of children often defied convention and were sometimes even thought of as ugly when they were

first published, the illustrators for the Little Golden Books did nothing new that might work against the status quo of the symbolic innocent child as already established in children's picture books. By focusing primarily on the image of the white, innocent child and marginalizing ethnic diversity, the Little Golden Books both reinforce and preserve the patriarchal nuclear family values that dominated white suburban America in the 1940s and 1950s. The movement of white Americans into the suburbs also facilitated the polarization of gender roles since women were more likely to stay home while men traveled farther distances to work. These aspects of white middle-class suburban American life were mirrored by the children in the Little Golden Books who played the bread-winning male (boys only) and the homemaking female (girls only).

Even though they started as a series of affordable picture books and continue to flourish in the publishing industry, the Little Golden Books have also explored other marketing avenues for their well-known characters such as toys, domestic goods, computer games, and children's videos. The marketing, collecting, and recycling of today's Little Golden Books constitutes a prime example of the nostalgia-infused repackaging of children's books as "classics". Yet, critics and academics continue to summarily ignore the impact of these books on children's culture and American popular culture. By examining specific Little Golden Books and the collection as a whole within the context of American culture, this dissertation considers the historical, cultural, rhetorical, and commercial significance of the longest-running series of picture books in the United States.

CHAPTER 1 AN INTRODUCTION: WHY THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

In this project, I examine a number of the cultural phenomena that inform the history and development of the Little Golden Books, from their beginning in the America of the 1940s to their place today as a universal presence in the literature of the American nursery. Beneath the deceptively simple surfaces of the Little Golden Books, lie complex cross currents of American popular culture that range from publishing economics and marketing strategies, to the dynamics of the American Zeitgeist in the wake of World War II. To bring this complexity of forces into focus requires multiple critical lenses that include archival research, cultural and gender studies, psychoanalytical theory, and picture book aesthetics. A key part of my methodology involves interviews with editors, collectors, authors and librarians as well as archival work through newspapers, magazines, and research libraries to reach some conclusions about the wealth of anecdotal mythology surrounding the books. Examining the specific Little Golden Books themselves requires not only an understanding of picture book theory, but also reveals how American popular culture, normative gender roles, the archetype of the child, and consumerism coalesce to form a series of picture books that have maintained their popularity for over 60 years.

Undoubtedly, the Little Golden Books have been and are still popular cultural texts that contain their own widely accepted, reinforced, and regulated images and belief systems. In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Lawrence Levine defines the adjective “popular” by pointing to “not only those creations of expressive culture that actually had a large audience . . . but also, and often primarily, those that had questionable artistic merit” (Levine 31). The establishment of cultural studies as a legitimate field of inquiry within the university setting in America has created a space for academic dialogue about topics that are “popular” in American culture but have “questionable artistic merit” in the eyes of the

critics. Books like *Hop on Pop: the Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture* that explore interest in mass consumer culture have opened the door for projects such as mine that treat the Little Golden Books as a significant part of children's literature and American popular culture not in spite of, but certainly because of, their mass distribution.

The growth of cultural studies also provides a context for books such as Julia L. Mickenberg's *Learning from the Left*, which examines the progressive tendencies of children's books produced by "Leftists" during the Cold War and compares those tendencies to the "New Leftists" of the 1960s in the United States. As a part of this study, Mickenberg focuses on a specific Little Golden Book titled *Tootle* (1954) by Gertrude Crampton in which a young, eponymous train engine rebels against the system by straying from the railway tracks because he wants to play with the butterflies and frolic among the flowers in the field. Eventually, Tootle learns that he must stay on the tracks and follow the rules precisely in order to be a productive part of his community, but for a brief moment in *Tootle*, children witness the joys of breaking a larger community's social rules. Mickenberg's *Learning from the Left* is singular in the field of children's literature in that it does not immediately dismiss the value of a picture book simply because it is a Little Golden Book.

Yet, academic criticisms that examine the Little Golden Books are rare because the books are often disregarded as sub-literary. Critical children's literature books like Michelle H. Martin's *Brown Gold: Milestones of African-American Children's Picture Books, 1845-2002* further the popular notion that Little Golden Books are filled with "cheaply rendered illustrations" that do not have any artistic merit (Martin 201). In her discussion of *Little Black Sambo*'s origins, Martin notes the "positive contributions" that Helen Bannerman's story and illustrations have made "within the developing canon of African-American children's picture

books” even though the story is often dismissed as racist (Martin 17). A concrete example of this ongoing controversy that Martin discusses occurred in a 1966 *New York Times* article in which Little Golden Books President Albert Leventhal noted that “almost every time we reissue the story of Little Black Sambo’ [sic] we receive mail deploring it. When it is not available in our Little Golden Books series, we have had letters asking why we do not keep this classic in print” (Lelyveld 34). Even though Bannerman’s story about a boy who outwits tigers and eats pancakes was eventually pulled from the Little Golden Books catalogue, in 2004 the story was published again under the title *The Boy and the Tigers* with updated illustrations to avoid any negative connotations attached to the first title. Unfortunately, by dismissing all illustrations in all Little Golden Books, Martin completely misses the opportunity to examine Gustaf Tenggren’s non-stereotypical illustrations in the Little Golden Book’s 1948 edition of *Little Black Sambo* when she examines several different illustrated versions of *Little Black Sambo* that have developed from Bannerman’s original story.

Surprisingly, critical examinations of the cultural and commercial significance of the Little Golden Books as a whole do not exist, but information about their history and collectibility is readily available. In 1991, Rebecca Greason authored *Tomart’s Price Guide to Golden Book Collectibles*, which focused more heavily on the trinkets, figurines, and toys associated with the Little Golden Books than the books themselves. More recently, collector Steve Santi, who is widely recognized as an expert on the Little Golden Books, regularly revises and publishes an extensive collector’s guide to the Little Golden Books that includes information on the people and places he learned about through numerous interviews. Unfortunately, Santi did not tape any of these interviews he conducted or draft detailed notes. He does, though, maintain a web site¹

¹ Santi’s web site can be found at <<http://www.thesantis.com/>>. This site includes an abbreviated history of the Little Golden Books, numerous photographs, and access to Santi’s Little Golden Books forum.

through which he answers questions about the Little Golden Books and sells extra copies of individual books. In a small, closely packed studio room connected to his house, Santi stores his pristine collection of every single Little Golden Book ever published which, he states, were usually pulled directly off the finished production line before being shipped out to the stores (Santi Interview). Since Santi has established himself as both a collector of and an authority on the Little Golden Books, contacts within the Little Golden Books company regularly provided him with newly printed titles and informed him about upcoming Little Golden Book events.

As early as 1987, Dolores B. Jones edited the book *Bibliography of the Little Golden Books*, which is neither a collector's guide nor a critical edition. As the book's title suggests, the *Bibliography of Little Golden Books* is a reference book that catalogues all of the Little Golden Books that were published between 1942 and 1985, providing essential bibliographic information for each title. The book itself also includes entries for the various Little Golden Books spin-offs like the Giant Little Golden Books, Walt Disney Books, and Ding Dong School Books. Although the *Bibliography of the Little Golden Books* is comprehensive in its bibliographic entries, inexplicably, the book does not include any historical or biographical information.

Most recently, Leonard Marcus authored a popular assessment of the Little Golden Books titled *Golden Legacy: How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and Became An American Icon Along the Way* (2007) that pieces together the stories behind the people and publishing houses that have made the Little Golden Books an American success story. But *Golden Legacy* does not engage in the same type of critical examination that is found in academic texts like Martin's *Brown Gold* or Mickenberg's *Learning From the Left*. Instead, Marcus's book fleshes out the complete history of the Little Golden Books and includes short

biographies of the influential authors and illustrators who worked for Golden. Prior to *Golden Legacy*, a minimal snippet of this information was only available through Santi's collector's guide. By providing candid photographs of the authors and illustrators as well as reproducing large, full-color illustrations from well-known Little Golden Books, *Golden Legacy* is designed to be visually admired. Its images invite nostalgic reflection by inducing readers to remember specific childhood favorites from the Little Golden Books catalogue. Moreover, the chapters in *Golden Legacy* are arranged by a timeline rather than containing an overarching argument or critical examination of particular Little Golden Books or the series as a whole. Published in conjunction with the Little Golden Books' 65th anniversary, *Golden Legacy* primarily celebrates the history and currency of the Little Golden Books, which is not surprising since Random House, the present owners of the Little Golden Books catalogue, commissioned Marcus to write *Golden Legacy* for this very purpose. My approach² departs from Marcus's *Golden Legacy* in that each chapter of the following study critically examines a number of the factors that have undergirded or given fundamental support to the Little Golden Books since their first publication in 1942. The materials I study include the Little Golden Books's marketing strategies and distribution as well as their status in education, library culture, and the field of children's literature.

After recognizing the potential magnitude of undertaking a project about the Little Golden Books, I set up two constraints. Throughout this project, I focus on the Little Golden Books as a collection in and of themselves rather than sorting through and categorizing them according to the publishing house that owned the rights to the books at any given moment in their publication

² By juxtaposing these forces with today's popular and consumer culture in the United States, my analysis also reveals how the Little Golden Books attempt to hide reality through the commodification of nostalgia with the reproduction of "Classic" Little Golden Books. This project is not a celebration of the Little Golden Books; rather, it is a careful negotiation between maintaining a critical distance, which is necessary to thoroughly examine the Little Golden Books, and my own nostalgia for the books, which were part of my childhood.

history. Information about the publishing houses that owned the rights to the Little Golden Books from 1942 until 1980 can be found in John Tebbel's *A History of Book Publishing in the United States: The Great Change, 1940-1980, Volume IV*. Marcus's *Golden Legacy* also includes information about the various publishers and subsidiaries that have owned the Little Golden Books over the years. Currently, the Little Golden Books are solely published through the children's division of Random House, which is located in New York City. Prior to 2001, Simon and Schuster partnered with Western Publishing Company to produce and publish the Little Golden Books. During an interview with Joyce Stein, who worked for Little Golden Books from 1983³ until 1989, she laughed slightly as she recounted the arguments that still flared up on occasion between the "big city" (Simon and Schuster in New York City) and the "quiet heartland" (Western Publishing Company in Racine, Wisconsin) over what "educational" material to focus on (Stein Interview). It is important to note that, even though the Little Golden Books have changed publishers over the years, their content and production quality today has remained consistent with the standards first established in 1942.

Secondly, this project is primarily concerned with the familiar, almost square (21 x 18 cm) shape in which Little Golden Books were first published in 1942 and continue to be published today. As will be discussed in next chapter, the Little Golden Books' growing popularity caused a number of spin-offs to be created, among them: Giant Little Golden Books, Big Little Golden Books, Little Little Golden Books, My First Little Golden Learning Library, Little Golden Books Land Series, and the Eager Reader series. Because of the sheer size of the entire Little Golden Books collection (over 1,200 unique titles), this project cannot hope to specifically analyze each facet of every Little Golden Book that has ever been printed. This project does, though, seek to

³ Stein was unsure about her starting date during our interview. She does know, though, that she either started working for the Little Golden Books in 1983 or 1984.

establish a platform for further research through an examination of the historical, cultural, and commercial significance of the longest-running series of picture books in the United States.

Emergence in Middlebrow Culture

The first twelve Little Golden Books emerged towards the end of what Joan Shelley Rubin marks in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (1992) as a transitional period during which “Americans created an unprecedented range of activities aimed at making literature and other forms of ‘high’ culture available to a wide reading public” during the three decades following World War I (Rubin xi). Rubin’s book not only examines Levine’s use of the terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” in his book *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, but also places the terms on a continuum in order to exploring the gap between the terms that led to the rise of “middlebrow” culture in the United States. In *Highbrow/Lowbrow* Levine defines “highbrow” someone who has “intellectual or aesthetic superiority” and “lowbrow” as someone who is neither “highly intellectual” nor “aesthetically refined” (Levine 221). Here, the terms function as nouns to characterize a person connotatively as either elite or vulgar, respectively. With the introduction of the term “middlebrow” in the early 1920s, all three terms came to function as adjectives that describe and categorize a way of life based on a variety of cultural events and aesthetics demarcated by class structure. For example, in the United States an opera, which presumably requires a sophisticated educational background to enjoy and appreciate because it is not sung in English, can be described as a “highbrow” cultural event. In contrast, some might argue that a monster truck rally does not require an advanced education as a prerequisite for enjoying the show, which makes it “lowbrow”. Yet, the growth of a middlebrow culture complicated these simplistically defined, either/or parameters of highbrow and lowbrow culture as the people in a growing middle and working class strove for self-improvement regardless of their class status and educational background. For example, the advent of digital signs makes opera more palatable to

all classes of viewers since subtitles can now be added to an onstage screen. Therefore, English-speakers are not required to understand more than one language to appreciate or enjoy the performance.

In *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, Rubin argues that the establishment of the Book-of-the-Month Club, “Great Books” collections, and “Outline” books are indicators of the rise of American middlebrow culture following World War I. By mingling democracy and elitism, each of these book club businesses sold culture through the mass distribution of books that not only bestowed prestige and currency on the books’ authors, but also disseminated “highbrow” literature directly into the homes of middle class people who believed that “culture could be dissociated from wealth” (Rubin 1). Thus, the middlebrow ideal that “broad reading was intrinsically worthwhile as well as socially rewarding” led people in the 1940s to participate in these types of clubs so that they could identify themselves among their peers as intellectual, educated, and on par with the upper-class (Rubin 31). This cultural tradition of self-improvement regardless of wealth in the United States is not simply a 1940s phenomenon, rather it stretches back to the early Puritan settlers and still flourishes today as exemplified by Oprah Winfrey’s book club.

Each of these book clubs and collections that Rubin examines in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* also created an internal, yet publicly visible, panel of experts who decided which books had the cultural merit to be included on each club’s reading list. When subscribing to the Book-of-the-Month Club, members agreed to “buy one new [not classic] book per month for a year” that was selected by a panel of experts known as the Selecting Committee or Board of Judges and shipped directly to the member’s home (Rubin 95). Even though some of the “new [not classic]” books like Joan Lowell’s *Cradle of the Deep* have not remained in constant

circulation, others like John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* have over the years earned "classic" status in the United States. Since the number of people attending college and becoming specialists in their respective fields grew in the early 20th Century, critics and book reviewers for papers like New York's *Evening Post* were also expected to also be "specialists" of a book's subject matter in order to properly and thoroughly evaluate the book's content (Rubin 39). As Rubin points out, "the function of the literary critic" was to assess "works in both aesthetic and ethical terms" (Rubin 45). Therefore, the Book-of-the-Month Club, "Great Books," and "Outline" Books all professed their reliance on a panel of experts, book judges or otherwise.

At the turn of the 20th Century, the rise of middlebrow culture coincided with the dissemination of "high" or "great" culture to the general public through books prepackaged and pre-selected by an authority figure. Much of this distribution was based on the assumption that culture "could be acquired" through the process of "reading certain books and avoiding others" (Rubin 1). Literature classes started requiring undergraduate students to study a list of widely recognized "Great Books" compiled by various professors and critics of literature. The public appeal of the "Great Books" moniker culminated in 1952 with the publication of *Great Books of the Western World*, a fifty-volume set from Encyclopedia Britannica, a highly respected source of information. The phenomenon of "Outline" books, a summary of facts in an easily read format, started in the 1920s with the publication of H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History* and resulted in "another way to catch up culturally and regain a unified perspective" in the face of new media and rising educational opportunities (Rubin 210).

The middlebrow Zeitgeist of the early 1940s encouraged Simon and Schuster to produce and distribute the Little Golden Books through grocery stores, pharmacies, and retail outlets like Woolworth rather than through freestanding, independent bookstores. In a move that brought

books to the general public, the Little Golden Books reached general consumers as part of their regular shopping routine, similarly to the way that a Book-of-the-Month Club book might be delivered straight to a consumer's doorstep. The entire Little Golden Books collection covered a variety of need-to-know childhood topics ranging from the educational (with books about numbers, colors, the alphabet, and geographic locations) to the cultural (with fairy tales and books based on television characters). Although notes from the first editorial meeting in the creation of the Little Golden Books do not exist⁴, the early editors of the Little Golden Books clearly prioritized topics of educational value above those of mere entertainment as part of the enculturation process of American children.

When covering a large section of history or biology, the Little Golden Books relied on a structure similar to Wells's "Outline" books. For example, the Little Golden Book *Our Flag* (1960) by Carl Memling outlines the history of the American flag and then draws in the young reader by pointing out that when "you [the reader] were born . . . our flag still had forty-eight stars" (Memling). The final pages of the book covertly instill the democratic value of patriotism by showing the reader the rules to follow when carrying, flying, or saluting the flag. Little Golden Books also provided an outline of information about oceans in Bertha Morris Parker's *Deep Blue Sea*, firefighters in Jane Goldsmith's *Firemen and the Fire Engine*, and the entire world in Jane Werner Watson's *Our World: A Beginner's Introduction to Geography* among others. While book clubs in America provided adult readers with "Great Books," the Little Golden Books supplied adults with educationally informative and enjoyable picture books for children.

⁴ If notes from the first meeting do still exist, they would be housed in the Little Golden Books closed archive that is owned by Random House and inaccessible by the public.

The Little Golden Books also borrowed the idea from the “Great Books” phenomenon that a person should not only read expertly chosen books, but also display those same books as proof of their growing bank of knowledge. To this end, the Little Golden Books established exact format and design standards for each book’s size, shape, and number of pages, which assured the reader that a collection of these books would display nicely on a bookshelf. In this, the Little Golden Books created a familiar look by simulating the continuity of a “Great Books” collection. Like book club participants who displayed their own purchased collection of uniform knowledge, children could place a physically standardized assortment of books that contained relevant knowledge about American culture to prepare them for future schooling on their bookshelves. By purchasing numerous Little Golden Books, a parent in the spirit of middlebrow culture was on some level assuming that children could also acquire “culture” by reading the “best books” (Rubin 1). A display ad produced by Simon and Schuster in December 1942 boasted to parents that “this [was] the first time the publishers have advertised them” because “every time ads were planned, most everybody selling Little Golden Books had already sold out and just wanted more books instead of any advertising” (Dear Parents 31). Noticeably, the persuasive, unspoken logic behind this print ad is that all the other parents have already bought Little Golden Books for their own children since they “had already sold out,” therefore if the potential buyer wants to be a good parent, she or he will buy these books, too (Dear Parents 31). Moreover, if a parent had not heard about the Little Golden Books yet, it was simply because “the publishers” were advertising them for “the first time” (Dear Parents 31). Thus, this ad also promotes the building of a universal bank of knowledge for children as it convinces the potential buyer to not be the only person unaware of the stories contained in the Little Golden Books.

Mickenberg points out in *Learning From the Left* that during the time following the Depression and World War II, “popular interest in American traditions” grew as Americans united in “the struggle against fascism” (Mickenberg 232). The occurrence of these socializing traditions in print comprise a pocket of time in America’s history that David Reisman marks as a movement towards an *inner-directed* society (and away from a *tradition-directed* society). In *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, first published in 1950, Reisman attempts to interpret shifts within late 1940s American culture according to “its relation to the past and the prospective future” (Reisman 5). As a part of this study, Reisman proposes that American culture in the 1940s moved away from the oral traditions that initially shaped its socialization process. At the same time in the 1940s, American culture moved towards socialization through different forms of print media that encouraged self-directedness and non-orality. Accordingly, a society defined by tradition-direction “makes use of oral traditions, myths, legends, and songs as one of its mechanisms for conveying the relative unity of its values” (Reisman 107). In comparison, a society defined by inner-direction is “affected by the excitement and novelty of literacy: there is a wide spread hunger for the press and for books — a hunger that the technology and distributive facilities arouse but do not entirely satisfy” (Reisman 110).

Reisman’s articulation of American culture’s rising need for books further underscores the growth of middlebrow culture that Rubin describes in the *Making of Middlebrow Culture*. During this cultural shift, lingering oral traditions were relegated to the seemingly innocuous realm of children’s print culture and survived in texts such as the Little Golden Books. Particularly, the first twelve published Little Golden Books not only captured the orality of children’s culture, but also fed the “wide spread hunger” for books. In this format, the songs and

stories provided a space for socialization through both the traditions and camaraderie of public knowledge (tradition-direction) as well as through the inner-directedness of children reading such texts to themselves without the interference of immediate adult interpretation. Thus, in the 1940s, the Little Golden Books balanced on the cusp between tradition-direction and inner-direction by publishing books that captured oral traditions in an easily distributed format for the individual reader.

Since a mother shopping with her children was presumably the targeted consumer of the Little Golden Books, the books were originally placed in grocery stores and retail chains in order to reach a wide audience of shoppers. The front flap of each dust jacket hooked the potential buyer with a brief description of the story and the educational substance of the book itself. This description advertised both the craftsmanship in and the educational value of each book while at the same time encouraging the purchaser to trust the publisher's ability (as a specialist) to discern the value of a text. For example, the front flap of *Scuffy the Tugboat* (1946) with illustrations by Tibor Gergely specifically states: "Gertrude Crampton's story is a skillful blend of entertainment and information" (Crampton). At the same time that readers are entertained by Scuffy's adventures and mishaps, readers are educated about the safety and value of returning home (or maybe even never leaving) where Scuffy finally finds safety. This mix of "entertainment and information" is further promoted towards the bottom of every front dust jacket flap: "The country's outstanding childrens [sic] artists have joined forces to create this series, and each of the Little Golden Books is prepared under the supervision of Dr. Mary Reed of Teachers College, Columbia University" (Crampton).

Dr. Mary Reed, who worked as an Assistant Professor of Education and held the position of head of the kindergarten division in Teachers College at Columbia University, supervised and

approved each book's subject from 1942 until her death on November 30, 1960, at the age of 89, which occurred long after the discontinuation of dust jackets on Little Golden Books ("Dr. Mary Reed"). Indeed, "Dr. Mary Reed" is mentioned again on the flip side of the title page, only this time her name is followed by the acronym "Ph.D." which doubly reinforces her own higher education and the educational value of the text. Thus, until the time of Reed's death, each Little Golden Book asserted both its educational worth and entertainment value by pointing out the use of "outstanding childrens [sic] artists" and a supervisor from Teachers College with a doctorate in education. As a specialist in children's education, Reed provided the prerequisite stamp of authoritative reassurance that each particular Little Golden Book is the "best" book to buy for children.

In addition to the approval of Dr. Mary Reed, a number of Little Golden Books were also tested on a child audience in the Bank Street's School for Children before being published and distributed to the general public. Established in 1916 by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, the Bank Street College of Education in New York City — originally named the Bureau of Educational Experiments before moving to Bank Street — encouraged future teachers to create environments in which children could grow both physically and intellectually by working directly with New York public schools, a method still encouraged by Bank Street today. Aside from experimenting with and promoting new educational techniques in the 1930s and 1940s, Bank Street would later help in the creation of the federal Head Start program and form a writing laboratory for authors who wanted to write books that "reflected the interests and need of children at various stages of their development" (Bank Street). Bank Street also established and promoted a "here and now" philosophy of writing among its authors that focused on writing about the everyday occurrences of a child's life that were "meant to empower children with an understanding of social

relationships [while] giving them the power to change and improve the world around them” (Mickenberg 26).

Producing books about the “here and now” during the rise of middlebrow culture not only gave young readers a snapshot of children their own age, but also immediately archived a segment of that life for future generations of readers and scholars. Between 1946 and 1951, eight Little Golden Books—including Mitchell’s *The New House in the Forest*, *The Taxi That Hurried*, and *A Year on the Farm*—passed through the Bank Street writing laboratory for authors⁵ and were tested with school children before being published as Little Golden Books. In order to show that a Bank Street author collaborated with the Little Golden Books, the title page of these books prominently declares that the book was “written and tested at the Bank Street Schools, Pioneer leaders in research in education for young children [sic].” Here, the general buying public has the reassurance of a panel of teaching experts, not just a single education doctorate, that the Little Golden Books exemplify exactly what each child needs in order to be a vital part of the community and prepared for public education.

Despite the Mary Reed, Ph.D. stamp of approval and cooperation with Bank Street Schools, most (but not all) librarians in the 1940s disapproved of the Little Golden Books, because the dominate discourse among librarians during the influx of middlebrow culture

⁵ Possibly the most prolific children’s book writer to rise out of the Bank Street panel of writers and most influenced by the “here and now” philosophy was Margaret Wise Brown (1910-1952), who wrote under her own name plus several pen names to keep from flooding the children’s book market. While she is probably most widely known for *Goodnight Moon*, a picture book featuring a great green room and a sleepy little bunny, she wrote several popular texts for the Little Golden Books including *The Color Kittens* (1949), *Five Little Firemen* (1948), *Home for a Bunny* (1961), and *The Golden Egg Book* (1962). As these sample titles might suggest, Brown’s books published through the Little Golden Books line did not strictly focus on “here and now” topics initiated by Mitchell, like labor, machinery, industrialization or the modern city. *Five Little Firemen* rush through town to put out a fire with bells clanging, *The Color Kittens* teaches children about mixing colors through the antics of kittens who paint, *Home for Bunny* shows a bunny who tries to live in the various places that other animals live until he finally returns to his own protective home, and in *The Golden Egg Book*, a rabbit and a duck become friends after misidentifying each other. Each of these books communicates the importance of friendship, security in the home, and basic knowledge. Brown was not confined to publishing only with the Little Golden Books; instead, she “freely published her work with whomever she liked” (Marcus *Dear Genius* xxiii).

dictated that an inexpensive, highly popular children's book could not possibly contain either high quality literature or high quality artistry. According to Marcus in *Golden Legacy*, the 1920s clash between traditional librarians and progressive educators deepened into the 1940s as librarians regarded "all juvenile fiction published in series form" with "deep suspicion" and educators "challenged the standards by which librarians evaluated children's books" (58). Louise Seaman Bechtel, who was appointed Head of the first juvenile book department at Macmillan Publishing Company in 1928, further emphasizes the rift between public school teachers and librarians when she reminds them to adhere to their separate, but equally important, ideals concerning children's reading habits in her speech at the American Librarian Association meeting in 1950. Bechtel states, "The teacher may emphasize what she knows the child *can* read; the librarian may know better what she *hopes* the child will read [Bechtel's emphasis]" (Bechtel 234). Here, Bechtel's comment both reiterates that a rift still existed between teachers and librarians, but that the divide could be overcome as long as both sides try to "awakening [children] to real literary values" (Bechtel 234). Functioning in the space between teachers and librarians, Bechtel did praise a Little Golden Book in a 1949 article published in the New York Herald Tribune's Weekly Book Review when she notes that a "big-edition" version of Margaret Wise Brown's *The Golden Egg Book* is a "treasure" among "mass-produced color books" due to its illustrations by Leonard Weisgard (Bechtel 217). The Little Golden Books' successful book sales might illustrate their public appeal, but they also mark their downfall amongst librarians and children's literature critics who in the 1940s "prided themselves on being cultural gatekeepers and moral guardians" for children (Marcus 58).

The image of librarians hating the Little Golden Books has become an apocryphal part of the books' history over the years. In his introduction to the 1998 version of *A Family Treasury of*

Little Golden Books, Marcus notes the dismissal of Little Golden Books by librarians who viewed them as “subliterary and market-driven” (Marcus xiii). In *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within*, Barbara Bader also refers to librarians “who saw in the series only crudity and commercialism” (Bader 279). Such comments were in direct contradiction to librarian and children's book reviewer Anne Eaton who in 1942 wrote in a *New York Times* review that the books will “provide a pleasant book experience for the young child” (Bader 279). Even Dolores B. Jones casually notes in her introduction to the *Bibliography of the Little Golden Books* that Little Golden Books do deserve a place in the history of children's literature “despite their poor image with literary critics, librarians, and teachers” (Jones xvii).

The most substantial indication of the general librarian's direct hatred of the Little Golden Books is a statement made in the early 1980s by Lucille Ogle, who had been vice president of Western Publishing and founder of the Little Golden Books. Ogle was incredulous when Edith McCormick approached her for an interview for the journal *American Libraries*. Questioning McCormick's intent, Ogle reminded McCormick “librarians hate us [the Little Golden Books]” (McCormick 251). Ogle also points out during the interview that librarians did “very, very nasty programs about them [Little Golden Books], and wrote critical articles about them, too” based on their rejection of the fact that “you could make a good book cheap” (McCormick 251). Here is where the archive starts to crumble, though, because a search of the *New York Times* does not reveal any negative reviews during the 1940s and 1950s of specific Little Golden Books. Moreover, many libraries during the mid-20th Century did not keep complete records of either the programs or the critical articles that were being produced.

If today's New York Public Library (NYPL) system is any indication, the outspoken “hatred” that librarians felt for the Little Golden Books in the 1940s no longer exists, even

though Little Golden Books are not being stocked regularly on their library shelves. Librarian Warren Truitt and Supervising Children’s Librarian John Peters, both of whom work in the Central Children’s Room at the Donnell Library Center in New York, spoke about their understanding of the rift between librarians in the 1940s and the Little Golden Books. Truitt iterated a story similar to the anecdotal ones above about how the Little Golden Books were not up to the librarians’ standards because they were “cheap” and contained “TV show tie-ins” (Truitt). Peters pointed out that the NYPL system did not own any Little Golden Books until the 1980s when he bought “representative” examples of Little Golden Books to add to the library’s collection for “historical purposes,” but not for general circulation (Peters). Currently, the only Little Golden Books in circulation at the NYPL are the ones that have been reprinted in a larger format (like Margaret Wise Brown’s *The Golden Egg Book* with illustrations by Weisgard) or the ones that have been collected into one volume (like *Farm Tales*, *Animal Tales*, and *Sleepy Time Tales*) since the larger format both emphasizes each book’s value as a picture book and protects each book from being lost or destroyed by patrons.

Even though the Little Golden Books are commercially successful and use outstanding children’s artists, no Little Golden Book⁶ has ever been awarded a highly influential Caldecott Medal, which “can lead to total sales of sixty to a hundred thousand copies — and come close to ensuring a permanent place on a publisher’s backlist” (Clark 74). The Association for Library Service to Children has given this award, named after Randolph Caldecott since 1938, to the most distinguished American picture book produced during any given year. Since the illustrators who worked for the Little Golden Books during the 1940s and 1950s also freelanced for other

⁶ Currently, Abe Birnbaum’s *Green Eyes*, a 1953 Caldecott Honor Book, is available through Golden Press. Today’s version of *Green Eyes* looks like a Little Golden Book, but when the book won a Caldecott Honor Medal in 1953 it was not a Little Golden Book. (Collector Steve Santi does not list this title in the recent editions of his collector’s identification and price guides.) Rather, Golden Books Publishing Company, Inc. renewed the copyright in 1981 and thus gained printing rights to the book.

children's book publishers, a handful of Little Golden Book illustrators received a Caldecott honor for their artistic talents in other picture books. In 1956, Feodor Rojankovsky earned a Caldecott Medal for his illustrations in *Frog Went A-Courtin'* and Leonard Weisgard earned one in 1947 for *The Little Island*, neither of which is a Little Golden Book. Elizabeth Orton Jones, who later illustrated *Little Red Riding Hood* for the Little Golden Books, received a Caldecott Medal in 1945 for *Prayer for a Child*. The list of illustrators who worked for the Little Golden Books and were honored by the Caldecott committee for books that were not part of the Golden family, include several other books illustrated by Weisgard like *Rain Drop Splash* in 1947 and *Little Lost Lamb* in 1946 as well as honors for Tibor Gergely for his work in *Wheel on the Chimney* in 1955. By default, the illustrators who earn Caldecott honors raise the level of the artwork in the Little Golden Books. Clearly, the total sales of the Little Golden Books have not suffered from lack of recognition by the Caldecott committee since four Little Golden Books occupy a place in the top ten positions⁷ of *Publishers Weekly* "All-Time Best-Selling Children's Books" list.

Of course, the Little Golden Books like much of children's literature have been overlooked by scholars until relatively recently. For example, in 1976, the Modern Language Association started listing "children's literature" as a subject heading⁸ in its bibliography. Then four years later in 1980, the MLA granted children's literature its own division status. (Flynn). By

⁷ In 2000, *The Poky Little Puppy* maintained the number one position on the Publishers Weekly "All-Time Best-Selling Children's Books" list for hardcover children's books ("All-Time"). The top ten slots on this list include three additional Little Golden Books: at #3 is *Tootle* (1945) by Gertrude Crampton, at #7 is *Saggy Baggy Elephant* (1947) by Kathryn and Byron Jackson, and at #8 is *Scuffy the Tugboat* (1955) also by Crampton.

⁸ Even with these additions, the MLA bibliography still included only a small number of children's literature journals until recently. As reported by Beverly Lyon Clark in *Kiddie Lit*, "for a number of years [the MLA bibliography] has screened *Children's Literature*, the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, the *English Journal*, and (as of 1995) *Canadian Children's Literature*. But until 1998 it did not screen *Bookbird*, *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries*, *Horn Book Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, *Language Arts*, *New Advocate*, *Five Owls*, *Voice of Youth Advocates*, *Junior Bookshelf*, or even the prestigious British journal *Signal* — to cite ten journals that publish work of interest to scholars of children's literature" (75).

examining how the Little Golden Books benefited from the rise of middlebrow culture in the early 20th Century, the task of this project is placed in a similar context as that held by Rubin to “redress the disregard and the oversimplification” afforded to both middlebrow culture and, in this case, the Little Golden Books (Rubin 31). As a way to separate “great” works of literature from children’s literature, the status of the Little Golden Books has been diminished through pejorative terms such as “kiddie lit” that blithely brush away the importance attached to the very first books that the general public reads. Moreover, the historical significance of the picture book is not easily confined to middlebrow culture; rather, the picture book as traced through Europe and into the United States has a rich history of social elitism and “high” class cultural standing as well as mass distribution. During the late 19th century, for example, when English printer Edmund Evans started producing picture books that featured the illustrating talents of Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, and Randolph Caldecott, he opened a door for the general publication and distribution of children’s picture books. Prior to Evans’s time, picture books were considered too expensive for everyday use by children and consequently were bought primarily by the upper, social classes, not the everyday, middle or working classes.

Essentially, the Little Golden Books fell into a literary black hole even as they remained culturally popular. Although the Little Golden Books benefited financially from mass distribution, their expansive explosion in the children’s book market during the 1940s and 50s also stigmatized their artistic merit and placed them into a category disparagingly referred to as “kiddie lit.”

In *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children’s Literature in America*, Beverly Lyon Clark explores the development of “kiddie lit” as a pejorative term in the United States by focusing on the split that occurs between literature for children and literature for adults in the late

19th century. According to Clark, “children and childhood were less segregated from adults and adulthood in the nineteenth century, before the split between high culture and low, before literary authority shifted from genteel editors to the professoriate [sic]” (Clark 16). This split, Clark argues, gave rise to the use of “kiddy lit” as a way to diminish literature written for both a child and adult female audience like Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Secret Garden* and to place adult literature like that written by Henry James in a position of authority. By the early 20th century as “gatekeeping shifted from literary journals to the academy,” this split⁹ forced children’s literature out of the hands of “genteel editors” and into the hands of librarians¹⁰ since “academics ignored it” (Clark 76). Clark notes that “the stewardship of children’s literature passed into the hands of librarians — but academics tended to ignore the work of librarians too” which means that picture books like the Little Golden Books relied partially on librarians for critical support in the 1940s and 50s (Clark 76). But, as discussed earlier, librarians in the early 20th century “hated” the Little Golden Books. Thus, even without the support of “genteel editors,” academics, or librarians, the Little Golden Books remained both largely popular and critically ignored in America.

Project Overview

In the chapters that follow, my project explores the ways in which the Little Golden Books became an important part of the history of children’s literature and popular culture, even though critics and academics have summarily ignored them. The second chapter “From the 1940s to the 2000s: Decades of Little Golden Books,” follows the extended history of the Little Golden

⁹ In one particular chapter titled “Kiddie Lit in the Academy”, Clark points out that “even the most elite [of] such arbiters, the editors of the *Atlantic*, devoted considerable space to reviewing and discussing children’s literature” during the nineteenth century (Clark 76).

¹⁰ The United States public library system only started allowing children into the buildings in the late nineteenth century when librarians started creating separate children’s rooms. By the mid-twentieth century “more than half of books borrowed from public libraries each year were lent to juveniles” (Clark 69).

Books from their inception in 1942 as a series of affordable picture books for children to their recent foray into children's videos and computer games in order to show how they adapt to, reflect, and capture changes in American society. Next, "The Gold Standard: Golden Ages and the Little Golden Books" compares the publication of the Little Golden Books in 1942 with the Golden Age of children's literature in the late 19th Century to examine the cultural parallels between these two "golden" moments since both exemplify similar themes, advances in printing technology, and the employment of talented artists. The fourth part of this study, "Images of Innocence: Ethnicity and Conformity in the Little Golden Books," examines images of the child in the Little Golden Books in order to gauge the marginalization of ethnicities and the idealization of white, middle class children. "The Happy Family: Gender Divisions and the Little Golden Books" further explores the image of the child in the Little Golden Books by examining how they mimicked the dominant perception of prescribed gender roles following World War II. As nostalgia for childhood continues to permeate the United States, the final chapter of this project, "Transporting Nostalgia: The Little Golden Books as Souvenirs of Childhood," analyzes how the Little Golden Books utilize America's current cultural preoccupation with both the recent and distant past by marketing childhood products and memories.

In his 1985 prologue to *Secret Gardens: the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, Humphrey Carpenter argues, "all children's books are about ideals. Adult fiction sets out to portray and explain the world as it really is; books for children present it as it should be" (Carpenter 1). Even if we accept Carpenter's argument that children's books "present [the world] as it should be," we can still question whose "ideals" are communicated through popular children's books like the Little Golden Books. For example, during a 1998 interview with Mickenberg, author Rose Wyler notes that "the earliest Little Golden Books showed a

commitment to racial diversity and rejected racism” (Mickenberg 314n76). In the mid-20th Century when the term “racial diversity” meant a variety of European immigrants, the Little Golden Books company did show a “commitment” to “rejecting racism” by hiring talented artists who hailed from various countries, including Feodor Rojankovsky from Russia, Tibor Gergely from Austria, and Gustaf Tenggren from Sweden. Yet, by today’s standards the early Little Golden Books themselves do not exhibit “racial diversity” because the earliest books do not include a variety of ethnicities in the illustrations themselves. Very few Little Golden Books feature a protagonist of color and only a handful of book illustrations, after the second or third printing, changed secondary white children to nonwhite children. Moreover, the republication of the earliest books from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s as part of the current Classics Little Golden Books catalogue only serves to highlight the supposedly desirable *white* child who still charms readers by reflecting an idyllic image of suburban, middle class life. As noted by Stephanie Coontz in *The Way We Really Are* (1997), most of today’s Americans do not want to actually live in the 1950s, but instead want a “more family-friendly economic and social environment” that fosters a “greater feeling of hope for a family’s long-term future” (Coontz 34). Perhaps, in the current cultural climate peppered by rising gas prices, a war in Iraq, and faltering faith in the abilities of the President, today’s adult consumer yearns for America’s post World War II “golden age” or their own memorable childhood and fulfils this yearning by buying Little Golden Books for the children in their lives or collecting them for themselves.

CHAPTER 2 FROM THE 1940S TO THE 2000S: DECADES OF LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

As the proliferation of Little Golden Books entered the homes of American families, we witness the way that the Little Golden Books remain both flexible and constant in their content and marketing techniques in the face of numerous social changes in the United States. Not only would the Little Golden Books capitalize on consumer interest by producing books that featured original stories and popular television or film characters, but over the last 60 years, they have also maintained popularity by extensively utilizing advertising, marketing tie-ins and product placement.

Who approached whom first is still unknown, but in the early 1940s Lucille Ogle and George Duplaix of the Artist and Writers Guild (a subsidiary of Western Printing and Lithography Company) started working with Leon Shimkin and Albert Levanthal of Simon and Schuster in order to produce a line of affordable children's picture books. Since several companies were affiliated with the production and publication of the early Little Golden Books, the copyright page often included Simon and Schuster, the Artist and Writers Guild, Sandpiper Press, Golden Press, and various permutations of the name Western Printing and Lithography Company. Despite of the number of spoons listed as stirring the proverbial soup, Simon and Schuster in New York City primarily contended with the editorial side of production while Western Printing in Racine, Wisconsin, tackled the printing the books during the early years. From this merging of creative and commercial energies sprang the first twelve Little Golden Books, which were quickly followed by an entire line of picture books that continue to flourish today, albeit some titles more than others.

At the heart of the Little Golden Books world is the regular-size Little Golden Book that measures 21 x 18 cm and originally sold for \$0.25¹ in 1942. These books were an instant success and by 1944 Little Golden Books of this size had sold more than five and a half million copies (Mackenzie BR2). By 1947, that number reached thirty-nine million. As noted by historian John Tebbel, “even during wartime paper shortages, these [Little Golden Books] were selling about 4.5 million copies a year (Tebbel 203). In 1949, Little Golden Books accounted for 50,000,000 of the 100,000,000 total books sold by Simon and Schuster (From the Inner Sanctum 1949, 25). Within a 10-year period from 1942 to 1952, the Little Golden Books catalogue grew from twelve to 181 titles and sold 196,000,000 total copies (Dempsey BR8). These striking sales figures from the Little Golden Books’ early years mark the beginning of a publication history that spans over six decades, an expanse of time that no other series of picture books in the United States can match.

In 1942, each book contained 42 pages — 14 pages in full color and 28 pages with two-color prints. Each book also came with a protective dust jacket that prominently displayed the trademark golden spine with its pattern of vines and flower clusters, a precursor to today’s highly recognizable gold-foil spine that distinguishes the Little Golden Books from other books on the shelves. The inclusion of a dust jacket also lent a dash of quality to each Little Golden Book since dust jackets or “wrappers” harken back to the days when they were only used to protect expensive books (Homme 20). The books themselves, minus the dust jacket, sported a blue cloth tape-like binding that covered the side-staples, and the remaining page edges were tinted with either a blue, yellow, or red chemical to deter the paper from expanding with moisture.

¹ Today, a Little Golden Book of this size sells for \$2.99 on Amazon.com.

In order keep the cost of each book low, Western Publishing printed 50,000 copies of each title in time for holiday shopping, which meant that they could be sold for profit at \$.25 each. This low price stood in marked contrast to the two or three-dollar picture books and avoided competing directly with the \$0.50 picture books on the American market at the same time. Despite initial concerns about printing such a large first run of each title, by early 1943 all twelve of the first books published were in their third printings, and a total of over 1.5 million copies of the Little Golden Books had been sold (Santi “History” 7).

Savvy marketing techniques, coupled with America’s underlying need to look towards the future in a time of war, created a thriving space in which knowledge could be distributed en masse and collected by purchasing Little Golden Books. According to a 1944 article about the Little Golden Books in *The New York Times*, “more than five and half million copies [of eighteen titles] have been sold” and “approximately 20 percent of orders were being filled” (Mackenzie BR2). Due to war-time shortages, the Little Golden Books line was not able to fully keep up with the demand for their books, which left 80 percent of their orders unfilled until after the end of the war. This same article by Catherine Mackenzie notes how a desire for picture books on the East Coast closely followed the establishment of nursery schools for industrial workers’ children which implies that picture books like the Little Golden Books were being marketed to working and middle class families.

By the end of 1945, the first twelve books had been reprinted at least seven times. In 1949, Simon and Schuster’s newspaper advertising column, “From the Inner Sanctum of Simon and Schuster” boasts, “of the 100,000,000 books sold by S&S thus far, 60,000,000 have been children’s books (50,000,000 Little Golden Books and 10,000,000 Giant Golden Books)” (From the Inner Sanctum 1949, 25). In releasing this kind of information about the Little Golden Books

from the “Inner Sanctum,” Simon and Schuster utilized an “eavesdropping” technique of advertising commonly used in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In this way, consumers are let in on a “secret” and are then presumably allowed to make up their own minds about a product after they “overhear” firsthand information to which they would not be privy (even though it has obviously been released publicly). Even when the eavesdropping method of advertising was no longer popular among publishing companies, it remained a central advertising tactic for Simon and Schuster because it helped maintain a sense of closeness and familiarity for the reading public with the Little Golden Books.

Original titles published during the 1940s focused mainly on the everyday lives of American girls and boys living in the city, the country, or suburbia. The Little Golden Books’ focus on the home and family during a time of restricted travel out of the country due to World War II reflects what children’s literature historian Ruth Hill Viguers has termed as the 1940s “know-your-own-land movement” in *A Critical History of Children’s Literature* (Viguers 445). The original titles published in the 1940s illustrate the flow of the family from city center to suburbia. While *The Taxi That Hurried* (1946) highlights the fast paced life of the city when Tom and his mother are late for the train, *The New House in the Forest* (1946) reflects the Jenks family’s decision to live a quieter life near the woods surrounded by friendly forest creatures. In *Happy Family* (1947), Mother, Peggy, and Tony all accomplish their domestic tasks in their pleasant suburban home while Father takes the car to work in the morning and then maintains the yard when he returns home in the afternoon. *A Year in the City* (1948) follows young Jenny and Billy through the four seasons of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter while living in a bustling city that resembles New York. Even the addition of new family members is explored in books like

The New Baby (1948) in which little Mike is so excited when baby Pat comes home that Mike gives up his own crib for the baby's use and is given his own "big boy" bed.

By moving out of the city to an area like the suburbs that in its inception during the late 1800s stood for a space both pastoral and technologically innovative, the fathers in these stories are able to encourage their own domestic masculinity by participating more fully in the upkeep of the home and family. Moreover, the mothers — and sometimes the children — in these early stories exhibited the freedoms and the limitations placed upon them by virtue of where they lived. For example, a city center provided women with access to public transportation, which in turn expanded their freedom of movement. The suburbs, however, while providing green lawns and home ownership, inherently restricted women and their children to their homes since public transportation and public gathering places were generally minimal.

The 1940s also marked the addition of Disney characters to the Little Golden Books line of original stories and illustrations. As early as 1933, Walt Disney signed a contract with Western Publishing giving them exclusive rights to all of Disney's licensed characters. From this agreement sprang numerous Disney comic books throughout the thirties and forties printed by Western. Then, when Western started working with Simon and Schuster, the first Disney and Little Golden Books collaboration appeared in 1944 titled *Through the Picture Frame*. Originally slated to be part of a Disney film about Hans Christian Andersen that was later abandoned, *Through the Picture Frame* is a Disney version of Andersen's story about a young boy who enters the world of a painting to save a princess. *The Cold-Blooded Penguin* (1944) soon followed. In this story, Pablo the Penguin, whose actions and appearance influenced the creation of Hanna-Barbera's Chilly Willy in 1953, seeks a climate that is warmer than his frozen home. In the book *Dumbo* (1947), based on the Disney animated film of the same title, a baby

elephant learns to use his huge ears to fly. More transitions from Disney animation to Little Golden Book soon followed with *Peter and the Wolf* (1947), *Uncle Remus* (1947), *Snow White* (1948), *Bambi* (1948), and *Pinocchio* (1948). By the 1950s, Little Golden Books regularly featured well-known Disney characters, among them Mickey Mouse, Jiminy Cricket, and Donald Duck as well as human “characters” like Mary Poppins, Robin Hood, and Zorro. Within three weeks of its release, Walt Disney’s *Santa’s Toy Shop* (1950) completely sold out its first printing of 1,700,000 copies (From the Inner Sanctum 1950, 25). Later, Little Golden Books further capitalized on the Disney name by producing a special selection of Disney Christmas titles from 1955 to 1959 and a selection of Mickey Mouse Club titles from 1954 to 1956 with a red-foil instead of a gold-foil spine. Often, the Disney connection added even more popularity to individual Little Golden Books.

The Little Golden Books of the 1940s provided a ready-made space for advertising war stamps throughout World War II. On the inside back-flap of the dust jacket, set off by a pink bar across the top and a blue bar across the bottom, one of the main characters from each Little Golden Book addresses the child reader about the importance of buying and collecting U. S. War Savings Stamps. The baby softness of the pink and the blue bars immediately bring to mind the separation of boys and girls by a designated color, as well as the patriotic use of red, white, and blue. Unlike adolescent novels during this time that focused on storylines involving children and the war, the Little Golden Books kept all references to the war sequestered to their dust jackets. Moreover, children were already collecting postage stamps and other items, so the promotion of this type of war stamp tapped into a patriotic consumerism that already existed in the United States. Since the Poky Little Puppy introduced the Little Golden Book line, he also introduced War Savings Stamps with this timely lesson:

The Poky little puppy [sic] sat near the bottom of the hill, looking hard at something on the ground in front of him.

“What is he looking at?” the four little puppies asked one another and down they went to see.

There was a War Savings Stamp lying on the grass.

And the Poky little puppy hurried home faster than he had ever run before, to paste the stamp in his War Stamps Book. All the five little puppies buy War Stamps every week.

So should you. (Lowery)

Noticeably, even the Poky Little Puppy is not terribly “pokey” or slow when supporting the war effort. By directly addressing the child reader in the last line with the phrase “so should you,” not only does this advertisement draw children into support for the war effort, but it also provides a space in which children could pester patriotic adults with cries of “Buy me more War Stamps!”

Using War Stamps as a reward is echoed on the dust jacket of the *Three Little Kittens* when the kittens’ mother decides to “get you all War Stamps today!” because the good little kittens found their lost mittens (*Three Little Kittens*). Furthermore, a War Stamp song sung to the tune of “Mary had a Little Lamb” increases the chance that each child will influence other children while chanting and playing rhythm games such jump rope or hopscotch:

Mary buys War Savings Stamps, Savings Stamps, Savings Stamps.

Mary buys War Savings Stamps

To help the U. S. A.

Soon she’s going to have a Bond, Have a bond, Have a bond.

Soon she’s going to have a Bond.

Why not start yours today? (*Gale Nursery Songs*)

The most persistent and direct advertisement for War Savings Stamps occurs on *The Golden Book of Flowers* where seemingly innocuous and shy flowers scream in all caps, “BUY MORE WAR STAMPS” (Witman). Thus, through these dust jacket advertisements, both parents and children are goaded into behaving as patriotically and conscientiously as their favorite characters.

Even though dust jackets continued to surround each book until the publication of the 35th title — *The Happy Family* (1947) by Nicole (the penname for George Duplaix) —, advertising for War Stamps ended with the close of World War II. After the war, the demand to “Buy U.S. War Savings Stamps and Bonds” was replaced by information about the artist and the author of the text on the back flap. Dust jacket advertising ceased completely with the publication of *The Saggy Baggy Elephant* (1947), Golden’s 36th title, which sported the first of its signature shiny gold foil spines.

As television usurped the popularity of radio in the 1950s, Little Golden Books reflected this change in the American home by including characters from westerns and children’s television shows. Bugs Bunny, from the Warner Brothers Studios, celebrates his birthday in *Bugs Bunny’s Birthday* (1950), is kidnapped by a tribe of Native Americans in *Bugs Bunny and the Indians* (1951), and starts working as a soda jerk in *Bugs Bunny Gets a Job* (1952). Yet, Bugs Bunny was not the only non-Disney character to join the Little Golden Books catalogue. Hanna Barbara characters also joined the Little Golden Books cast with book such as *Woody Woodpecker Joins the Circus* (1953), *Tom and Jerry meet Little Quack* (1953), and *Huckleberry Hound Builds a House* (1959). These titles left little surprise as to what would happen in the books, and the covers always portrayed the main character in a scene that paralleled the title. Little Golden Books featuring children’s television shows also included some well-known, non-cartoon characters such as Howdy Doody in *Howdy Doody in Funland* (1953), Rin Tin Tin in *Rin Tin Tin and Rusty* (1955), Captain Kangaroo in *Captain Kangaroo* (1956), and photographs of Cleo the basset hound, who appeared on the television show “The People’s Choice,” from 1955 to 1958, in *Cleo* (1957).

Cowboys and the wild frontier found a home with Little Golden Books in picture books like *Hopalong Cassidy and the Bar 20 Cowboy* (1952), *Dale Evans and the Lost Gold Mine* (1954), *Roy Rogers and Cowboy Toby* (1954), and *Annie Oakley and the Rustlers* (1955). These Wild West heroes and heroines reinforced America's interest in expansion and the westward movement. They were joined by other American icons of exploration such as *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier* (1955) and *Daniel Boone* (1956) both of whom also appeared in their own television shows.

During the 1950s, the Little Golden Books started advertising directly to the child consumer through highly prominent product placement. Working in conjunction with the Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical company, Western published *Doctor Dan, the Bandage Man* (1950), a book that came complete with six plain, junior-sized Johnson & Johnson brand Band-Aids glued to the title page. With the introduction of Band-Aid Adhesive Bandages to the American public, cuts no longer required gauze bandages fastened to the skin with sticky tape. In this book, readers learn about the healing power of the Band-Aid when little Dan scrapes his knee and his mother cleans him up before applying a bandage. He then becomes Doctor Dan, the boy who knows how to clean and bandage scrapes by applying Band-Aids to his little sister, her stuffed toys, the family dog, and his father. Later editions of *Doctor Dan* sported new Band-Aids designed with stars and stripes. Circus animals appear on the Band-Aids that came with *Doctor Dan at the Circus* (1960). The first *Doctor Dan* was soon followed by *Nurse Nancy* (1952), another Little Golden Book with Band-Aids in patches, strips, and spots or, in later editions, stars and flowers on the title page. In this picture book Nurse Nancy, her brother who plays Doctor Dan, and some neighborhood boys play "ambulance" complete with "pink and green candy pills" and plenty of "brand-new Plastic Strips, Spots, and Patches" (Jackson).

In 1952, *Tex and His Toys* came with a genuine red and white tin of Permacel Tape Corp.'s Texcel Cellophane Tape and a series of activities that required Texcel Tape. Here, Tex entertains his Little Sister by using cutouts from the book and Texcel Tape to make a pinwheel, a rocking horse, paper hats, and other assorted paper toys. Unfortunately for Permacel, today in the United States cellophane tape is more widely known by Permacel's competitor's name, Scotch tape. Even though Permacel no longer produces cellophane tape, the company still supplies camera operators with electrical tape, splicing/mounting tape, and gaffer's tape. For the book *Fun With Decals* (1952), the Little Golden Books teamed up with Meyercord, a company that specialized in decalomania² transfers. Together they produced a picture book that included a sheet of suitable decals for children because children like "1. Things to cut up. 2. Things to stick together. 3. Things with lots of color. [and] 4. Things to slosh in water" ("A Note"). In this book, when a vacation picnic is interrupted by rain and the family is forced inside, Julie, Susie, and Ty help their mother and father clean up around the cabin. Then the children apply decals to the furniture and cabinets that are similar to the decals included in the book.

Two years after *Tex and His Toys* and *Fun with Decals*, Little Golden Books printed *Little Lulu and Her Magic Tricks* (1954) in conjunction with Kleenex brand tissues. In this particular book, which came with a small packet of tissues, children learn about fun things to make and other playtime activities that can happen with Kleenex tissues. Coinciding with this marketing technique, a yellow wrapper stretched around three boxes of Kleenex that advertised *Little Lulu and her Magic Tricks* and provided instructions for making a tissue Mr. Scarecrow. By

² The word "decalomania" defines an art process during which a picture or design backed with paper is transferred to another surface like wood, metal, or glass. This type of decorating gained popularity in the late 1800s. Then, in the early 1900s, surrealist painters like Oscar Dominguez and Max Ernst perfected using the technique in their paintings. Etymologically, the word "cockamamie" is most likely a corruption of the word "decalomania." In the 1950s, a company producing decalomania transfers for children marketed the transfers as "cockamamies," a purposeful mispronouncement of "decalomania."

packaging their products with children's books, Johnson & Johnson, Texcel, and Kleenex reached a child audience that was likely to use all of the Band-Aids, cellophane tape, or tissues in the house during playtime without a second thought, thus causing moms and dads to buy even more of these household products. The combination also aligned new products like Band-Aids with a name that Americans already trusted in the Little Golden Books.

Little Golden Books provided advertising space for more than health care products. From 1956 through 1964, advertisements for both Little Golden Books and other Golden Book products graced the outside back cover of each book produced. Ranging from Craft and Hobby books, such as *Indian Crafts* or *Chemistry Experiments*, to Fiction for Boys and Girls, a line of young adult books starring Brains Benton and Vicky Loring among others, each back cover led readers toward another purchasing adventure³. These advertisements also highlighted the educational value of the Golden Books product line. According to the back cover of *Rin Tin Tin and Rusty* (1955), the Craft and Hobby Books collection is a “boon to Scout-masters [sic] and club leaders” as well as “ideal for vacationers, campers, and rainy-day hobbyists” (Hill). According to the back cover of *Puss in Boots* (1959), Dr. Herbert S. Zim, “editor of the popular Golden Nature Guides, and authority on science education” supervised the preparation of the texts in the Golden Library of Knowledge (Jackson). Today, updated and revised editions of these Golden Nature Guides are recommended reading in college biology classes and among nature enthusiasts.

While teaching at Mercy College in New York, Henry Knizeski, Ph.D. lists a Golden Nature Series book titled *Insect Pests* on his annotated list of entomological literature. He writes that students should “not be misled by its size” because “there is a wealth of information here”

³ For a list of all the Little Golden Books products advertised from 1956 to 1964, see Appendix A.

(Knizeski). Knizeski also points out that Golden Press produces “one of the best introductions to biology” that is both “well illustrated and inexpensive” (Knizeski). On a web site produced by and for orchid enthusiasts, Ed Wright describes *Orchids*, another Golden Nature Guide, as a “little paper bound treasure” and his “most-used orchid reference” (Wright).

Despite a proliferation of product placement and the inclusion of advertising space in each picture book, the Little Golden Books continued in their tradition of providing entertaining, educational, and family-oriented stories. Books like *The Color Kittens* (1950) introduced children to mixing paint colors through the antics of two painting kittens named Hush and Brush who finally discover that yellow and blue makes green. In order to teach children the value of being on time, the book *How to Tell Time* (1957) included a Gruen watch face with movable hands that replicates the popular Gruen Watch Company style. During this time, some Little Golden Books focused on a single subject with encyclopedia-like clarity: *My Little Golden Book About Dogs* (1952), *Airplanes* (1953), *My Little Golden Book about the Sky* (1956), and *About the Seashore* (1957) to name a few. Some Little Golden Books came with a jigsaw puzzle of a character or scene on the inside back cover that could be easily removed and reassembled like *Jerry at School* (1950), *When I Grow Up* (1950), and *Ukelele and Her New Doll* (1951). Other books included an extra page of paper cutouts to play with as seen in *The Little Golden Paper Dolls* (1951) and *The Paperdoll Wedding* (1954). Both jigsaw puzzles and paper doll cutouts added a level of play that required children to practice their fine motor skills and dexterity. Moreover, both girls and boys continued to be inculcated with domestic family values in these books and others such as *Susie’s New Stove: The Little Chef’s Cookbook* (1950), *My Baby Brother* (1956), *A Book of Manners* (1956), *My Baby Sister* (1958) and *We Help Mommy* (1959).

Saturday morning cartoons were introduced into the Little Golden Books catalogue in the 1960s and with them a return to creating original stories, rather than reprinting old favorites — a trend that continued into the 1970s. Esther and Eloise Wilkin teamed up to write and illustrate *Baby Dear* (1962), *Good Little, Bad Little Girl* (1965), *Play with Me* (1967), and several more original stories about getting a new family member or following the rules of etiquette. Puppies, kittens, and other animals continued to be popular subjects for original stories in books like *Corky* (1962) about a black puppy, *Bow Wow! Meow!* (1963), a book of sounds, *Hop, Little Kangaroo!* (1965), and *Animal Counting Book* (1969).

As part of the crossover between Saturday morning cartoons and the Little Golden Books, *Yogi Bear* (1960), *Quickdraw McGraw* (1960), *Rocky and His Friends* (1960), and *Huckleberry Hound and His Friends* (1960) recounted scenarios from those cartoons. In these books, Yogi continues to steal picnic baskets, Quickdraw still misses his targets but catches the bad guy, Rocky tolerates Bullwinkle's antics, and Huckleberry makes dinner for his friends. Other books in the 1960s featured cartoons that are no longer part of the Saturday morning lineup or replayed on the Cartoon Network. For example, *Supercar* (1962), based on a children's TV show by the same name, features a car with intergalactic capabilities. *Beany Goes to Sea* (1963), from the *Time for Beany* show, is about a boy and his sea monster friend, and in *Fireball XL5* (1964), derived from a science fiction cartoon show, the XL5 spacecraft patrols Sector 25 of the Universe.

Two particular Little Golden Books from the 1960s are worth noting here because they draw stories from local tradition. The legend of the Kromer blizzard cap, a wool cap with a visor worn by engineers, became a Little Golden Book titled *Mr. Puffer Bill* (1965) written by Leonard Arland and illustrated by Tibor Gergely. As legend has it, the baseball cap that George Kromer

wore while engineering the train kept blowing off his head when he pushed it back at an angle. His wife created a new hat which was very popular with his coworkers, so he and his wife went into business sewing and selling the now famous Kromer cap for engineers and other people who want a comfortable hat that will not blow off in a high wind (Hajewski 1A). Then, three years later, Little Golden Books published *Ookpik the Arctic Owl* (1968) to raise money for Inuit cultures. According to the title page, “Ookpik is a furry owl who was born in Fort Chimo, far up in the Canadian Arctic. Royalties from the sales of Ookpik books and toys go to the Fort Chimo Co-Operative Association for the benefit of the Eskimos” (Hazen). In the book itself, even though Mukluck says that a huge monster is coming, Ookpik the owl decides to go and see the monster rather than set a trap. Then Ookpik discovers that the monster is really a sad and lonely walrus. Ookpik, Mukluck, and the walrus all become friends, and the walrus become a lifeguard in the summer when the water unfreezes. While the word “Ookpik” is Inuit for “snowy” or “Arctic owl” and the Ookpik was already a popular image and a small, fuzzy toy in Canada by the 1960s, how the Fort Chimo Co-Operative Association and the Little Golden Books became partners remains unclear.

Throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, authors and illustrators occasionally incorporated small self-referential images and phrases that alluded to other Little Golden Books in a playful form of intertextuality. When Timmy plays in the sand in *Busy Timmy* (1948), he carries a purple and yellow pail with an image of the Poky Little Puppy on it. In *My Kitten* (1953) a blonde nameless female protagonist spends a full day properly taking care of her new kitten named Fluffy. The very last page of this picture book reveals a pile of toys and books including *The Kitten’s Surprise* (1951), a Little Golden Book about how *not* to treat a kitten. An illustration in *We Help Mommy* (1959) that shows young Bobby helping his mother unload her grocery cart

onto the checkout counter, also shows that for only 50-cents, the family is purchasing a copy of a Giant Little Golden Book titled *Kittens: Three Complete Stories* (1958). When Paul finds out that his mother is having a new baby in *New Brother, New Sister* (1966), he starts to collect new toys for the baby. One of the books Paul owns but gives to his new sibling is a copy of *My Puppy* (1955), which is about a boy and his dog. Finally, in *Little Mommy* (1967) when one of her dollies gets sick, the unnamed little girl pretends to call Doctor Dan from *Doctor Dan, the Bandage Man* (1950) so he can come over and heal her doll. While these are only a few examples of self-references in the Little Golden Books series, an observant reader could easily spot and appreciate others. This intertextuality also breeds a degree of familiarity within the Little Golden Books line.

Over 1.5 billion Little Golden Books of various sizes and formats were sold by 1970, and more than 300 million Little Golden Books appeared on foreign markets in 26 languages. By the early 1970s, *Sesame Street* dominated children's television and Little Golden Books marketing. My favorite, *The Monster at the End of this Book* (1971), stars a lovable blue character named Grover, who is based on a popular puppet from the show. Other *Sesame Street* books included *Sesame Street: The Together Book* (1971), *Big Bird's Red Book* (1977), *The Amazing Mumford Forgets the Magic Words* (1979), and another personal favorite *Cookie Monster and the Cookie Tree* (1977).

The 1942 notion that Little Golden Books should be both entertaining and instructive continued to influence original stories that were introduced into the catalogue. While the mid to late 1960s included books about physical and mental maturation, such as *We Like Kindergarten* (1965), *Good-bye, Tonsils* (1966), and *When I Grow Up* (1968), the 1970s included books about home and personal feelings like *Forest Hotel* (1972), *The Bouncy Baby Bunny Finds His Bed*

(1974), *My Home* (1976), and *Feelings A to Z* (1979). In all of these books, children learn about their immediate surroundings and their growing bodies.

Throughout American history, images in picture books have reflected the times during which they were published. Since the Little Golden Book series thrives on reprinting familiar classics, some original illustrations were replaced before being republished as America became more aware of racial discrimination during the Civil Rights Movement, gender bias following the Women's Rights Movement, and general health concerns as medical knowledge advanced. Unlike a picture book published in 1998, a picture book published in 1948 is less likely to contain a variety of ethnicities or an abundance of career options for women. Certainly, picture books change in response to the social climate, but very few picture books span the same breadth of time as the Little Golden Books, which is why the Little Golden Books provide a unique platform for studying the changes between a first edition and an eighth or twelfth edition. When *My Little Golden Book about God* was first published in 1956, all the children depicted in the book were pink-cheeked and lily white. By 1975, Eloise Wilkins replaced several of the illustrations picturing white children with illustrations showing African American children in poses, settings, and clothing that are similar to the white children previously pictured.

In the 1976 version of *Cars and Trucks* (originally printed in 1959), a family in 1970s style clothing replaces one of the 1950s illustrations in which the children are playing cowboys and Indians, dad is reading the paper outside, and mom is washing dishes inside the trailer while a baby peeks over a crib. In the new 1970s illustration, a little boy and a little girl play an All-American game of baseball in front of the trailer, while dad takes care of the baby inside, and mom sits outside reading. None of the other illustrations in this particular book have been changed, so the difference between the 1950s style and the 1970s style is striking.

On the 1979 cover of *We Help Daddy* (originally printed in 1962), the father is no longer smoking a pipe while he clips the hedges with his two children nearby since smoke, especially secondhand smoke, is deemed hazardous and unhealthy. In 1948, the cover of Ruth and Harold Shane's *The New Baby* showed an infant sleeping on her or his stomach, which we now know can contribute to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The 1975 version features a baby on her or his back.

In some situations, an entire Little Golden Book is completely redrawn by the same illustrator and the text is updated for a new generation of readers before the book is reprinted. One fine example of this is Ruth and Harold Shane's *The New Baby*, which was first illustrated by Eloise Wilkin in 1948 and later modified with new images for a 1975 edition. The basis of the story is that little Mike's parents are preparing for the arrival of a new baby by purchasing new baby accessories and helping little Mike with the transition into being a big brother. In the 1948 version, a deliveryman brings the family a bathinette. In the 1975 version, the deliveryman brings a buggy for the baby, which for a reading audience in the early 21st Century could be updated again to a stroller. Moreover the 1970s illustrations show a younger, more contemporary family. Even though Mummy is pregnant in both versions of the story, she only *looks* pregnant with a large round belly and maternity clothes in the later illustrations. During the course of the story "Aunt Pat" comes to the house to help out before Mummy goes into labor and stays until after the new baby returns from the hospital. In the 1948 version, Aunt Pat is clearly Mummy or Daddy's older relative since she is illustrated with tiny glasses, wrinkly skin, and a bent, grandmotherly posture. But, the Aunt Pat in the 1975 version must be little Mike's aunt since she is young with long blonde hair that matches the father's hair color and wears stylish 1970s slacks with a sweater vest. These types of changes in text and illustration reflect the ability of the Little

Golden Books to maintain currency by continually updating the look of the American family. By giving a nod to the times in which a book is published, through its pictures the Little Golden Books parallel the techniques used in updating the time-sensitive details of long running, popular adolescent novels ranging from *Nancy Drew* and the *Hardy Boys* to the *Baby Sitter's Club* and *Sweet Valley High* series.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the product placement marketing begun in the 1950s was used to draw people into buying certain foods in order to receive a free Little Golden Book. In 1982, McDonald's, which had begun selling child-size fast-food portions in 1979, packaged five different Little Golden Books with their Happy Meals so that children could pick up a new book every week (Porter 01). As part of this ad campaign, McDonalds piqued feelings of nostalgia by asking consumers if they "remembered their favorite books as a child." Burger King, the major competing restaurant chain, handed out copies of *The Train To Timbuctoo* (1950) in the late 1980s as part of a promotion about trains and traveling. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Hardee's, still another fast food chain, gave away twelve different Little Golden Books titles with their kid's meal including the following four books that featured Pound Puppies and Pound Purries: *Pick of the Litter* (1985), *The Puppy Nobody Wanted* (1986), *Problem Puppies* (1986) and *Kitten Companions* (1986). Sometime around 1987, the Wienerschnitzel hot dog shops distributed copies of *The Poky Little Puppy's Naughty Day* (1985) and *When You Were a Baby* (1949). Also in 1987, *Crispy in the Birthday Band* (1987) and *Crispy In No Place Like Home* (1987) could be found inside specially marked boxes of Crispy Critters cereal. A third book, *Crispy's Bedtime Book* (1987), was available by special order through the mail. In 1995 Chick-fil-a, like Hardee's, gave away eight different Little Golden Books with their kid's meals. Since this restaurant is part of a family-owned chain that also seeks to package traditional family

values with its fast-paced food service, the company handed out long-standing favorite titles such as *The Poky Little Puppy*, *Little Red Caboose*, *Velveteen Rabbit*, and *Saggy Baggy Elephant*. By aligning their names with the Little Golden Books, all of these restaurants showed the general public that they were dedicated to creating an environment and food that appeals to the family as a whole. Yet, even as these restaurants were trying to feed both the child's mind and body, they were also feeding the child's impulse to collect every Little Golden Book being offered by the chain through this promotional tie-in.

From the 1980s through today, no other remarkable changes or additions have taken place in the Little Golden Books catalogue. The Little Golden Books continued to feature popular cartoon characters such as Rainbow Bright and the Pound Puppies in the 1980s and Dora the Explorer and the Powerpuff Girls in the 1990s. They included books based on popular toys like Barbie, Tickle Me Elmo, and Winnie-the-Pooh. Early favorites from the 1940s and 50s, such as the *Poky Little Puppy* and others from the first twelve books published, are now being reprinted as "classics" for a new generation of readers. Moreover, people are still giving reprinted versions of *The Golden Egg* (originally published in 1962) as gifts during Easter time. In this story, a young bunny finds an egg from which a baby duck hatches and the two of them become fast friends. *The Night Before Christmas* (1946), *Christmas Carols* (1946), *Santa's Toy Shop* (1950), *Animals Christmas Eve* (1977), and other Little Golden Books about Santa or Christmas also remain popular. Today, the Little Golden Books still publish both original stories and reinterpretations of familiar stories in the tradition of those first twelve books.

Throughout their publication history, Little Golden Books have sold primarily in drugstores and supermarkets, as well as department stores and bookstores. Their affordable price makes them an easy, last minute addition to an already filled shopping cart. Today, in drug stores

like Duane Reade, Little Golden Books are on display in their own golden spinning rack that can hold multiple books on each of its four sides. The rack is sectioned off into book holders that nearly reach the floor, which allows for both tall adults and small children to easily pick out an eye-catching book. This newer, twenty-first century display rack for the Little Golden Books varies greatly from the bulky, dark brown, wooden display that graced Woolworth's in the late 1940s. On that first boxy, 1940s display, mustard yellow vines wrapped around the edges of the case, and a whimsical, gnomish man stood looking out the top half of a green-framed door on the front. Also, the paintings on the front of the display case included a curly-headed, blonde child reading a book. In order to entice the potential buyer, shallow yellow pockets that rose like stadium steps running six across and four deep fully displayed each book's colorfully illustrated front cover. While not exactly as close to the floor as the spinning rack, this wooden display also provided children with access to the books. Although different in design, both displays provide the buyer with easy access to the available books and physically set the Little Golden Books apart from the other children's books carried in the store.

In addition to regular-sized books, Little Golden Books produced both larger and smaller versions of specific stories as well as various shape books. In 1944, preorders for two Giant Golden Books, priced at \$1.50 each, reached 150,000 (Mackenzie BR2). During that same year, Middling Size Golden Books, such as *The Golden Almanac* and *Walt Disney's Circus*, were introduced for \$1.00 (Golden Books BR13). In the 1950s, Little Golden Books, through Golden Press, launched activity books that included paper cutouts, jigsaw puzzles, paint sets, stamps, and spinning wheels. Also published in the 1950s was the 10" x 13" Giant Little Golden Book for \$0.50 (a cousin of the Giant Golden Book) and the 2.25" x 3.25" Tiny Golden Book. Soft cover, shape books with die-cut edges emerged in the 1960s. From 1974 to 1975, Little Golden Books

produced an Eager Reader series of books for beginning readers. Golden Fragrance Books with scratch and sniffable spots were marketed in the late 1970s and were followed by their smaller cousin, the Sniff It books, in the early 1980s. In 1983, Golden Melody Books came with an electronic chip that played music when the book was opened. The late 1980s saw the production of the Big Little Golden Books (8" x 8.25") and the Little Little Golden Books (2.57" square) as well as First Little Golden Books (5.5" x 5 7/8").

Based on the popularity of their stories, the Little Golden Books expanded to include other media formats. As early as 1948, a bright yellow Little Golden Record sold for 20-cents and included twelve popular stories such as *Scuffy the Tugboat*, *Big Brown Bear*, and *Shy Little Kitten*. In order to maintain high artistic standards, Little Golden Records employed such talented actors and popular vocal artists as Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, Roy Rogers, and Irene Wicker. Based on the popularity of this first record, Little Golden Books then produced a series of yellow or orange 45 and 78-rpm singles featuring stories or songs about famous personalities, holidays, folk songs, Disney characters, and animated features. By the mid to late 1950s, a person could buy a Golden Record Chest — a boxed set of eight records — for \$3.95 or a record and book set that included the entire text of the book on the record. During the 1960s and 1970s similar records and books with records were reintroduced into the market with new Hi-Fi sound. During the technological shift from records to cassette tapes, Little Golden Books released Read-Along Books and Cassettes. Coinciding with the popularity of VCRs in the 1980s, they produced eight, 30-minute Golden Book Videos. Each video featured three popular stories, and they were heavily advertised in women's magazines. By 1996, the Little Golden Books went digital with the progressive release of 24 CD-ROMs. The design on each of the 24 boxes mimicked the familiar gold-foil spine look of the original books.

As the Little Golden Books became a common part of an American child's book collection, they also marketed their own licensed characters for use as toys, costumes, jewelry, and other products. Larger newspapers across the United States such as the *New York Times* included these products in advertisements placed by local stores. As early as 1950, a parent could buy wallpaper that featured characters from the *Shy Little Kitten*, *Scuffy the Tugboat*, *Little Black Sambo*, and the *Saggy Baggy Elephant*. Designed for decorating the nursery, plastic washable drapes with these same characters and three or four piece laminated plaque sets illustrating various Little Golden Books characters were available for less than four dollars in 1951. Aside from products designed specifically for the nursery, other Little Golden Books products included handkerchiefs and jewelry pins. Also in 1951, Simon and Schuster released a stationary set with postcards, envelopes, and writing sheets displaying the Poky Little Puppy, the Saggy Baggy Elephant, Tootle, the Lively Little Rabbit, the Color Kittens, Big Brown Bear, Little Black Sambo, the Fuzzy Duckling, as well as characters from *I Can Fly* and *The Golden Sleepy Book*. The Little Golden Books characters even found their way onto fabric that could either be bought by the yard or purchased already assembled as a young girl's dress. In 1955, a cotton dress printed with scenes from the *Seven Little Postmen* was available in sizes 4 to 6x, as was a dress with images from *Circus ABC* on it in sizes 1 to 3 for only \$1.99 on sale at Morton's department store (Morton's F30). Each dress also came with a Little Golden Book. Not only did the Little Golden Books establish a spot in the nursery by marketing plaques and wallpaper, they also cemented their own importance in children's culture by reaching an audience beyond the nursery walls and opened up an avenue for collectors by producing stationary, jewelry, handkerchiefs, and dresses.

Despite the popularity of all of these tie-ins during the 1950s, the 1960s passed by quietly and the widespread distribution of Little Golden Books images did not pick up again until the 1970s. Not only could children read about the Poky Little Puppy, but also they could hang images of the Puppy on their walls, curl up with a stuffed version of him at night, or dress up like him for Halloween. In the 1970s, Dolly Toy Company manufactured wall plaques, lamps, and shades for the nursery. Images of the Saggy Baggy Elephant decorated a plastic tea set. Plastic figures of the Poky Little Puppy and the Shy Little Kitten could be used as either a bank for collecting coins or a night light with the insertion of a light base. Gund, a stuffed animal manufacturer, produced both a hand puppet of the Saggy Baggy Elephant and stuffed versions of the Poky Little Puppy and the Tawny Scrawny Lion. Children could play with wind-up, hard plastic versions of Poky Little Puppy, Tootle the Tugboat, and the Saggy Baggy Elephant or even dress up as one of these characters for Halloween.

By the 1980s, licensed Little Golden Books characters were on plastic lunch boxes, bookends, gift bags, night lights, sippy cups, toothbrushes, table cloths, wall paper, growth charts, stickers, plates, napkins, invitations, wrapping paper, banks, bowls, and pajamas. The Poky Little Puppy, the Tawny Scrawny Lion, the Shy Little Kitten, Baby Brown Bear, the Little Red Hen, and the Saggy Baggy Elephant were also manufactured as stuffed animals, ceramic figurines, and plastic toys. A musical Tootle the Train even headed up a ceramic train set that carried the Tawny Scrawny Lion, Baby Brown Bear, Poky Little Puppy, and Katy Caboose. In the 1990s, small stuffed animal versions of the Little Golden Books characters filled store shelves, soft cover Little Golden Books ranging from *The Poky Little Puppy* to *Beauty and the Beast* came with miniature plastic figurines, and t-shirts for teenagers featured images from *The Poky Little Puppy*, *The Shy Little Kitten*, and the Little Golden Books' back cover with its

montage of characters. Also available from the 1990s is a pack of three Golden Book Card Games, which includes a memory card game, an A-B-C card game, and a 1-2-3 card game. People who like the Saggy Baggy Elephant and prefer a board game can purchase *A Little Golden Book: Circle of Friends Matching Game* in which Saggy and a good memory for matching cards will help players reach the inner circle of Little Golden Books characters and win the game.

When Lucille Ogle, George Duplaix, Leon Shimkin, and Albert Levanthal approached each other in 1942, they probably did not foresee that the Little Golden Books would become the longest running series of children's picture books in the history of the United States. Nor could they have known that the earliest Little Golden Books would come to represent an idealized time in the history of America's middle class. They did hope, though, to earn a huge profit return by keeping the cost of high quality picture books low and distributing them through department stores, pharmacies, and groceries rather than in traditional bookstores. These books, particularly the first twelve books, have made an indelible mark on both children's literature and children's culture in the United States. As the regular-sized Little Golden Books catalogue expanded to include a variety of sizes and shapes before morphing into different types of media, they reached such a high level of popularity and integration into American culture that they deserve to be studied. To completely ignore the Little Golden Books phenomenon is to discount the impact of these picture books on the history of children's literature, children's culture, and American popular culture.

CHAPTER 3 THE GOLD STANDARD: GOLDEN AGES AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

Within the field of children's literature, the defining parameters of the first Golden Age¹ of Children's Literature might vary slightly, but they generally include the decades in the late 19th Century when Edmund Evans (1826-1905), well-known for his skillful printing technique, published illustrated picture books by Walter Crane (1845-1915), Kate Greenaway (1846-1901), and Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886). During this time in England, publishers, authors, and illustrators joined in their commitment to higher quality writing and illustrations, which revolutionized the design of books designated primarily for children. Moreover, consumers not only readily purchased books illustrated by Crane, Greenaway, Caldecott, and others, but also bought a variety of domestic goods like wallpapers and dishware that were based on illustrations first seen in children's books. This confluence of writing, illustrating, printing, and marketing techniques in the late 19th Century set the standard by which a "golden age" in children's literature is currently judged.

Today, critics and historians of children's literature in the United States and Britain often allude to the 1950s as a second "golden age" due to the number of "classic" books published, including Crockett Johnson's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* and E. B. White's *Charlotte's*

¹ Some critics, like Sheila Egoff in *Thursday's Child* (1981), pinpoint the "Golden Age of children's literature" to the last half of the 19th Century when the Romantic view of childhood as a time of innocence became the dominant rhetoric in the United States and Britain. Or, to quote Egoff's reductive analysis, the late Victorian period in children's literature is a "golden age" because it is a time "that can be described as 'good' both in a literary and popular sense" (21). Other scholars, like Humphrey Carpenter in *Secret Gardens: the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (1985), extend the Golden Age of children's literature into the early 20th Century and confine the age to British authors by marking it as the time between the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* books (1928) since these texts envision an idealized child filled with imagination.

Still more clarification could occur by defining the Golden Age of children's literature within the context of picture book illustrations; although, this additional parameter registers only slightly different results. Some point again to the mid-19th Century print work by Edmund Evans in England while others, like Ruth Viguers in *A Critical History of Children's Literature*, place the beginning of this golden age to the late 1920s with the publication of Wanda Gag's *Millions of Cats* (1928) in America.

Web.² Yet, agreeing on the parameters that define a “golden age” is often a complex task, even though the term is most often applied retrospectively. In and of itself, the term “golden age” generally is used to refer to an explosion of positive activity in a nation, culture, literature, or art and simultaneously denotes a time of happiness, peace, and prosperity that is likened to a utopian state. With the addition of a prepositional phrase, the term “golden age” is made more specific such as the “Golden Age of Television” or the “Golden Age of Brooklyn,” but this specificity also leads to a vagueness and destabilization of the term since no single moment in history can be designated as a “golden age” unless retrospectively bracketed by dates to clarify potentially indistinct parameters.³ If the first Golden Age of Children’s Literature established a set of agreed

² The books first published in the 1950s under the editorship of Ursula Nordstrom, director of Harper & Brother’s Department of Books for Boys and Girls from 1940 to 1973, are still quite popular today and have become “classics” in children’s literature. These books include Crockett Johnson’s *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1951), E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* (1952), and Syd Hoff’s *Danny and the Dinosaur* (1958).

In *Secret Gardens*, Carpenter states that the mid-1950s in England “has often been described as a second Golden Age of children’s literature” before pointing the reader towards more discussions about England’s second “Golden Age” in the book *Children and Literature* (1973) edited by Virginia Haviland (Carpenter 214). Carpenter then belittles the development of a simultaneous rising in children’s book production in America by including the phrase “at last” in the following statement: “at exactly the same time [in the mid-1950s] America itself developed, at last, its own vigorous strain of writing for children” (214). Even though Carpenter does credit the United States with producing a “vigorous strain” of children’s literature, he does not specifically term this moment in American history as a “golden age.” In placing these two mid-1950s moments in England and in the United States side by side, he indicates that children’s literature in America also experienced a golden age.

Concurring with the notion that the United States experienced a golden age of children’s literature in the 1950s, Selma Lanes in *Down the Rabbit Hole: Adventures and Misadventures in the Realm of Children’s Literature* (1971) argues that “illustrations began to gain greater and still greater importance” that had “little in common with *Peter Rabbit*, *Little Black Sambo* or even such ‘40s books as *Make Way for Ducklings*” (Lanes 53). Lanes then marks the 1950s as the beginning of “a veritable Golden Age for the [children’s book] artist” (Lanes 54). Yet children’s literature critics and historians like Carpenter and Lanes ignore a key facet of children’s literature in the United States when they define the 1950s as a golden age and ignore the production of quality children’s literature only a decade earlier.

Children’s literature historian and critic, Ruth Hill Viguers had yet to experience the flourish of children’s literature in the 1950s when her chapter titled “The Golden Age 1920-1950” was published in *A Critical History of Children’s Literature* (1953). Not only does she readily admits that she and other writers are “too close” to the books published between 1920 and 1950 to fully judge their worth, because they can “only touch certain of them with respect,” but she also neglects to include any of the Little Golden Books in her chapter (Viguers 447). Sixty years later, we are no longer “too close” to the 1940s to judge the value of the Little Golden Books as a whole or those first twelve Little Golden Books in particular. Rather, we can retrospectively examine the strength with which the Little Golden Books impacted the children’s book publishing market in the United States and see the parallels between these books and the toy books published during the first Golden Age.

³ Admittedly, applying the term “golden age” in a willy-nilly manner throughout the decades has caused the term to lose some of its connotative value.

upon parameters, then I propose that the Little Golden Books ushered in the second “golden age” of children’s literature in 1942 with the publication of Janette Sebring Lowrey’s *The Poky Little Puppy*. Not only did the Golden Age of Children’s Literature and the Little Golden Books see a rise in the production quality and sheer number of picture books printed, but both “golden” moments also benefited from advancements in printing techniques, redecorated the nursery, and revived interest in traditional texts. More importantly, though, but harder to describe with facts and figures, is how books from both golden ages produce intangible feelings of happiness in today’s reader.

When the Little Golden Books began publishing in the early 1940s, Simon and Schuster knowingly followed a pattern of educational, yet entertaining and affordable picture books for children that originated in Germany and France in the 1930s, because the editors of the Little Golden Books recognized a similar, profitable market in the United States. As early as 1937, more than 6,000,000 ten-cent children’s books were being sold monthly in department stores and other outlets across the country in the United States (Tebbel 280). According to William Feaver in *When We Were Young: Two Centuries of Children’s Book Illustrations*, the Herbert Stuffer Verlag publishing house in Germany produced “cheaper, attractive, semi-educational books” as can be seen in “Marianne Scheel’s illustrations of the farmer’s year and Friedrich Boer’s largely photo-montage [sic] books about the workings of a town and railway” (Feaver 21). In 1930s France, the number of books published under the name Pere Castor — or, in English, Father Beaver — climbed to over 250 titles and “sold millions of copies” (Feaver 21). Produced by a Parisian bookseller, this series of books were “cheap, bright, calculatedly educational” and included board games, calendars, and wild animals (Feaver 21). George Duplaix, who helped found the Little Golden Books with Leon Shimkin, Lucille Ogle, and Albert Levanthal, also

translated to English the first Pere Castor animal histories books sold in the United States (Bader 278). Most notably, though, famed Little Golden Book illustrator Feodor Rojankovsky first illustrated for the Pere Castor line in France as “Rojan” before moving to the United States and eventually illustrating books such as *The Three Bears* and *Hop, Little Kangaroo!* for the Little Golden Books catalogue. It was a tactical move requiring forethought for the editors to knowingly glean from the children’s books being marketed in France and Germany during the 1930s.

Drawing inspiration from other children’s book markets outside of the United States was only one of many savvy business decisions practiced by the Little Golden Books in 1942. When Little Golden Books first rolled off the Western Printing and Lithographing Company (Western) presses, President Roy A. Spencer was no stranger to the production and sale of children’s books. Almost thirty years earlier in 1915, he personally found buyers for the thousands of children’s books that Western had printed for the Hamming-Whitman Publishing Company (a primary publisher of children’s books) when Hamming-Whitman could not pay their bill and left their printed stock with Western. One year later (1916), Western bought out Hamming-Whitman, renamed the publishing house Whitman Publishing Company, and started creating and distributing children’s books through this subsidiary (“Diversity” 5).

When Western faced another overstock of children’s books three years later in 1918, salesman Sam Lowe convinced the F. W. Woolworth Company and other retail stores to sell Western’s children’s books year-round rather than just with the toys during the Christmas holiday season. Banking on this accomplishment, Lowe then convinced Western executives to produce a ten-cent line of books, which also became an immediate success (“Diversity” 6). Even Walt Disney helped in the promotion of Western’s children’s book section by signing an

agreement in 1933 granting Western exclusive rights to all of Disney's licensed characters ("Diversity" 8).

In 1942 when Duplaix and Ogle of the Artist and Writers Guild, a New York subsidiary of Western, approached Levanthal and Shimkin of Simon and Schuster, the group decided to produce a line of colorful, durable, and affordable children's books that could be sold year round in department stores and supermarkets as a way to promote Simon and Schuster's newly established children's department. This decision to produce the Little Golden Books was not a stroke of sheer luck or good fortune; rather, the move was indicative of Western's production history. The two companies were already in the midst of discussing the details of producing a print version of Walt Disney's feature-length animated film *Bambi*. (Santi 6).

The First Golden Age of Children's Literature

During the late 19th Century, four distinct marketing influences converged to provide the necessary infrastructure to support and advance a flourishing children's book activity in England that spilled over into the United States which has since been named the Golden Age of Children's Literature. During this time the children's book market benefited from advancements in printing techniques, an enthusiasm for decorations that targeted a child's domestic space, and a revival of public interest in traditional texts. Over 70,000 copies of Kate Greenaway's *Under the Window* were reprinted with over 30,000 more copies in French and German (Viguers "Introduction" 17). The publisher Edmund Evans's own account about Greenaway's *Under the Window* shows the chiding that he endured for printing thousands of copies during the initial press run:

George Routledge 'chaffed' me considerably for printing 20,000 first edition of a book to sell at six shillings, but we soon found that we had not printed nearly enough to supply the first demand: I know book sellers sold copies at a premium, getting ten shillings each for them: it

was, of course, long out of print, for I could not print fast enough to keep up the sale. (E. Evans 61)

Randolf Caldecott's books usually sold 10,000 copies of a single printing before Evans could bring out another edition. "Evans speculated on the picture book project, and Caldecott agreed to make the illustrations for a royalty of three farthings a copy — six and a quarter percent of the shilling that the books cost" (Hutchins 59). Within a six-month period crossing from 1878 to 1879, the small royalty brought Caldecott 375 pounds, which taking into account inflation is equivalent to over 25,000 pounds or almost \$51,000 today. In response to public demand, the Evans-Caldecott team produced two new toy books each year for eight years (E. Evans 58). The popularity and sale of toy books increased to a point where Evans was printing 100,000 first editions that were bound in volumes and sold immediately (E. Evans 59).

Walter Crane also shared in this printing success. As pointed out by Spencer, "the excellent sales of Walter Crane's toy books encouraged Routledge in 1870 to begin to issue composite volumes of several titles, and the rapid consumption of these were proof of the artist's well established popularity as a children's illustrator" (Spencer 52). All in all, these toy books, printed by Evans, achieved a popularity that extended all the way to the United States "where firms had soon brought out pirated editions" (Spencer 60). The toy books produced by illustrators Crane, Caldecott, and Greenaway, who all benefited from Evans's printing skills and the subsequent marketing spin-offs from their books, are a prime example of the first Golden Age's convergence of marketing influences — the likes of which will be seen again in 1942 with the publication of the first twelve Little Golden Books in the United States.

Both the toy books produced by Edmund Evans and the Little Golden Books flourished under the advancement of multicolor printing techniques, which allowed for a greater emphasis

on enjoyable color prints in children's books. Even though John Newbery (1713-1767) greatly improved the publication and production value of books meant for children by printing on sturdier paper and writing stories specifically for the child reader, Evans is credited with packaging and publishing the first truly modern picture book with full-color illustrations ushering in the initial Golden Age of Children's Literature.

In 1865, Evans started printing an inexpensive, usually sensational, novel that sold for one or two shillings and was printed on a yellow stock paper with a thinly coated enamel surface. According to Elizabeth Billington in *The Randolph Caldecott Treasury*, "the books were immediately successful and were affectionately called 'yellowbacks', or more humorously, 'mustard plasters'" (36). Isobel Spencer notes in *Walter Crane* that these cheap editions of books met the "growing demands of an expanding literate class and bored railway travelers" (39). Even though 'yellowbacks' were not expressly produced for children, they did reinforce for publishers the general public's interest in affordable reading and that a profit could be made when printing large quantities of relatively cheap books⁴ as opposed to limited runs of more expensive gift books.

When his printing machines were sitting idle, Evans started manufacturing the "toy-books of Walter Crane, then those of Randolph Caldecott, and finally he turned his attention to Kate Greenaway" (Spencer 37-8). All three artists benefited from Evans's ability to create a large color palette by utilizing only six colors: red, yellow, blue, pink, gray, and brown as well as the artistic effects to be gained through the layering of colors when printing "a red with a fraction of

⁴ In the same way that the French Pere Castor books made a path for the Little Golden Books to follow, a path was cleared for printers such as Evans by publishers Dean and Son, who took early strides in the production of inexpensive books: "The pioneer publisher of inexpensive picture books was Dean and Son, a firm which, in the 1840s, began to cater for a cheaper market than it had done before. ... The firm was ingenious in devising books intended, not for reading, but for colouring with moveable parts and dolls to dress" (Spencer 46).

brown in it” and the use of gradations when engraving the print blocks (E. Evans 34). Advances in printing plus the growing market for children’s books “kept the cost [of a toy book] within the reach of most middle-class pockets” (Spencer 46).

Eventually, toy books became so popular that Evans started reprinting individual books on larger paper, binding the books together, and selling them as deluxe collection sets that included the printer’s and publisher’s signatures. According to Evans in his memoirs, “this ‘Edition de Luxe’ sold immediately [as] they were printed: I wished I had printed three or four thousand instead of one thousand (E. Evans 59). In the 1940s, the Little Golden Books would also publish larger and smaller editions of original books as well as print deluxe collections. Through these types of advancements, both Evans and the Little Golden Books capitalized on the middle class public’s interest in children’s books.

As the images produced by illustrators Caldecott, Crane, and Greenaway grew in popularity, these same images started appearing as domestic decorations that expanded characters beyond the nursery and into the communal space of the private home. Just as today’s Little Golden Books are enjoyed by both children and adults, the toy books of the late Victorian period were “appreciated not only in the nursery but by adults in the parlor and library and even by artists and architects who used them to give clients an idea of the way in which their own homes could be decorated” (Spencer 60). Although more widely recognized for his toy books and magazine illustrations, Caldecott produced wallpapers⁵ that included images from *Hey Diddle Diddle and Baby Bunting*, *The Diverting Story of John Gilpin*, and *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*. Caldecott’s illustrations also appeared on eight-inch square ceramic tiles. In one set of tiles featuring five illustrations from *John Gilpin*, a few of the individual illustrations spread

⁵ Some surviving samples of these wallpapers are located in the de Grummond Children’s Literature Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi.

across the surface of three different tiles. Not only were these tiles used to decorate private homes, but they were also used in the children's wards of hospitals due to their hygienic, easy to clean surfaces.

Between 1876 and 1906, Crane designed six nursery wallpapers based on scenes from his toy books: *Humpty Dumpty* (1876), *Froggy Would a-Wooing Go* (1877), *Sleeping Beauty* (1879), *The House that Jack Built* and *The Fairy Gardens* (1886), as well as *Mistress Mary* (circa 1906). Crane also designed ceramic tiles for the Shropshire firm of Maw and Company that drew from his toy book illustrations. Within a year (between 1874 and 1975), six-inch square tiles were produced featuring Boy Blue, Bo-Peep, Tom Tucker, and other nursery characters. Aside from wallpapers and tiles, Crane designed lace cot covers, doilies, and printed fabrics among other household goods.

Unlike Caldecott and Crane, Greenaway did not specifically design illustrations for wallpaper and other household goods, but her images were still utilized outside of her books, both with and without her permission. A wallpaper titled "The Months" uses images and themes from Greenaway's *Almanac for 1893* in which "the pattern was built up of what were, in their original forms, single-page plates in tiny books and transformed by the delicate use of chains of flowers and foliage into a delightful continuous whole" (White 65). Additionally, Greenaway images appeared on, but were not limited to, tea service settings and prints for nursery wall hangings. As pointed out by Anne Higonnet in *Pictures of Innocence*, "the formal simplicity of her watercolors allowed Greenaway children to appear on every conceivable printed or stamped commodity: tea towels, embroidery kits, china figurines, wallpaper, stationary, dolls, doilies, soaps, etc" (54). The quaintness of her children's dress in illustrations also spawned what was referred to as "the Greenaway-look" in the world of children and women's fashions.

Though a nearly 80 year gap exists between Evans's first toy books in 1865 and the first Little Golden Books in 1942, both books capitalized on a revived interest in fairy tales, folk lore, and nursery rhymes by producing books that highlight the antics of talking animals and softened the prevailing view that children's literature exists primarily for didactic purposes. Not only did Crane illustrate fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Frog Prince*, and *Cinderella* for his toy books but he also illustrated numerous nursery rhymes like "This Little Pig Went to Market," "Mother Hubbard," and "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe" among others. Aside from writing and illustrating her own verses, Greenaway illustrated a collection of forty-four rhymes titled *Mother Goose or The Old Nursery Rhymes* which includes "Little Jack Horner," "Goosey, Goosey, Gander," "Little Miss Muffet" and other familiar poems. Most famously, Caldecott illustrated nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and songs in his toy books. Ranging from *The House That Jack Built* and *John Gilpin* in 1878 to *Jack and the Bean Stalk* in 1886, which was published after his death, Caldecott's illustrations in these toy books set a standard for movement, color use, and fine detail in children's book illustrations for which he was posthumously honored with the establishment of the Caldecott Medal.

According to Spencer in *Walter Crane*, "leaning heavily as they did on fantasy and folk lore for their story-line, Victorian picture books mark the complete rout of the rationalists" who emphasized intellectual and deductive reasoning rather than sensory reaction as the primary source of knowledge (46). Even though the "complete rout of the rationalists" may be too reductive a statement about the entirety of children's literature during this period, these Golden Age Victorian picture books did gain popularity due in part to the growing arts and crafts movement that spurned the mechanization of daily life brought on by the Industrial Revolution and its factory system. Spencer's observation indicates that the onset of non-rational subjects

lend themselves to fanciful, full-color illustrations such as Crane's anthropomorphic felines in *Pussie Cat's ABC Book* (1865) or the Dish who runs away with the Spoon in Caldecott's *Hey Diddle Diddle and Baby Bunting* (1882). These two Victorian picture books alongside other toy books published by Evans between 1865 and 1875 reflect a social change in attitudes regarding books aimed at children during a time of rapid mechanization. In the 1940s, a similar social regard for children's books developed⁶ when American factory production rises in response to World War II.

A Second Golden Age

The Little Golden Books emerged at the end of World War II and concretely gained popularity during a postwar boom in the United States by utilizing methods that parallel significant publishing tactics from the Golden Age of Children's Literature. These include advancements in printing techniques, a revival of traditional texts, and an assortment of domestic products for the home. Affordable pricing and new printing techniques with illustrations in full color as well as black and white helped both 19th Century toy books and the Little Golden Books prosper in popularity with the general public.

Even though the 1942 ad in *Publishers Weekly* promised that the Little Golden Books would have 30 black and white pages plus 14 full-color pages (44 pages total), the first run of Little Golden Books only contained 42 pages — 14 pages in full-color and 28 pages with two-

⁶ In January 1945, the Association of Children's Book Editors officially formed the Children's Book Council (CBC) which started distributing promotional materials on a year-round basis to libraries, bookstores, and other book buyers for November Book Week, book fairs, and seasonal promotions. The CBC sponsored publishing forums at conventions, collected lists of current children's publications for easy reference, and significantly contributed to the growth of children's literature. Long-standing publishing houses also established or expanded their children's book departments following the war. For example, Bennett Cerf, the head of Random House, decided that the children's book department should develop the types of books that would help his children "expand their knowledge of the world" and hired the now famous Dr. Seuss when he was still known by his given name: Theodor Geisel (Tebbel 478).

color prints. No one is quite sure if the number of pages listed in the Publishers Weekly ad was a misprint, or if production costs caused Western Publishing Company to cut the number of pages before the initial publication run. Either way, within five months Simon and Schuster sold over 1.5 million Little Golden Books and were on their third printing. Despite paper restrictions during World War II, the Little Golden Books strove to fill numerous books orders from across the country. By 1949, mothers were listing Little Golden Books among the suggested materials to take on a long car trip to keep young children occupied (Mackenzie 27). The sheer number of titles printed under the Little Golden Book catalogue (over a thousand) coupled with the extent to which they have been in production (over 60 years) attests to their popularity and impact on American children's literature.

In the same way that improved color printing techniques advanced the Golden Age of Children's Literature, changes and advances in color printing practices also affected the production of picture books during the 20th Century. With these advancements, the Little Golden Books were able to produce a large number of books that contained several full-color illustrations during a single press run. The 1930s in America marked new strides in photo-offset lithography that made "possible large editions of illustrated books at low cost" (Viguers "Golden Age" 438). This new technique in printing meant that publishers were able to produce significantly larger runs of books at a reduced price per book, which in turn guaranteed that picture books would become available to a much wider audience of readers. By the 1940s, manufacturing children's books in large quantities by machine made the picture book a steady product in the United States:

Mass production made possible large editions of elaborately illustrated books at small cost, with selling outlets not only in bookshops but in ten cent and variety stores, drug stores, and even chain grocery stores. Children's books had become a commodity (Viguers "Golden Age" 442).

Much like the profusion of 'yellowbacks' that reached a new market of travelers by being sold in train stations in England, picture books reached a growing demographic of readers by being marketed in shops other than independent bookstores. Drug and chain grocery stores, as well as ten cent and variety stores, provided a space where working and middle class families could easily purchase inexpensive picture books and toy books while buying other household goods.

Like the images produced by Crane, Caldecott, and Greenaway, once the Little Golden Book catalogue proved successful and the early characters became household names, other domestic products emerged that were built on the cultural capital of popular characters. In 1950, Katzenbach & Warren produced Little Golden wallpaper, which featured characters from popular Little Golden Book stories including the Shy Little Kitten, Scuffy the Tugboat, Black Sambo, and the Saggy Baggy Elephant. Costing 90-cents a sheet, the 72" by 25" wallpaper positioned collage-like squares replicating the print on a book's gold spine next to large, colorful images reprinted directly from the illustrations in each book ("For the Home" 38). These same Little Golden characters appeared in children's rooms on plastic draperies in 1951. Manufactured by Shapiro & Son, these 24" wide by 87" long, fade-resistant, washable curtains sported a ruffled valance and cost only \$1.98 ("Whimsical Figures" 28). Also in 1951, Nursery Plastics, Inc. produced a line of laminated cardboard plaque sets that included Noah's Ark and the Saggy Baggy Elephant among other Little Golden characters. These particular laminated wall plaques cost anywhere from \$2 to \$4 for a three or four piece set ("Presents Suggested" 51).

The Little Golden Book characters also reached seamstresses and quilters when multi-design fabrics entered the market. Even though little is officially known about the Little Golden Book fabric, collector Holly Everson dates eleven fabric designs⁷ to the late 1940s or early 1950s in part because of the books represented and also because of the fabric's 36-inch bolt width, as opposed to the 45-inch bolt that developed later (Everson). In the 1980s, new wallpaper emerged featuring some of the same classic characters that were on the 1950s wallpaper. Decorated cups, plates, dishes, and stuffed animals have also recently reemerged from the Little Golden Books catalogue. Through this type of product exploitation, parents can inexpensively decorate their child's room from top to bottom in Little Golden Book characters.

Just as toy books during the Golden Age of Children's Literature provided contrast to the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution in England, the Little Golden Books also employed traditional texts during the 1940s when the United States experienced a time of heightened factory production to meet the demands of World War II. Of the first twelve Little Golden Books published in 1942, two books reprint familiar fairy tales (*The Golden Book of Fairy Tales* and *Bedtime Stories*), three books contain talking animal tales (*The Poky Little Puppy*, *The Little Red Hen*, and *Three Little Kittens*), and four other books gather together nursery rhymes, songs, and prayers (*This Little Piggy*, *Mother Goose*, *Nursery Songs*, and *Prayers for Children*)⁸ all of which reflect Caldecott's subject matter. Eight of these Little Golden Books are a gathering of stories and rhymes plucked from the public domain, which means that Simon and Schuster, the

⁷ For more information about the Little Golden Book fabrics see Appendix B.

⁸ Of the first twelve Little Golden Books published, only three do not specifically fit the categories of fairy tale, folklore, or nursery rhymes. As its name implies, *The Alphabet From A to Z* is an alphabet book in which the narrator shows the reader what little Jimmy sees around his house. In *Baby's Book*, the narrator asks the reader if she or he has seen little Tommy before looking for him while pointing out everything that Tommy owns or likes. Finally, in *The Animals of Farmer Jones*, Farmer Jones feed his farm animals later than usual so the animals complain by meowing, mooing, or gobbling among other farm animal noises.

publishing house, kept production costs down by not having to pay any single person for the rights to use these traditional texts. Using pre-established texts that are familiar to the general public also allows each illustrator to bring new interest to a familiar piece of children's culture because the same story can be told in different ways. Only *The Poky Little Puppy* is an original story that lists an author on the title page⁹ and is not derived from a previously published source or a commonly known tale.

Whether purposefully or inadvertently, Simon and Schuster also created an underlying sense of security in these first Little Golden Books by publishing stories that were already familiar to the general public in the United States during a time of national vulnerability. *Fairy Tales* and *Bedtime Stories* contain well-known stories such as "Jack and the Bean Stalk," "Cinderella," "The Three Little Pigs," and "Chicken Little." *Mother Goose*, *Nursery Songs*, *Prayers for Children*, and *This Little Piggy* gather together nursery rhymes, children's songs, prayers, and counting rhymes. *Mother Goose* is a collection of familiar rhymes like "There Was an Old Woman," and *This Little Piggy* is a collection of counting poems like "Thirty Days Hath September." *Nursery Songs* contain musical scores for each song so that the entire family can sing along to a musical accompaniment. In the only overtly Christian selection of the first twelve books printed, *Prayers for Children* teaches traditional Christian values through chants and prayers such as the "Doxology" and "Twenty-Third Psalm."

Even though their actual origins are unclear, an earlier version of *The Little Red Hen* was retold and illustrated by Florence White Williams in 1918, and *The Three Little Kittens* stems from Eliza Folen's *New Nursery Songs for All Good Children* published in New England in 1843, although some argue that the rhyme is even older. These books are a readily available

⁹ *The Alphabet from A to Z* also lists an author on the title page, but *The Animals of Farmer Jones* and *Baby's Book* only list the illustrators.

accumulation of the oral rhymes, songs, and tales that mark children's culture both in and previous to the 1940s. The revived interest in these texts from the public domain serves to reinforce the Little Golden Books' ability to create a space of cultural commonality for American readers, which is something that Crane, Caldecott, and Greenaway also did for their English audience.

Like their Golden Age counterparts, the first little Golden Books in 1942 also include illustrations from a cadre of acclaimed illustrators. The front flap of the dust jacket on these books drew attention to the outstanding artwork that included bright and lively illustrations designed to fill in the gaps between word and actual object¹⁰ for young readers. Gustaf Tenggren joined the Little Golden Books family and illustrated *The Poky Little Puppy* and *Bedtime Stories* after a strong art career in Sweden and drawing for Walt Disney Studios¹¹, Rudolf Freund, who illustrated *The Animals of Farmer Jones* and *The Little Red Hen*, also worked with the American Museum of Natural History during his career and later became "a leader in natural history illustrations" (Bader 282). Including *Nursery Songs*, Corinne Malvern illustrated seventeen Little Golden Books and won the Julia Ellsworth Ford Foundation's children's literature prize in 1943 for her work in *Valiant Minstrel: The Story of Sir Harry Lauder* with Messner Publishing.

In the years that followed, other well-respected children's book illustrators¹² joined the Little Golden Books family including Feodor Rojankovsky, who illustrated such favorites as *The*

¹⁰ As Janet Evans points out in her introduction to *What's in the Picture?*, illustrations "enabl[e] children to gain meaning from books" and "provide a starting point from which the reader gets meaning and to which the reader gives meaning" (J. Evans xv).

¹¹ His work with Disney can be seen throughout the animated movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and in the background of the movie *Pinocchio*.

¹² Maybe because a biographical and critical examination of the sheer number of people who have illustrated for the Little Golden Books could fill multiple volumes, only one critic (Barbara Bader in *American Picture Books*) and two

Three Bears (1948) and Gaston and Josephine (1949) after working for the Pere Castor line of children's books in France; Eloise Wilkin, who illustrated My Little Golden Book about God (1956), reillustrated Prayers for Children (1952) and designed Baby Dear dolls; Garth Williams, who illustrated the popular Little House on the Prairie series, Stuart Little, Charlotte's Web, and The Cricket in Times Square before working for Little Golden Books; and Richard Scarry whose bear cub in the Little Golden Book titled Smokey the Bear (1955) eventually became the icon for national outdoor fire safety.

Unlike books without pictures where “every action described is of equal significance as part of the whole,” each illustration in picture books forces the reader to pause and “pay special attention to some particular moment out of the whole action” (Nodelman 255). Due to this inherent quality and the desire to produce high quality but affordable picture books, the editors of the Little Golden Books strove to employ top-notch illustrators to provide those visual stopping points.

If the second golden age of children's literature began with the Little Golden Books catalogue in 1942, then the book that arguably marks the exact starting point is the same book that heralded the publication of the Little Golden Books: Janette Seabring Lowrey's *The Poky Little Puppy* with illustrations by Gustaf Tenggren. On October 1, 1942, the image of a brown and white Poky Little Puppy crawling under a red fence embellishes the first advertisement in *Publishers Weekly* announcing the arrival of the first twelve Little Golden Books. According to Leonard Marcus, the advertisement “boldly declar[ed] that the high quality of the books would in every respect—art, text, printing, paper—set them worlds apart from all the other books” (50).

collectors (Rebecca Greason in *Tomart's Price Guide to Golden Book Collectibles* and Steve Santi on his web site under “Illustrators & Authors”) have taken on the task of highlighting the smallest handful of illustrators and their accomplishments with the Little Golden Books.

Here, the rhetoric of the print advertisement publicizes the same principles that girded the first Golden Age of Children's Literature. Over the last 60 years, *The Poky Little Puppy* has remained the signature book for the Little Golden Books and is a key figure in their anniversary celebrations. For reasons that are not necessarily tangible, people in the United States have a soft spot for the Poky Little Puppy. In 2000, *The Poky Little Puppy* was ranked the number one selling hardback book on the Publishers Weekly "All-Time Best-Selling Children's Books" list ("All-Time"). Today, since the Little Golden Books are steeped in nostalgia and have reached multiple generations of readers, *The Poky Little Puppy* is the book most often remembered by the people with whom I discussed this project.

The Poky Little Puppy is a well-loved trickster figure in training, who cleverly gobbles up dessert after all his brothers and sisters have been sent to bed without any dessert as a punishment for digging a hole under the fence. Tenggren's color illustrations of the puppies with their floppy ears and button noses are colorful, round, and inviting. The shading of the black and white illustrations shows depth and precision. Lowrey's story consists of repeated words and phrases that add a lyrical quality to the text. Even the physical properties of the book itself are inviting to the reader. In *Words About Pictures*, Perry Nodelman posits that in picture books that are taller than they are wide "there is less opportunity for depicting setting and, as a result, greater concentration on and closer empathy with the characters depicted" (46). Since the regular Little Golden Book's proportions are barely taller than wide (21 x 18 cm), books like *The Poky Little Puppy* invite the reader to both enjoy the little puppy's curiously slow nature and empathize with his plight when he eventually does not get any dessert. In combination with the size of the regular Little Golden Books, the textured, non-glossy paper on which the books are

printed “seems to invite our touch and in that way supports an atmosphere of involvement and intimacy” (Nodelman 48).

Like all picture books, *The Poky Little Puppy* forces the reader to decode the images and the text separately on each page before combining each deciphered message into an overall meaning on the page itself and in relationship to the entire story. As explained by Nodelman, “since words and pictures give us different insights into the same events [in a picture book], we move from one to the other in terms of how the text forces us to go back and reinterpret the pictures and how the reinterpreted picture then forces us to go back and reinterpret the text again” (243). For example, the first page 13 of *The Poky Little Puppy* features two pictures, one above the other, separated by a single sentence of text. Whether or not the reader enters the story by reading the text first or examining the illustrations first is not particularly important; although, the American convention of reading from left to right and top to bottom might cause the reader to start with the first picture of a puppy crawling under a red picket fence since it is located at the very top of the first page. Rather, the reader’s interpretation of the pictures is colored by her or his interpretation of the opening sentence and vice versa in a continuous cycle until a full semblance of understanding is reached. While one single puppy is shown crawling under a fence at the top of the page, the picture at the bottom of the page features four other puppies scampering down a swath of green grass that implies a hill. Judging by the images alone, these four puppies could be running away from the single puppy at the top of the page, or they might be running towards something that the reader has yet to learn about because it lies on the next page. As a matter of fact, without the text dividing the pictures, the reader could misconstrue the

¹³ Like most picture books, *The Poky Little Puppy* does not have numbers at the bottom of each page. To facilitate with the analysis of this book, I mark “page one” as the first page of the actual story following the title page and the copyright page. The rest of the page numbering follows sequentially.

first image to mean that the single puppy is stuck under the fence. The intent of the puppies is clarified when coupled with the text since the sentence reveals, “five little puppies dug a hole under the fence and went for a walk in the wide, wide world” (Lowrey). Thus the reader learns that all “five little puppies” belong together, and that all five are culpable for digging “a hole under the fence” which is presumably against the rules.

Since the plot of *The Poky Little Puppy* centers around a single white puppy with brown spots plus his four variously colored puppy siblings, the turn of each page causes the reader to track the location of all five puppies before centering on the pokiest of the puppies. The reader is never given an explanation through either words or pictures as to what the Poky Little Puppy is doing that is causing him to be slower than the others. Visually, he is not smaller than any of the other puppies which might indicate that he is the runt of the litter and therefore unable to keep up as easily. Nor is the Poky Little Puppy distracted by any of the small creatures that live on the hill beyond the fence.

Even though the front cover of the book shows him crouched down and examining a small green lizard, inside the book the Poky Little Puppy is not examining any of the small creatures on the hill. Instead, in one color illustration, he has his head cocked to the side with one ear jauntily in the air so that he can better hear the sound of chocolate custard being spooned into all of their bowls. In another black and white illustration, the Poky Little Puppy’s nose quivers in the air when he detects the smell of rice pudding. After each of these moments, the puppies run home “as fast as they could go” but the Poky Little Puppy comes home later “after everyone [is] sound asleep” (Lowrey). Where the Poky Little Puppy is or even what he is doing while the other four puppies eat dinner is never indicated in the story through either words or pictures. He is simply late, and the reader is left to either fill in the gaps with information that is not readily

available or ignore the gaps completely. Maybe the first time the Poky Little Puppy returns home later than the other puppies, he learns that showing up late equals eating everyone's dessert. The reader could easily fill in the gaps by assuming that the Poky Little Puppy purposefully tricks the other puppies into digging a second hole under the fence so that he can again return to the scene of the crime later than the others and thus gobble up a second night's worth of dessert. Or, maybe he enjoys getting his puppy siblings into trouble with their mother. But neither the text nor the images indicate any forethought or malice on the Poky Little Puppy's part.

Not only is his body, like his siblings' bodies, rounded which "we associate with softness and yielding," but his face and body are also predominately white which tends to represent "goodness" (Nodelman 72, 111). Curves, in contrast to angles, are non-threatening, so the Poky Little Puppy's round eyes, pudgy body, and curlicue tail make his actions throughout the book seem pure and altruistically motivated. Even though he shows the spark of a trickster figure, the Poky Little Puppy is still ultimately a good little puppy who slips up but learns not to dig holes under fences or separate from his siblings.

Similar to a fairy tale where the hero must go through a series of tasks that parallel each other, a repetitive pattern flows through the text of *The Poky Little Puppy* moving the action of the story forward. In this way, the book builds an underlying feeling of safety through repetition. On three separate occasions, all of the puppies escape under the fence and run to the top of a hill before the reader and four of the puppies notice "one little puppy wasn't there" (Lowrey). At this point, the four puppies "roly-poly, pell-mell, [and] tumble-bumble" back down the hill only to discover that the Poky Little Puppy smells, hears, and then sees a reminder that dessert is being served which causes the four puppies to run home "as fast as they could go" (Lowrey). They, of course, are punished for digging a hole under the fence by being sent to bed without any dessert

because “their mother was greatly displeased,” and the Poky Little Puppy arriving late eats everyone’s leftover dessert before “crawl[ing] into bed as happy as a lark” (Lowrey). Through the simple repetition of words and phrases, Lowrey sets up a complex pattern that both compels the reader to move forward through the text to see if the pattern of events holds true, and at the same time allows the reader to leisurely linger over the pictures since what will happen on the next page is not going to be complete surprise — either the pattern will continue, or it will be broken.

In addition, each page of *The Poky Little Puppy* is self-contained which provides the reader with another opportunity to stop and examine the pictures. Rather than compelling the reader to move forward through the plot by breaking up a sentence across multiple pages, each sentence with its neat little period at the end indicates the reader should “stop right here.” In *The Poky Little Puppy* the picture on the page acts as a confirmation of what the reader already knows from having read the text since “the moments depicted by the pictures come exactly at the place in the sequence of events that they occur in their physical interruption of the [entire] text” (Nodelman 259).

After the Poky Little Puppy disappears and the other puppies start looking for him, both the sentences and the pictures depict the same events. A picture of a “big black spider” is positioned under two sentences about what the puppies could see “going down the hill,” and a picture of a “brown hop-toad” is shown above two sentences about what they could see “coming up this side” (Lowrey). On these two example pages, the reader experiences a small piece of the overall repetitive pattern, which will be replayed a total of three times with different sets of creatures. This compels the reader to move forward to find the Poky Little Puppy and at the

same time remain on the page to examine the pictures bringing the reader's perspective to the same level as the puppies by focusing solely on a close-up of the spider and the toad.

Cleverly, the combination of text and the images inside the book do not reveal which puppy is the pokiest of the puppies until several pages into the story, even though the Poky Little Puppy is the only puppy on the front cover. On the second page, one sentences lead the reader with the five puppies under the fence and far away from home: "Through the meadow they [the five puppies] went, down the road, over the bridge, across the green grass, and up the hill, one right after the other" (Lowrey). To emphasize the movement of the puppies and the great distance covered, a single black and white illustration that moves across the gutter of the two-page spread shows five puppies sprinting across a wooden bridge in a grassy field. The Poky Little Puppy might be the last puppy in line to cross the bridge, but he is not significantly trailing behind the other puppies. At this point, he is still just a single puppy in a crowd. Even the phrase "poky little puppy" is not used in the story until the fifth page when the other four puppies suddenly realize that one puppy is missing: "'Now where in the world is that poky little puppy?' they wondered. For he certainly wasn't on top of the hill" (Lowrey). As the reader moves back and forth between the color illustration and the text, she or he will notice that only four puppies stand on top of the hill, all of whom look like they are searching for the missing puppy. Now that a phrase signaling the title of the book has been used in the text, concern over the missing puppy coupled with anticipation in potentially meeting the Poky Little Puppy grows and continues to heighten when the reader turns the page only to discover two more pictures — one of a fuzzy caterpillar and one of a green lizard — but no puppy. One more turn of the page, though, reveals an illustration of the Poky Little Puppy by himself at the bottom of a hill.

In the first eight pages of *The Poky Little Puppy*, the illustrations pull the reader through the book until the pokiest of the puppies is found for the first time. Here not only does the picture on page eight force the reader to pause and examine the missing puppy, but the picture also allows the reader to build an identification with the lost puppy.

Up until this point in the story, the main movement in each of the illustrations is towards the right side of the book, which encourages the reader to turn the page because “action usually moves from left to right in picture books” (Nodelman 163). Four puppies scamper across a swath of green towards the right, five puppies sprint across a bridge that opens up to the right, two of the four puppies on the hilltop face right on the right side of a two-page spread, and even following the line of the fuzzy caterpillar’s body and the green lizard’s tail moves the reader’s eyes towards the right side of the page. Once the Poky Little Puppy is found, though, the movement stops. On the right hand side of the page, four puppies look down over the hill towards the left, which draws the reader’s attention back to the Poky Little Puppy who is also facing left while sniffing around in the grass. By placing the Poky Little Puppy alone on the left side of the two-page spread, the reader is also given his or her first opportunity to identify with the main character in this picture book. According to Nodelman, “because we look first at the left foreground, we tend to place ourselves in that position and to identify with the objects or figures located there” (Nodelman 135). Nodelman is applying the implications of Mercedes Gaffron’s “glance curve” theory, which focuses on paintings,¹⁴ to the way Americans take in and respond to the art in picture books. The reasoning behind this stipulation is twofold if the reader follows the conventional pattern of reading left to right: one, the left foreground is visually the closest point on the page to the reader, and two, since the left side of the page is the first side that the

¹⁴ For more about the glance curve, see Gaffron’s article titled “Right and Left in Pictures” in volume 13 of *Art Quarterly* (1950).

reader will notice, picture book illustrators tend to place the most important character on that side. By waiting until page eight to foreground the Poky Little Puppy, the reader's satisfaction in identifying the main character, or even identifying with the main character, is delayed.

The delayed identification of the Poky Little Puppy coupled with the flattening effect that nostalgia has on a past event might explain why today's average adult, who read *The Poky Little Puppy* as a child, does not remember the melancholy ending of the story. If brought up in conversation, remembrances of *The Poky Little Puppy* often include some form of the sound "aww" to indicate a sweetness and a clarifying question about how "that's the one where the cute puppy eats dessert, right?" Since nostalgia tends to change a person's perception of past events by pushing aside bad memories and heightening good memories, the adult reader who remembers the Poky Little Puppy usually forgets that the pokiest of the puppies is punished in the end when his mother catches him. Remarkably, the reader never sees the mother, which gives her the same omniscient qualities as Santa Claus the giver and remover of gifts. The very act throughout the story that guaranteed the Poky Little Puppy would have an entire tub of dessert all for himself — his inability or maybe even choice to not keep pace with his siblings — is what keeps him from enjoying that final strawberry shortcake dessert.

The story ends with a black and white illustration of the Poky Little Puppy staring up at a sign that reads "No desserts ever unless puppies never dig holes under this fence again!" (Lowrey). Since the Poky Little Puppy is seen from behind in this picture, the warning on the sign is directed at the reader just as much as it is directed at the puppy, since the reader is essentially reading over the puppy's shoulder. Neither the text nor the illustration leaves the reader with any indication that the Poky Little Puppy learns his lesson so that he can earn more dessert. Moreover, the last frontal image of the Poky Little Puppy that the reader sees is on the

second to last page. Here a very sad-looking puppy is lying under a blanket with his paws folded under his chin because he “felt very bad for himself” (Lowrey). Thus the reader is immediately left with the lingering impression of a depressed puppy that highly contradicts with the cheerfully nostalgic memories people have of a puppy eating chocolate custard in the middle of the picture book or a puppy with a curlicue tail examining a green lizard on the cover.

As recently as the beginning of 2008, the comic strip “Luann” examined the appeal of the Poky Little Puppy through a five-day storyline. In the first strip, Luann, the 16-year-old main character, picks *The Poky Little Puppy* to read to a group of kids during the library’s story hour because it is, in her words, “more classic” than *Tom Sawyer*, *Moby Dick*, or *Wuthering Heights* (G. Evans 31 Dec). Luann’s friend, Gunther, a nerd who has the highest IQ in their high school, admits that he has never heard of *The Poky Little Puppy* and was “more into” Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* (G. Evans 1 Jan). After reading *The Poky Little Puppy* on his own, Gunther declares that the book is “way too complicated for kids” because “there’s so much going on,” even though Luann deems it a “sweet little story for kids about some curious puppies” (G. Evans 2 Jan). During story hour when Gunther questions the plausibility of the warning sign at the end of the book because “dogs can’t read,” a little girl sitting next to him tells him that he is “too old to understand” (G. Evans 3 Jan). Perhaps the little girl is right in that an adult, even a 16-year-old adult, is “too old to understand,” because the magic of *The Poky Little Puppy* probably occurs when the book is read as a child. Then nostalgia carries the appeal of the book into adulthood. More importantly, though, Luann and Gunther’s exchange throughout the storyline touches upon how *The Poky Little Puppy* is both complicated and simple in its plot and illustrations, which is why it remains a vital part of American children’s culture and should be the touchstone for a second golden age of children’s literature.

Although *The Poky Little Puppy* did not earn a Caldecott Medal for Tenggren's illustrations, the above close reading and the "Luann" comic strip shows why the story and illustrations continue to thrive in today's market. Not only are Tenggren's illustrations distinctive, but Americans also have a soft spot for loveable trickster figures like Huck Finn, Bart Simpson, and the Poky Little Puppy. By the end of World War II, the middlebrow concept of bringing literature, or more specifically in this case high quality picture books, to the general public that started with publisher's like Edmund Evans was fully in place. *The Poky Little Puppy* should not be summarily dismissed because of its mass production and continued popularity. Rather, by weighing its popularity and the time during which it was published against the standards of a "golden age" established in the late 19th Century of children's literature, we see that *The Poky Little Puppy* indicates the beginning of a second golden age.

What the editors of the Little Golden Books could not have anticipated when they first published *The Poky Little Puppy* was the staying power of this particular story — albeit a version that in people's memories glosses over the puppy's punishment— and of the other eleven books¹⁵ in general. Nor could the creators of the Little Golden Books catalogue have foreseen the large impact that the Little Golden Books would have had on both the general public and children's literature. Now, over 60 years later, historians and critics of children's literature can look back on the 1940s in the United States, chart the continuation of the Little Golden Books through the nostalgia-infused popularity of *The Poky Little Puppy*, and retrospectively define the beginning of a second golden age in children's literature that takes into account both the popularity of certain Little Golden Books and the standards from the Golden Age of Children's

¹⁵ In 1992, the Little Golden Books published a commemorative box set of the first twelve Little Golden Books published in 1942 in order to celebrate their 50th anniversary. While the books in the box set look more like today's Little Golden Book than the 1942 version with a dust jacket and thicker paper, the stories and illustrations inside each facsimile remains true to form.

Literature that they meet. Drawing from the advancements of the first Golden Age of Children's Literature, the Little Golden Books certainly lead the way into a second golden flourish of activity that revolutionized 20th Century children's literature.

CHAPTER 4 IMAGES OF INNOCENCE: CHILDREN IN THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

In *The Human Face*, John Brophy argues that “not all children are beautiful, but almost all are attractive because of their youth and because their promise has not yet had the opportunity to disappoint” (82). Of course, the attractiveness of the child is not only determined by her or his “youth” or “promise,” but also by the child’s actual physical characteristics and how they reflect societal expectations. Brophy also points out that we almost universally assume that “certain configurations of the face, certain shapings and proportions of the features, symbolize definite traits of character” whether the face is on a live person or in a realistic illustration (195). Purposefully or not, the majority of Little Golden Books feature children whose physical “configurations” document America’s continuing idealization of innocence in children’s picture books. By coupling the marginalization of ethnically diverse children with the depiction of white children in stable families, the Little Golden Books help maintain the 1940s and 1950s version of the patriarchal, nuclear family. At the same time, the Little Golden Books draws on the purchaser’s nostalgia for a childhood shaded in an idyllic, harmonious American past. In contrast to Little Golden Books with nonhuman characters like *Tootle* (1945) whose story is “arguably about the subversive pleasures of resisting pressures to conform,” the child in the Little Golden Books conforms to the larger expectations of American society with little resistance (Mickenberg 7). Unlike Dr. Seuss or Maurice Sendak, whose illustrations of children often defied convention and were sometimes even thought of as ugly when they were first published, the illustrators for the Little Golden Books did nothing new that might work against the status quo of the symbolic innocent child as already established in children’s picture books.

The Romantic Child and the Knowing Child

In *Picture of Innocence* (1998), Anne Higonnet explores the image of the child as innocent by examining photographs and paintings throughout Western history. She delineates the differences between the “Romantic” or innocent child and its opposite, the “Knowing” child. After examining numerous images of the child, Higonnet concludes that the Romantic image “enable[s] us to forget many aspects of adult society” because the child remains innocent, sexually pure, and healthily chubby, while the Knowing image contains an element of heightened sexuality and knowledge about the misfortunes of the greater (adult) world in which the child lives (23). “The Romantic child makes a good show of having no class, no gender, and no thoughts—of being socially, sexually, and psychically innocent” (Higonnet 23-4). In paintings and illustrations, a Romantic or innocent child does not maintain eye contact with the viewer; rather, the child peers at a spot off in the distance that is to the right or left of the edge of the painting or illustration. Over the years, the Romantic child image reveals its underlying archetype of innocence in paintings such as the aptly titled¹ *The Age of Innocence* (1788) by Sir Joshua Reynolds or the children’s book illustrations of Kate Greenaway, who during the Victorian Golden Age of picture books produced *Under the Window* (1879) among other titles, and Bessie Pease Gutmann, whose career started by illustrating Robert Louis Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1905) and continued through the 1940s. Today we see the underlying archetype of the innocent child in the work of Anne Geddes who photographs babies and young children primarily sleeping or dressed up as flowers and small, cuddly animals.

¹ Even though Sir Joshua Reynolds’s character study or “fancy picture” is widely known as *The Age of Innocence*, the Tate National Gallery Online states that the painting did not receive this name until 1794, six years after it was first painted. Previously, the Tate contends, the painting was simply titled “A Little Girl” or “An Infant Girl” (Postle).

In contrast, the Knowing child can be seen in paintings like John Everett Millais's *Cherry Ripe*² (1879) in which a young girl stares directly at the viewer while tilting her head slightly downward in a manner that looks more coy than demure. Even though she is dressed in an enveloping white gown with girly pink highlights (hat ribbon, waist sash, and shoes), she wears black lace gloves that form a distinct v-shape in her lap and draw attention to the potential erogenous zone hidden under the folds of her dress. The characteristics of the Knowing child, though, are most apparent in photographs of actual children where their knowledge of the adult world cannot be masked or created by an illustrator's brush. In contrast to the innocent child, the Knowing child shows characteristics that range from a skinniness that implies constant hunger to a Lolita-like way of having sexual understanding. Although Higonnet does not specifically examine the Little Golden Books in *Pictures of Innocence*, the images of children the Little Golden Books clearly resonate with the characteristics she identifies to define the Romantic child such as the innocence, guilelessness, and unaffectedness that can be seen in their chubby faces, wide round eyes, and bubbly smiles.

Innocence and Children in the Little Golden Books

Although not striving to be photorealistic, the Little Golden Books do try to capture the uncensored facial expressions of a child. In *A Brief History of the Smile*, Angus Trumble points out that a baby's "impromptu smile" can "reduce healthy adults to a state of incoherent rapture" partially due to the innocence imbued on a child with large eyes and chubby cheeks (123). Moreover, a good representation of a child smiling is "more appealing" because "it is in some

² John Everett Millais's painting *Cherry Ripe* is actually based on another famous painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds titled *Penelope Boothby*. Young Edie Ramage attended a fancy dress ball in 1879 dressed as the girl in *Penelope Boothby*. "Millais was so struck by Edie's appearance that immediately after the ball she was taken to his studio, where he began a portrait for her uncle" ("Cherry Ripe") Unlike the child in *Cherry Ripe*, the child in *Penelope Boothby* has her hands folded demurely in her lap and is gazing towards her left off the edge of the painting which highlights her innocent characteristics.

fundamental way genuine, not staged or ‘put on’” (Trumble 131). Brophy declares that from a baby’s face emerges “vivid expressions, unmixed with shame or self-consciousness, all the elementary emotions of humanity: desire, gratification, anger, indignation, affection, surprise, and amusement” (28). The first twelve Little Golden Books in 1942 published archetypal images of healthy, happy, inquisitive, innocent children that could reassure the average American that World War II hardships would be followed by a time of peaceful stability and that the economic growth experienced during heightened wartime production would continue.

Similar to Disney’s version of Snow White whose wide-eyed innocence is emphasized in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*³ by her pale white skin and pink cheeks, children in the Little Golden Books are guilelessly unaware of potential dangers that surround them. The child in the Little Golden Books is often portrayed in lackadaisical poses that highlight the child’s sense of security whether standing, sitting, or laying down. The face of the child probably plays the most important role in revealing the child’s innocent nature and reassuring the average American. Rather than looking directly at the reader when facing forward, the child in the Little Golden Books redirects his or her gaze to an area that is above, to the right, or to the left of the reader but does not actually contain the reader. For example, even though the child on *This Little Piggy* is grasping at her or his toes, from the reader’s perspective, the child’s eyes look into the space that exists just outside and in front of the book’s cover. By not making eye contact with the reader, the child in the illustration keeps him or herself distant from the reader. Brophy notes that “if a glance is made seriously, and interlocks with the glance of another person, each pair of eyes staring into the other, the meeting cannot be sustained for long without an intense relationship

³ First released in 1937, Disney’s feature-length animated classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was such a huge box office success that the Walt Disney Company re-released the film in 1944 to earn more company revenue. Clearly, the American public was well acquainted with Snow White as both an image of innocence when she is not in a relationship and an image of financial security when she marries Prince Charming.

being set up” since maintaining eye contact for several minutes at a time without glancing away is a “sustained intimacy proper only to lovers” (Brophy 14). McNeill concurs that “we normally don’t gaze straight into people’s eyes when we speak to them” instead “our eyes dance about their faces” in order to not appear rude nor develop a deep intimacy (230). Thus, in the Little Golden Books, by focusing the gaze of the child on a point beyond the edge of the illustration, a barrier is metaphorically established between the reader and the child that turns the reader into an outside observer who can witness, but not participate in, the child’s archetypal innocence throughout the story.

From an archetypal standpoint, the child figure must always remain innocent of adult understanding even though a potential future for the child and the child’s community is graphed onto her or his every thought and action. While the forward growth of the child archetype is often examined and commented upon in the context of Jung’s initial description of the child, the child archetype’s static nature is more often overlooked or unacknowledged by critics and psychologists. In “Abandoning the Child,” James Hillman briefly describes the staticity of the child archetype in conjunction with the archetype’s abandonment in Western culture. “For the child *archetype* does not grow but remains an inhabitant of childhood, a state of being, and the archetypal child personifies a component that is not meant to grow but to remain as it is as child, at the threshold, intact [his emphasis]” (Hillman 30). By remaining “at the threshold [of adulthood], intact,” the archetypal child’s potency is bound up in its ability to personify “a component that is not meant to grow” or change. Thus the child archetype can emerge through static images like those found in the Little Golden Books where the child is in a constant state of age containment because she or he is not depicted growing towards adulthood. In order to maintain the innocence of the child, Little Golden Book illustrations portray two distinct

characteristics regardless of the individual book's author or illustrator: a healthy chubbiness, which was promoted by child care manuals at the time, and a gender neutrality that anchored the universality of the child as an archetype.

First, to show their healthy chubbiness, children in Little Golden Book illustrations carry the same physical characteristics that Higonnet identified in Reynold's painting *The Age of Innocence*: pudgy hands, round cheeks, and large eyes that reflect the child's innocent nature. When analyzing children's faces, Brophy declares that part of the "charm of a baby's face" comes from "its roundness and its comparatively large size [because] all the proportions of the body are different in infancy" (82). Even the toddler who is old enough to speak "has a face compact of plump, soft curves and from these emerge vivid expressions" (Brophy 82). In *Words About Pictures*, Perry Nodelman argues that "rounded and curved" attributes in an illustration are visually associated with a "softness and yielding" that counteracts the harshness of straight lines and sharp edges (Nodelman 72). Accordingly, "our eyes respond to all these sharp points the way our bodies might if we sat on them" while "rounded shapes are accommodating" (Nodelman 73, 127). When these attributes are applied directly to the physical features of a child in an illustration, the vulnerability of the child is visually emphasized.

Barbara Bader also notes in *American Picturebooks: From Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* that in the Little Golden Books "heads are overlarge" in order to emphasize the "essence of an individual" through the "exaggeration of distinctive features" (288). Here again, the "essence" being emphasized is one of innocence, even though Bader does not specifically refer to it as such, since an "overlarge head" draws attention to the child's cheeks and eyes. Like the print advertisements in the 1930s that equated being American with having fair features, more often than not in the Little Golden Books, the physical characteristics of innocence are combined with

light hair, blue eyes, and a reinforcement of middle or working class status that is meant to accentuate the All-American components of the child.

Second, in the Little Golden Books the innocent child is depicted as a gender-neutral child, which emphasizes the child's archetypal qualities. In illustrations of individual babies, gender is usually not ascribed to each baby through the use of clothing color, hair ribbons, or other visual cues. Generally, the story itself provides the only way to determine the biological sex of a baby. For example, the covers of *Baby's Book* (1942), *This Little Piggy* (1942), and *The Alphabet from A to Z* (1942), depict each child with curly blonde hair, chubby cheeks, and blue eyes that gaze off towards the edge of each cover as if the children are lost in their own happiness. The neutral image of the child dissipates, though, once the first page of *The Alphabet from A to Z* and *Baby's Book* is read and the sex of little Tommy and Jimmy, both boys, is revealed. The sex of the child on the front cover of *This Little Piggy* remains ambiguous, though, since "This Little Piggy" is a counting rhyme that does not include sex or gender specifications. Here, the innocence depicted in the physical features of the child in *The Alphabet Book from A to Z* and *Baby's Book*, two of the first twelve books published by the Little Golden Books, remains intact even as "male" supercedes "gender-neutral" as an indicator of the universality of the child.

In Little Golden Book illustrations of toddlers and young children, a clearly male child is often paired with a child who is clearly female to visually form a heterosexual balance⁴ that serves to visually neutralize their sexuality. The pairing of children mirrors the marriage union⁵ of a heterosexual couple, which in turn might dissipate any adult concerns about the children

⁴ Although not discussed here, this type of heterosexual pairing also evokes the promise of two children in a nuclear family.

⁵ According to Stephanie Coontz in *The Way We Never Were*, the number of "out-of-wedlock babies placed for adoption between 1944 and 1955" rose by 80 percent, a statistic which only serves to highlight how images of innocent children in heterosexual pairs could assuage middle-class America's underlying fear of entering into a marriage with an out-of-wedlock child in tow (Coontz 39).

engaging in any activities that thwart their prescribed gender roles. For example, on the cover of *Bedtime Stories* with illustrations by Gustaf Tenggren, a little girl and a little boy wearing cozy pajamas and slippers read stories⁶ such as “Chicken Little” while sitting on a purple love seat before bedtime. A new moon hangs in the night sky outside the window and subtly illuminates the outline of a church’s steeple in the distance. As readers, we assume that these two children are brother and sister and will be off to bed after reading these bedtime stories. In this illustration, these two children represent a safe heteronormativity that is further reinforced by a blurry image on the girl’s pajamas that looks like a bride or a princess in a white dress standing next to a male figure. Like a fairy tale heroine who sleeps through puberty and wakes up in the arms of her future husband, visually pairing children in a heterosexual coupling⁷ immediately places each child in a safe marriage-like situation that keeps the innocent “Romantic” child from turning into a “Knowing” child.

The clearest sign of a child’s inherent innocence, though, is the incorporation of healthy chubbiness and gender neutrality into compositions with overly sweet, cherubic children.⁸ On the

⁶ Near the children’s feet leans a Little Red Riding Hood doll who appears to be listening to a story that might even be about herself since the story of Little Red Riding Hood is in this collection of *Bedtime Stories*.

⁷ In 1863 when Tom Thumb (Charles Sherwood Stratton) married Lavinia Warren, they sparked the performance of numerous fake weddings between young children, which became a common spectacle throughout the United States. Referred to as Tom Thumb Weddings, fake weddings that heterosexually couple together children are still being performed as fundraisers and spectacles. In a short article titled “Tiny People Participate in Tom Thumb Weddings,” Becky Billingsley writes that “there is photographic evidence of a local Tom Thumb wedding as early as 1931” in Conway, South Carolina (1).

⁸ While a baby’s inherent helplessness underscores the image of the innocent child, innocence still clings to the elementary school children scattered among the illustrations of babies and toddlers in the Little Golden Books. Here, education does not equal access to information that might divest the innocent child of her or his angelic demeanor. Several Little Golden Books, such as *Fun with Decals* or Helen Gaspard’s *Doctor Dan*, *The Bandage Man*, focus primarily on developing gender roles by illustrating children in mock grown-up, domestic situations. These early Little Golden Books socialize children by teaching them some patterns to follow and ways to behave — or not to behave — as an adult. More importantly, these early texts provide a provocative space in which children can comfortably explore the rhetoric of American individualism through potential careers that will more than likely be different than the careers currently held by their parents, since the social order had moved past apprenticeships in the United States. As a component of what Reisman terms an inner-driven society, these picture books “teach the child

cover of one of the first twelve Little Golden Books published in 1942, *Prayers for Children* with illustrations by Rachel Taft Dixon, a little boy and girl both with pink cheeks and blonde, curly hair kneel together as if praying while they read from a blue book⁹ with gold edging titled, *Prayer Book*. A white glow and a border of flowers, vines, and friendly birds surround the two children on the front cover. Further reinforcing the innocence of these two children, a rabbit, a lamb, and two angels peer at the children from the border design as if they are listening to the prayers; the young girl even wears a garland of flowers in her hair. Inside the book, each full-color page showcases more blonde children with pink cheeks collecting flowers, playing games, praying, singing, walking to church, and being protected by angels with similar blonde features. Other pages in black and white have a slightly medieval feel to them since their borders are primarily decorated with angels, vines, and flowers. With both the children and the angels, the blue of their irises takes over their eyes, which are as round as marbles, leaving only the slightest touch of white on the very edge of each eye. In these illustrations, the lack of white in these

something about the variety of adult roles he [or she] may enter upon and to permit him [or her] to ‘try on’ these roles in fantasy” (Reisman 114).

⁹ The children on the front cover of *Prayers for Children* are reading a collection of poems and songs that focus on Christianity and American nationalism, assuming that blue book the children are reading contains the same material as *Prayers for Children*, which is also a blue book with a golden spine. Ranging from the rarely sung fourth verse of Reverend Samuel Francis Smith’s “America,” the de facto national anthem of the United States for most of the 19th Century, and Leah Gale’s “Till the Victory is Ours” to “The Twenty-third Psalm” and the Doxology, collectively these songs and poems thank and praise the Christian image of God while asking Him for guidance, strength, and security in America. For example, in Gale’s poem the God “who watches over all” is called upon to be a “shield” and a “guide” for “our heroes” who include sailors, soldiers, and pilots during the struggles of World War II (*Prayers* 36-7). Tying the various poems and songs together are color illustrations of blonde children with rosy cheeks and angels with similar features that illuminate the verses by Emerson.

Last verses of songs seem to be very popular. The fourth and last verse of “America” or “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” goes as follows: Our fathers’ God, to Thee,/ Author of liberty,/ To Thee we sing./ Long may our land be bright/ With freedom’s holy light;/ Protect us by Thy might,/ Great God, our King. In 1989, a fifth verse was added to “America” in celebration of George Washington’s centennial inauguration as President of the United States. Interestingly enough, the text of the Doxology was originally the final stanza of Thomas Ken’s hymn “Glory to Thee, My God, This Night” written in approximately 1674.

Gale’s “Till the Victory is Ours” is not included later editions of *Prayers for Children* printed after the end of World War II.

children's eyes removes the reader's ability to interpret what the children are actually thinking. The visual messages the children might be trying to send are lost. As discussed by McNeill, the eyes "send a constant stream of messages," but "without a backdrop like the white" the signals elude the reader (24). Moreover, the children and the angels physically look exactly the same from the tops of their curly blond hair to the tips of their pudgy toes, except that the angels have white, feathery wings.

The very first page of *Prayers for Children* reproduces Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Father, We Thank Thee"¹⁰ in its entirety before giving way to two full-color illustrations on the second and third pages. The relative placement of two lines from Emerson's poem centered underneath the pictures on each full-color page turns the lines of the poem into titles for the illustrations. For example, an illustration of two tow-headed children praying before sitting down at a small table to eat are captioned with the lines "For health and food, for love and friends, / Father, we thank Thee" (*Prayers for Children* 6 1942). In this illustration, we see the heterosexual coupling of a boy and girl in a mock-grownup domestic situation. Moreover, the white border around each color illustration provides a layer of detachment, as if the reader is viewing this happy scene from a distance. As noted by Nodelman, "white space around a picture can act as a frame" that "demands detachment" from the activities taking place in the framed illustration (Nodelman 53). Even though *Prayers for Children* is heavily text-based due to the number of poems and songs in its collection, the illustrations of children portraying moments of thankfulness provides a balance to the text that defines the book as a picture book and not a hymnal or a collection of poetry. These children in *Prayers for Children* represent the idealized

¹⁰ Even though some controversy surrounds whether or not Emerson originally wrote this poem titled "Father, We Thank Thee," this poem should not be confused with Rebecca J. Weston's same-titled hymn written in 1885.

innocence associated with the child in Little Golden Books by falling just short of capturing the expressions of real middle and working class children in the United States.

Today's reader might scoff at the overbearing guilelessness of the children in *Prayers for Children* and write it off as a convention of illustrating or of the Little Golden Books in the early 1940s, but even a 1943 *New York Times* review of the first twelve Little Golden Books described the pictures of the children in *Prayers for Children* as "over-sweet" ("Golden Library" BR25). Yet, if Dixon's illustrations in *Prayers for Children* were "over-sweet" in 1943, then the 1952 reprint edition with illustrations by Eloise Wilkin might have sent that same book reviewer into sugar shock, since Wilkin's trademark is to overemphasize the qualities of the innocent or Romantic child. Not only did Wilkin illustrate over 50 Little Golden Books with this style of child between 1943 and 1961, she also freelanced other children's book illustrations and created a line of Baby Dear dolls for Vogue, a doll manufacturer. In *Eloise Wilkin Stories*, Eloise Wilkin's daughter, Deborah Wilkin Springett, writes that her mother's dolls sold in the millions. In 1960 Nikita Khrushchev "came to New York City to deliver his famous shoe-thumping speech at the United Nations. When he and his Russian delegation saw Eloise's doll in the window of FAO Schwarz, they purchased thirteen Baby Dears to take back to Russia" (xi). Over the years, Wilkin's illustrations have become a cornerstone of the Little Golden Books catalogue with her books going through numerous printings.

On the 1952 cover of *Prayers for Children*, a young boy and girl are still kneeling in prayer, but rather than show the entire body of each child as on Dixon's cover, this illustration focuses on each child's pale, freckled face. The boy, in a plaid suit and tie, bows his head, closes his eyes, and folds his hands. His mouth is slightly open which reveals a gap from where his front two teeth have yet to grow in. This boy is the image of the ideal child that every

churchgoing parent wants or wishes their child to be since he looks clean, respectful, attentive, and serene rather than uncomfortable, anxious, and prone to outbursts. This boy clearly understands what is expected of him and complies — with both God and his parents. Next to him, a little girl, who we are to assume is his younger sister even as she provides a heterosexual balance, also has her hands touching in prayer. Both children’s mouths naturally turn upward on the corners, which give them a slight smile and causes the reader to imbue them with positive qualities. As observed by McNeill, “people with naturally upturned mouths” are often given qualities of “humor, kindness, and honesty” based on appearance alone (169).

Yet Wilkin’s depiction of innocence in children is also strangely off-putting or even uncanny when the child is directly facing the reader. Unlike the boy on the cover of *Prayers for Children*, the expression on the little girl’s face sends mixed signals when combined with her chubby features. She stares directly off the cover but still does not meet the reader’s gaze, which keeps the reader from establishing a relationship with the child. Since her eyebrows are raised, causing a slight wrinkle in her forehead, and her bottom lip disappears into her top lip, as if she is quietly chewing on her bottom lip, the little girl looks quite worried. Her large blue eyes might be meant to convey kindness and warmth,¹¹ but instead her eyes look vacant as if she has been fed a dose of children’s Nyquil to keep her quiet. The combination of her eyes and eyebrows reveal that she is more concerned or afraid than curious about the church services taking place around her, since fear causes the face to “open” as the “eyes widen, and the eyebrows lift and move towards each other” (McNeill 182). Her chubby fingers, round eyes, and button nose might physically define her as an innocent child, but the little girl’s expression betrays a level of fear and concern. What she is concerned about is hard to determine, especially since she is not

¹¹ In *The Face*, Daniel McNeill points out that “some features [like eyes] convey warmth” and that “large, Bambi-like eyes seem kinder” (169).

specifically depicted inside Wilkin's *Prayers for Children*, but her facial expressions could evoke similar feelings in whomever views the cover.

Probably the most well known book illustrated by Wilkin and the book most indicative of Wilkin's portrayal of the innocent child is *My Little Golden Book About God* by Jane Werner Watson. First published in 1956 and still reprinted in various Little Golden Book formats today, *My Little Golden Book About God* attempts to explain the omnipotence of God at a child's level by mixing simple sentences such as "God is Great," "God is Good," and "God is Love" with longer sentences detailing God's movement in nature and eternal qualities. For example, according to the text the mountain peaks "were crumbling away with age before the first men lived on earth" yet "when they [the mountains] were raised up sharp and new/ God was there, too" (Watson). Although this book never specifically mentions Jesus Christ or any other religious figures, it clearly focuses on a Judeo-Christian image of God just like the other religion-based books in the Little Golden Books catalogue.¹²

On the cover of *My Little Golden Book About God*, a small girl with rosy, plump cheeks, blonde hair, and pudgy toddler fingers gazes toward a purplish tulip she has plucked from the ground. A wreath of daisies crowns her head, and a bee gathers pollen from a blue flower nearby. Since all of her concentration is on examining the tulip, she is clearly unaware of the bee and also unaware that the reader could be examining her. By placing the girl on the front cover in a position that focuses on her profile, Wilkin removes any initial connection between the reader and the small girl since "intimacy is lost when the direct glance of both eyes is avoided" (Brophy 28). Rather, "it is easier to study other people with detachment if they are seen in profile, for

¹² In addition to *My Little Golden Book About God* and *Prayer for Children*, over the years the Little Golden Books have published various books based on Old Testament stories including *Bible Stories of Boys and Girls*, *Heroes of the Bible*, and *David and Goliath*. So far, stories culled from other religions have not been published as a Little Golden Book.

there is no meeting of the eyes, no disconcerting clash or communion of self-consciousnesses” (Brophy 28). Since the girl’s eyes are in the process of closing while she smells her tulip, even the potential for eye contact or “communication of self-consciousness” is removed. Here, the image demands that the reader focus on the child’s physical characteristics of innocence by thoroughly negating any chance of learning more about the small girl by peering into her eyes.

The familiar, yet strangely off-putting, illustrations in *My Little Golden Book About God* have not stopped today’s reader from enjoying the book, although on Amazon.com, several reviewers note that their preschoolers lost interest in the book’s long sentences and antiquated word choices. The adult reviewers also noted that they enjoyed rereading a book they nostalgically remember from their own childhoods. Overall, the reviewers commented positively about the Wilkin’s illustrations, and only one person pointed out that her son did not like the “baby doll-faced children” because he found their eyes “scary” (Azuma). This comment about “scary” eyes is what makes Wilkin’s Little Golden Book illustrations unique. The children she draws all carry the physical characteristics that mark the depiction of an innocent child, but at the same time, these children lack the intangible flash of excitement in their eyes that brings an illustration of a human — for lack of a better word — to life. The lack of emotion in Wilkin’s illustrations is viscerally disturbing because small children in real life exude a variety of emotions with little to no self-censorship of their faces.

If face signals truly are universal, as argued by McNeil, then the faces depicted on the children in *My Little Golden Book About God* carry more weight and meaning than the text itself. Even as the text reassures the reader that God’s love provides comfort and protects children from harm, only one child on one page looks as if she is enjoying herself as she stands in the rain with her face upturned and her mouth open catching raindrops. Even though she is visually centered

in the foreground of the illustration on a dirt path that draws attention to her presence, her body height barely occupies the bottom half of the page. The tall, thin trees on either side of her coupled with the downward motion of the raindrops also brings her to the center of the reader's focus. But, the girl is standing in profile with her eyes closed, so she is still visually closed off to the reader, which means that the reader can examine, but not participate, in this child's moment of joy as she appreciates "the needed rain" (Watson).

The first time that the reader sees a child's full face in *My Little Golden Book About God*, rather than the child's profile or the back of the head, a little boy and girl walk hand in hand up a small dirt road towards the reader. As discussed earlier, the two children visually connote a heterosexual balance, which is a characteristic of innocence employed by the Little Golden Books. Moreover, children have pink, chubby cheeks, pert little noses, and pudgy knees, which are easily identifiable with a quick glance as physical marker of innocence. The position of the path not only leads the children to the bottom right of the illustration, but also encourages the reader to turn the page. As noted by Perry Nodelman in *Words About Pictures*, "we usually assume that figures of characters pointed towards the right are moving forward" and so we as readers move forward with them in order to find out what happens next (Nodelman 163). The sentence at the top of the page similarly encourages page turning because it begins on the facing page and breaks before it ends: "so that now, for a day of play and work/ we face the sunlight, then we turn away —" (Watson). In order to find out what "we" are "turn[ing] away" from or to, the reader could even move on to the next page without examining the illustration since the sentence ends before the picture begins. If the reader stops to linger over the picture, though, she or he will notice that neither of the children is smiling, nor do their eyes contain any white

around their irises. Their faces do not register any emotions other than a slight disinterest and even that is minimal.¹³

Several pages later, the image of a young girl holding up a teacup demands the reader's attention since she is facing left on the left side of a two-page spread. Her position on the page, with her back to the gutter of the book, provides a visual stopping block for the reader, unlike the left to right movement of the path discussed above. A grandmotherly figure, possibly the girl's own grandmother, pours tea into the girl's cup. Not only is the body of the figure positioned in the same direction as the child's — another visual stopping block, but the grandmother's body also fills the background of the illustration and bleeds off the edges of the page. Even as the position of the little girl demand the reader's attention, the teapot from which the grandmother pours tea is nearly the same size as the girl's head and serves to focus attention on the little girl's chubby cheeks, round eyes, and fine, blonde hair. Once again, this girl is not smiling even though her lips naturally upturn slightly, and her eyes do not show a glimmer of emotion. Nor does the girl reflect that "God is in all the love we feel/ for playmates and family and friends" since she looks as if she does not feel anything at all (Watson). Since the black type of the sentence on the page basically melts into the black dress the grandmother wears, the image and text can easily be viewed holistically.¹⁴ The girl's lack of interest is heightened by the fact that she is staring blankly off the front left side of the page, rather than watching the tea being poured into the cup she holds. As explained by Nodelman, "words and pictures give up different insights

¹³ The next page does not add any more information to their emotions since it reveals the same two children from behind walking back down the path at night. They must have spent part of their day picking flowers since the girl wears a ring of them around her head. The little boy also holds a bouquet of flowers in the crook of his free arm. His other arm is wrapped around the girl's wrist.

¹⁴ In *Words About Pictures*, Nodelman argues that "the alternation between words and pictures requires constant switches between two different ways of seeing — from a pattern of left-to-right and top-to-bottom scanning to a much less regulated consciousness of holistic form and then back again" (243).

into the same events” so that the reader must constantly “go back and reinterpret the pictures” followed by “go[ing] back and reinterpret[ing] the text again” (243). Here, the sentence about “the love we feel” and the image of an emotionless girl continually demand reinterpretation in the context of each other and create an ambiguous subtext that could leave the reader confused even as the physical features of innocence create delight.

The most striking and yet disconcerting image in *My Little Golden Book About God* is of a little blonde girl whose hands rest underneath her chin as she stares directly at the reader, unlike the other images where the children avoid eye contact. First of all, by staring directly at the reader, the blonde girl not only makes the reader feel uncomfortable for intruding, but also forces the reader to look away from the illustration. Through her stare, the reader changes from a voyeur of the illustration to a participant. As observed by McNeill, staring is generally considered a rude behavior since “it invades others, psychologically and physiologically” (230). The description that McNeill further attaches to the act of staring perfectly describes how this blonde girl’s stare is “blatant, persistent, often blank, and unresponsive to the acts of its target” (McNeill 230). Secondly, the little girl’s brown eyes completely lack irises. Included in the illustration are two small white spots where her eyes reflect a nearby light, but where her irises should be is a barely discernable smear of lighter brown. These are the “scary eyes” that the Amazon.com reviewer referred to in her comments. The illustration of the girl floats on a white background above two longer sentences in which the reader is told that God “gives us a small still voice in our hearts” as well as “hopes and wishes and dreams” (Watson). Yet in interpreting and reinterpreting the messages between the illustration and the text, the reader is left wondering if the little girl hears that “small still voice” or has any dreams since throughout history the eyes have been connected to the inner workings of a person. If, as stated by Cicero, the eyes reveal the

contents of a person's mind or, as written by Melville, "the eyes are the gateway to the soul," then the little blonde girl's mind and soul must be as blank as her eyes.

American Innocence

The immediate success of the Little Golden Books in 1942 lay in their ability to tap into the image of the innocent child that had already entered American society through picture books and print advertisements. As noted by Higonnet, Bessie Pease Gutmann (1876-1960) helped set the standard for the image of the innocent, wide-eyed, and healthy white child in America. During her working years, she produced over 600 prints and illustrated numerous books including a 1907 version of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Her illustrations of innocent children at play or sleeping became a regular part of nursery decorations, postcards, calendars, and print advertisements. While almost all of her artwork depicts a white, chubby, pink-cheeked child with a wisp of curly hair, she also occasionally drew an African American baby with the same characteristics, except for skin color, that can be seen in the 1926 print titled "My Honey." Alongside Gutmann stands the artwork of Maud Humphrey (1865-1940) whose prolific work as an illustrator¹⁵ is usually overshadowed by the fact that she gave birth to Humphrey Bogart and used him as a child model for her early drawings. In her illustrations for Ivory soap advertisements such as "My Busy Day" (1898), the child washing her dollies and their clothes takes center stage, and Ivory's name is only seen on the bar of soap she uses. Even though the little girl drawn in the Ivory advertisement is busily mimicking her mother's everyday chores, her rounded features, small stature, and smiling eyes betray no hint of adult worry or fatigue. The little girl clearly enjoys her current activities that will eventually be required of her on an almost daily basis when she is an adult. Humphrey also illustrated popular picture books,

¹⁵ Both of these American artists — Gutmann and Humphrey — benefited from an advance in color-printing techniques, which allowed for more depth of color in each print and larger, more cost efficient print runs.

among them *Babes of the Year* (1888) filled with illustrations of winsome toddlers and *Mother Goose* (1891) in which common nursery rhymes like “Little Miss Muffet” sit next to images of rosy-cheeked, plump, white children with curly hair. As pointed out in A. M. Sperber and Eric Lax’s biography about Humphrey Bogart simply titled *Bogart*, Humphrey was earning close to \$50,000 a year by the age of 27 and was nicknamed the “American Kate Greenaway” due to the popularity of her illustrations of innocent children.

Early in the 20th Century, the images of the innocent white child reached consumers nationwide through advertisements in popular magazines and incorporated a rhetorical strategy of depicting All-Americanness. For example, Ivory’s use of the innocent child image did not end with Humphrey’s illustrations. Rather, Ivory’s advertising campaigns focused on convincing women that they, too, could have skin as soft as a baby’s by showing images of bubbly, wide-eyed babies next to women with clear complexions. One 1930s advertisement printed in magazines like *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* announces that Ivory “persuaded a few of America’s youngest bathing beauties to pose” so that the consumer can see the “most eminent living authorities” on keeping a clear complexion (Come into a Beauty Conference). Noticeably, the babies on the page are all illustrations drawn by Dorothy Hope Smith, who two years earlier had sketched the widely popular image of Ann Turner Cook, the first Gerber Baby. Quite reminiscent of the Gerber Baby, every one of “America’s youngest bathing beauties” is ivory white with chubby pink cheeks, a gurgling smile, and a wisp of strawberry blonde hair. American reliance on expert opinion is also highlighted through this advertisement in that the “bathing beauties” are “living authorities” on skin care.

A second 1930 Ivory soap print advertisement that aligns clean, white children with being all-American showcases a drawing of a pink-cheeked, blue-eyed baby peeking over a pillow of

clouds. The body of the advertisement states that the child must demand his “rights as an American” because “Ivory foam is as light as the clouds you’re resting upon” (To the Babies). By placing this child within the framework of his “rights as an American,” the advertisement further standardizes how an American child should look. This same ad points out that the reader “won’t have to be a gold-spoon baby” to enjoy Ivory soap (To the Babies). In other words, the American child does not have to be a socially elite child to enjoy clear, soft skin, but the American child should at least be a white child. According to Brophy, “the child’s character, at least so far as it is visible in the face, is unformed, all possibilities and alternatives” (202). This particular print ad encapsulates many of the common cultural values that the image of the innocent child connotes in the early 20th century, including an air of innocence, true-blooded Americanism, and middle or working class standing. From a societal psychological standpoint, “the occurrence of the child motif [in any form] . . . signifies as a rule an anticipation of future developments” as stated by Carl Jung in *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (83). By producing images of the innocent child untouched by adult knowledge, the American public was able to focus on the health and the well being of the present and future state of American society.

Changing Faces and Racial Diversity

The lack of racial diversity in the Little Golden Books was not uncommon for mainstream picture books published in the 1940s and 1950s. For example, one of the largest nation-wide controversies surrounding a picture book occurred in 1958 when Garth Williams illustrated a white bunny marrying a black bunny in *The Rabbits’ Wedding*. As pointed out by Werner Sollors in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both*, “the presence of the categories black/male and white/female helped to override the species difference between the book’s subjects and its readers” which caused a backlash against the book since interracial marriage was “still illegal in more than half of the United States” (19). Despite the national need for change that the Civil

Rights Movement brought to the forefront of America's cultural consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s, the Little Golden Books have continuously and dominantly presented images of the ideal, white child while marginalizing multiethnic illustrations.

The early images of predominately white children in the Little Golden Books stand in stark contrast to an assertion made by Little Golden Books author Rose Wyler who in a 1998 interview claimed that the early Little Golden Books "showed a commitment to racial diversity and rejected racism" (Mickenberg 313-14n76). In the early to mid-20th Century when "racial diversity" included a variety of European immigrants, the Little Golden Books company did show a "commitment" to "rejecting racism" by hiring talented artists who hailed from various countries like Feodor Rojankovsky from Russia, Tibor Gergely from Austria, and Gustaf Tenggren from Sweden. Moreover, the Little Golden Books did not publish any stories where white children or adults tormented non-white children or where different ethnicities fought against each other. Even the Native Americans and the cowboys learn to work together in the Little Golden Books about the Old West. Yet, the early Little Golden Books themselves do not exhibit "racial diversity" as a whole since their focus remained on the white child as the ideal of America, and the earliest books do not include a variety of ethnicities in the illustrations themselves.

In the 1940s and 1950s, a handful of Little Golden Books focused on American Indians, but none of these books showcased an Indian child with chubby cheeks or round eyes, the physical attributes of innocence. Rather, each book's storyline revolved around a boy coming of age or the conflicts and resolutions between American Indians and various cowboys or settlers. In Charles Spain Verral's *Broken Arrow* (1957), Aquila, an Apache Indian, breaks an arrow with a white boy on the frontier as a sign of friendship after the white boy saves his life by distracting

a bobcat. During the story, both boys feel conflicted about whether or not they should help the “enemy,” but they each look beyond the other’s skin color in order to save the one who is in trouble. When the Pawnee try to attack the Cheyenne in Verral’s *Brave Eagle* (1957), one of the Pawnee shoots an arrow at a huge eagle that is guarding the mountain pass. As the eagle falls, young Keena and Morning Star run to warn the rest of the tribe of the attack. After driving back the Pawnee, Brave Eagle climbs the mountain cliff to rescue the wounded eagle and nurse it back to health. Rather than being presented as an amorphous group of “brown” people, each American Indian tribe is referred to by name, and individuals within each tribe are marked as distinct from each other. A handful of other Little Golden Books about the Wild West include, but do not necessarily focus on, American Indians as in Irwin Shapiro’s *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier* (1955) and Gladys Wyatt’s *Buffalo Bill Jr.* (1956). Even though settlers and American Indians work together in many of these books, the eventual destruction of the tribes by American expansionism casts a shadow over these moments of recognition and understanding.

Printed concurrently with these books that focus on American Indians are another handful of Little Golden Books in which a white male child dresses up as an Indian in a game of pretend. In these books, the child is not exploring a potential career, but instead is playing out the stereotypical connotations sometimes applied to American Indians that were not seen in the previously discussed books. While the books depicting American Indian adolescents show a semblance of understanding between two cultures, these books in which a white child pretends to be an “Indian” focuses on maintaining the status quo of white American superiority. In Hilda K. Willams’ *Up in the Attic: A Story in ABC* (1948), Ted climbs the stairs into the attic instead of going to bed at his bedtime. Once in the attic, he dresses up as an “Indian” and plays until he scares himself in a mirror. Published in 1958, *Jack’s Adventure* by Edith Thacher Hurd is about a

boy named Jack who builds a hideout where he can play cowboys and Indians, after he is kicked out of his father's garage and his mother's garden shed. Then, in Kathryn Hitte's *I'm an Indian Today* (1961), little John decides that he will BE an Indian in the Old Wild West for an entire day of play. As the day progresses, though, he realizes that he has to ignore all non-Indian distractions such as a peanut butter sandwich or a bicycle since those items presumably did not exist in Native American culture. By the end, John realizes that his white suburban neighborhood is significantly better than being an American Indian. In these books, Native American culture is presented as a source of amusement and strength since Ted, Jack, and John all want to be Indians. It is also a source of terror since Ted's own dressed up reflection sends him downstairs to bed while Jack and John both try to scare others with their "Indian" attributes. But in the end, all of the boys return to and greatly appreciate their rightful place as white American children.

Since, according to the Little Golden Book *Fun with Decals* (1952), the Little Golden Books are meant to "acquaint the child with the lives of people around him [or her] and extend his [or her] awareness of the world," the reader might expect to see a myriad of children with different ethnic backgrounds. This potential expectation is especially reinforced by the location of the publishing house, since a variety of people walk the streets of New York where the publishing house resides (Nast). Instead, a survey of Little Golden Book covers from 1942 to 2004 reveals that only five of them show a child who is black or of African descent: *Little Black Sambo* (1948), *Corky's Hiccups* (1973), *Just Watch Me: Funny Things To Do and Be* (1975), *My Kindergarten Counting Book* (1995), and *The Boy and the Tigers* (2004). Quite noticeably, a twenty-year gap exists between the first publication of *Little Black Sambo* in the late 1940s and next two books to feature African American children in the 1970s. Another twenty years pass before a fourth Little Golden Book with an African American child on the front cover is

published. Then ten more years separate the publication of *My Kindergarten Counting Book* and *The Boy and the Tigers*. Technically, though, the number of books that feature African American children on the front cover should only be four since *The Boy and the Tiger* is a re-illustrated version of Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo*, which is the earliest Little Golden Book to feature a child with dark skin as the protagonist. Often banned in the United States, this story, originally written about a child in India by a British author, has recently been claimed by the African American community which has led to a renaming of the story with new illustrations as seen in *The Boy and the Tigers* with illustrations by Valeria Petrone.

African American's are not completely absent from the Little Golden Books, though. Nonwhite adult men do at times appear as small, darker, blurry porters who scurry around with other people's luggage at the train station in several early Little Golden Books, like in the background illustrations of *The Taxi That Hurried*. In Marion Conger's *All Aboard!* (1952), when Molly and her mother take the train west from New York towards Buffalo and Albany to visit Molly's grandmother, they are helped by a variety of smartly dressed African American porters and cooks. Although they look dignified in their white jacket uniforms and are treated with respect by Molly and her mother, these Little Golden Book images indicate that African Americans are only allowed on the train to serve the white traveler. Molly's plump cheeks, blonde curls, and ready smile physically depict her inherent innocence, which is further emphasized when she mistakenly assumes that the train belongs to the people who work on it. After thanking the porter for brushing off her clothes and shining her shoes, she says "I'd like to stay on *your* train forever [my emphasis]" (Conger). Even as relatively recently as 1983, the *Fire Fighters' Counting Book* by Polly Curren includes only one African American man on the fire fighting squad. As side and background characters, these depictions of dark brown, adult,

African American males contrast greatly with the very pale women and children they are often helping.

Throughout the decades a handful of Little Golden Books illustrations have been revised to include African American children. Picture books originally published in the 1950s like *My Little Golden Book About God*, depicted only white children, but in 1974 two illustrations with African American children drawn by Wilkin replaced two of the original illustrations of white children. In one illustration, a little African American boy and girl hold hands while standing on the beach staring at seagulls under the words “For GOD IS GOOD” (Watson). The second replacement illustration contains a close-up of an African American child, who is holding flowers and wearing an orange winter cap. She, too, has the same perfectly round eyes without pupils that are Wilkin’s signature characteristic. In 2005, Golden Books released *Prayers For Children* as a larger board book, with a combination of selections from *My Little Golden Book About God* and *Prayers for Children* as part of A Toddler Treasury series. This particular book shows two additional images of African Americans in its 35 pages: one saying a blessing over a bowl of oatmeal, and one sleeping with a teddy bear. Since the illustrations depicting black children simply replaced a white child with a black child while not changing the rest of the composition, white children and black children did not, and still do not, coexist within the same illustration in this particular Little Golden Book. Visually, the images imply that black children and white children can praise God, but should not do so together.

If, as Nodelman suggests, the “visual information” on covers of books forms “the foundation for our response to the rest of the book,” then the covers of the Little Golden Books confirm the dominance of white culture over other cultures in the United States, whether the books were published in the 1940s, 1980s, or today (49). On cover art alone, not only are African

American children noticeably absent from the Little Golden Books catalogue, but children of Asian or Hispanic descent are also marginalized. Eileen Daly's *Just Watch Me: Funny Things To Do and Be* (1975) shows a montage of children playing. Mixed in with the white children are one African American child who is either singing or yelling, since her hands are around her mouth like a megaphone, and one child who might be Asian American but her ethnic heritage is unclear. Pat Visser's *Feelings From A to Z* (1979) also shows a montage of children on the cover, one of whom is an Asian American¹⁶ girl and another of whom has very black straight hair and cocoa brown skin which means he could be Native American, Hispanic, or possibly Indian. On the cover of Margo Lundell's *My Kindergarten Counting Book* (1995) four children parade across a room holding large squares with numbers on them. An Asian American boy with a number two sign marches next to an African American girl who is holding the number three. The remaining two children are white. In all of the above examples, African American children and white children are easily identified in Little Golden Books illustrations by their skin color, but the rest of the children, even children with almond shaped eyes, tend towards a vaguely indistinct, "catchall" ethnicity reminiscent of the models¹⁷ featured in today's United Colors of Benetton advertisements.

The briefest inclusion of racially diverse children interacting with each other can be most readily found in Little Golden Books published after 1970 where ethnic children speckle the

¹⁶ Of note is that in all of these Little Golden Books children from Asia are drawn with almond shaped eyes, which are distinct from the perfectly round eyes shown on other children, instead of a stereotypical and racist slanting slit often seen in caricatures.

¹⁷ In this, the images of the "ethnic" children—neither black, nor white—portrayed in the Little Golden Books coincide with the emergence of a similar idealized beauty standard created by high fashion marketing after the 1970s. As noted by Marilyn Halter in *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*, "neither the classic blue-eyed blonde nor the African queen are gracing the covers of fashion magazines" in the United States (178). Accordingly, today's "idealized beauty standard" is a "mélange of off-white features and khaki tones" (Halter 178). While the use of "khaki tones" remains a salient marketing strategy for the beauty and fashion industry, it clearly does not hold the same importance for the Little Golden Books whose audience still consists primarily of the white consumers that make up three-quarters of America's population.

illustrations like chocolate chips in a sugar cookie. While *Let's Go, Trucks!* (1973) by David Harrison focuses on the importance of trucks and large moving vehicles, illustrator Bill Dugan included an African American girl who is holding hands with a taller, white girl and watching the “trash truck [eat] trash with a hungry roar” (Harrison). Three pages later, white, Asian American, and African American children race towards the ice cream man’s truck that is “ding-a-linging down the street” (Harrison). Here we see a diverse group of children interacting with each other in public, unlike in the *Prayers for Children* illustrations. In the middle of Watson’s *ABC For Christmas* (1974) with illustrations by Sally Augustiny, an Asian family sits in a Catholic or Episcopalian church pew and the text reads “N is for Noel.” On “R is for Rose” a Hispanic boy with brownish skin and dark hair offers his mother a rose. A clue as to their ethnicity is the piñata lying in the background of the illustration. Inside Visser’s *Feelings From A to Z* (1979), a variety of children including African American, Asian American and Hispanic children, express what they are feeling in the hopes that, according to a note from the editors, this text will “be the start of a very special conversation” (Visser). For example, next to “Dd” is the sentence “Donna feels daring,” and the illustration shows a black child balancing on the top of a white, wooden fence while another black child watches her (Visser). Noticeably, in *Feelings From A to Z* and other Little Golden Books, even children who represent ethnic diversity carry common, nondescript names such as Donna, Julie, Norman, Ruth, Sue, and Vera rather than Julio or So Hee, which evokes images of white, middle class children and flattens the impact of their diversity. Clearly, the depiction of ethnically diverse children is the exception in the Little Golden Books catalogue, not the norm.

Today if we examine a display rack of Little Golden Books, the books based on Dora the Explorer or her cousin Diego might leap out as being both multicultural and inclusive because

they are Hispanic and bilingual. But, Dora and Diego do not quite fit the parameters of this discussion about the characteristics of archetypal innocence since they are both cartoon characters. Their faces are stylized and therefore do not attempt to capture the nuances found in the face of a real child. Like a token person of color on a television show, Dora and Diego are an exception rather than a rule of the faces depicted in the Little Golden Books. This nod towards diversity is a product of cross marketing and character licensing, not original story lines or illustration choices made by the Little Golden Books. If we look to the Little Golden Books as a guide to society, then we see a catalogue of books dominated by white protagonists with the occasional representation of ethnic diversity. By investing and reinvesting in these white images, the Little Golden Books maintain the foundation on which their children's book industry was first built and continues to grow. The republication of the earliest books from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s as part of the current Classics Little Golden Books catalogue only serves to highlight the supposedly desirable *white* child who still charms readers by combining an idyllic image of suburban, middle class life with an archetypal innocence.

CHAPTER 5 THE HAPPY FAMILY: GENDER DIVIDES AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

By focusing primarily on the image of the white, innocent child and marginalizing ethnic diversity, the Little Golden Books both reinforce and preserve the patriarchal nuclear family values that dominated white suburban America in the 1940s and 1950s. In this setting, black Americans “existed on the fringes of the middle-class family ideal” and other races did not exist at all (May 13). As Elaine Tyler May points out in her book *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, even though fertility rates across all of America peaked during the baby boom regardless of ethnicity, “the values of the white middle class . . . shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans” (May 13). The American dream of home ownership, underwritten by mortgage policies and highway systems, seemingly “facilitated the dispersal of the white middle class into the suburbs” which contributed to a “de facto segregation” (May 170).

In *The Way We Really Are*, Stephanie Coontz further explores how segregation became the default in the suburbs when she argues that the move to the suburbs was a move away from “racial and political tension,” a retreat from “social activism,” and a development of local community through “repression or exclusion” (Coontz 39). Essentially in the United States, the white, middle class population avoided extrinsic integration laws, either consciously or inadvertently, by moving to the suburbs and creating homogenous communities that intrinsically excluded African Americans.¹

¹ Some towns were more obvious in their exclusionary practices since some white communities allowed African Americans and other races to pass through town, but only during the day. Passing through the same towns after dark invited harassment and possible lynching. For more about this part of America’s history read *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* by James W. Loewen.

The movement of white Americans into the suburbs also facilitated the polarization of gender roles since women were more likely to stay home while men traveled farther distances to work. The suburbs did not initially offer women the same social opportunities and freedom of movement they could experience in an urban setting. In her book *Suburban Lives*, Margaret Marsh makes clear that “cities gave women scope” since places like department stores often provided “lounges and dining rooms where they [women] could meet their friends for lunch, or rest or read” (Marsh 73). Sometimes these larger department stores even provided childcare which freed mothers from their children for a few hours and allowed more leisure time in the store for shopping or meeting casually with other women. Moving to the suburbs also turned men from walkers into commuters who took a train, bus, or car into the city center to work every day. These aspects of white middle-class suburban American life were mirrored by the children in the Little Golden Books who playacted the bread-winning male (boys only) and the homemaking female (girls only). The world, as presented by the Little Golden Books, can more easily be explained by examining the context in which gender roles, child rearing, and the family became solidified in mid-20th century America.

Educating Parents And Educating Children

Woven throughout the gendered representations of mommies, daddies, and innocent children in the Little Golden Books is a constant anxiety not only about whether the child is being raised properly under the flag of democracy, but also about who to go to for parenting advice. In *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children*, Ann Hulbert explores the high levels of anxiety that plagued mothers and fathers throughout every decade of the 20th Century. Hulbert asserts that “never has this concern [about raising children] been as intense, as self-conscious, and as publicly debated as during the past hundred years” (Hulbert 4). In *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America*, Peter Stearns

argues that the century of the child² became a “century of anxiety about the child and about parents’ own adequacy” (Stearns 1). Both of these texts posit that this parental anxiety is reinforced by the plethora of child rearing pamphlets produced during the 20th Century that caused parents to question their obligation to believe the advice of older family members rather than experts in the field. Psychologists and educators engendered fear in parents as early as 1904 when G. Stanley Hall published *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. In this landmark two-volume set, Hall explores facets of American life that he deemed key to understanding adolescents. His findings not only firmly established “adolescents” as separate beings from “adults,” but also helped instigate a widespread social fear of adolescents breaking society’s taboos during puberty. To combat this potential of youth gone wild, between 1914 and 1921, the federal Children’s Bureau issued “a million and a half” *Infant Care* bulletins in the hopes that a properly raised baby would not turn into an unruly adolescent (Hulbert 11). These regimented *Infant Care* bulletins “curtly prescribed milk formulas, schedules, and not [to] play with the baby” (Hulbert 11). Emerging in 1926, *Children: The Magazine for Parents*, soon renamed *Parents’ Magazine*, brought child rearing strategies and expert advice directly into the American home on a monthly basis. Whether or not parents actually read *Parents Magazine* is difficult to determine, but the magazine’s continued subscription sales throughout the 1930s and 40s attests to its popularity.³

During the 1930s, parenting advice on how to treat a newborn shifted from adhering to schedules and minimizing interactions with the child to maximizing the amount of time spent

² In 1909, feminist reformer Ellen Key published *The Century of the Child* which in that year became a best-selling book and whose title was applied to the dawning 20th Century.

³ According to a chart on the Parents.com web site, in December 2006 the circulation figures for Parent’s Magazine reached 2,200,000 subscriptions (*Circulation Leader*).

interacting with the child. The leading manual writers on parenting started insisting that the “vulnerable child, male or female, needed coddling” not denial (Stearns 24). These same manuals brought the role of the father into question during this time of shifting American values because mothers and psychologists demanded that the absentee father was also needed in the home to fully meet the child’s various social and psychological needs. As pointed out by Julia Grant in *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers*, whereas mothers willingly accepted personal responsibility for the well-being of their child, fathers placed the responsibility for raising the child on the community or society as a whole which had previously allowed fathers the freedom to be absent from their child’s life⁴ (Grant 172). Thus, parenting choices in the 1930s were fueled by behaviorists who, in the decade before, explored the possibilities of nature versus nurture by observing children interacting in controlled clinical situations. American psychologists like Dr. Arnold Gesell who published *The Mental Growth of the Pre-School Child* (1925) and Dr. John B. Watson who published *Behaviorism* (1925) and *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928) also examined the vulnerability of a child’s psyche as interpreted from the work of Sigmund Freud. By the 1940s, objects like balls, dolls, and bicycles carefully placed in advertisements “reflect[ed] the importance that parents attached to finding the right vehicles and objects to encourage their children’s development (Kline 59). Underlying all of these helpful messages and expert advice about proper child rearing was the fear that a child could easily be flawed for life or develop adult psychological complexes by a wrong parenting choice.

⁴ This all changed, of course, when women with children started to carve out their own space for personal time in order to step away from the singular definition of “mom” and acquire multiple self-definitions based on hobbies, interests, careers, and other personal identities.

Relatively soon after the Little Golden Books were first published in 1942, Dr. Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1945) gained popularity as an important guide for rearing a child. According to Hulbert, one key to Spock's appeal "in a Cold War era preoccupied with security and harmony" was his ability to find a middle ground in child rearing by offering up options based on multiple circumstances (Hulbert 12). Yet, multiple options could lead to more parental anxiety since parents wanted explicit directions to achieve the perfect child. A choice "based on multiple circumstances" still leaves room for mistakes. For example, in Spock's book, mothers are told that they should reduce their children's fear of being abandoned at nursery school by slowly introducing them into the school environment until they create bonds with the teachers and other students, but how slowly and whether bonds are created is left to the discretion of the parents. Parents are also admonished to not push a child too hard especially if they suspect that his or her IQ is not as high as the parent would hope or expect, but exactly how hard is too hard? Even though both of these edicts are meant to easily alleviate pressure placed on the child, in actuality they raise the anxiety levels of parents who, in order to complete such tasks, must constantly question their own choices.

Since information about the importance of education or even reading at home, which is key to this study of the Little Golden Books, is not addressed in the 1945 edition of Spock's child care manual, today's reader could assume that reading to children or even teaching children to read was not considered an important part of child rearing at home. But this assumption overlooks Spock's entry on comics. Here, he allays the parental fear that comic books and comic strips will "ruin their children's taste for good reading" (Spock 320). Spock argues that comic books and comic strips are the stepping-stones between stories that replicate "the grown-up occupations that they see around them" and "more sophisticated reading" (Spock 320-21). The

Little Golden Books are not comic books, nor are they what Spock would categorize as “sophisticated reading” for older children. Yet, many of the Little Golden Books in the 1940s and today do replicate the “grown-up occupations” that children see and experience every day in their own parents and in other adults in the neighborhood. As argued by Sharyl Bender Paterson and Mary Alyce Lach in the “Gender Stereotypes in Children’s Books,” all picture books “provide children with role models and clear images that prescribe for the children what they can and should be like when they grow up” (Paterson). When children in the early Little Golden Books practice being adults, the situations they imagine themselves in primarily reflect gender specific roles that are meant to prepare them for public and private spheres in the 1940s and 1950s.

Mothers and Fathers in the 1940s and 1950s

During World War II, much of the propaganda aimed at women with children concluded that their first priority was to be stellar mothers in the home even if they also worked outside of the home. This expectation was emphasized in 1944 when J. Edgar Hoover placed the onus of responsibility for the “home front” on women with children in “Mothers . . . Our Only Hope,” an article about a woman’s patriotic duty to her country and for her children. In the Little Golden Books from this era, mothers remain in the home rather than go to work, are readily available for their children, and only leave the house to run household errands. The women we see in the Little Golden Books are either moms or wives. They are neither factory workers nor airplane pilots, and never are they childless. Thus, the child reader only sees the stereotypical limitations placed on women and not the realities of women in the working world during the 1940s. Additionally, whoever reads a Little Golden Book to a child is learning the basis of “good” mothering by seeing representations of what a mother should primarily be doing for her children. These national images of mothers and wives reveal the naturalization of strict gender divisions

by the 1950s. Indeed, images of the happy housewife and mother “were taken as evidence that American housewives were more satisfied than the unfeminine Soviet women, who worked in ‘men’s’ jobs and left their children in institutionalized daycare” (Mickenberg 180).

Concurrently, the reader of a Little Golden Book in the 1940s and 1950s sees how a mother should also treat her husband, since a woman who is single would not (or should not) have any children in the Little Golden Books world. Established in the early 1940s, these traits both in the Little Golden Books and in American society continue to characterize and sterilize images of the woman as mother because a good mother equals a good wife. According to Anne Kingston in *The Meaning of Wife*, advertisements that encouraged working mothers to return to their homes after World War II “elevated [housework] to a gesture of love and support” rather than “simply chores that needed to be done” (Kingston 78). Yet, “engaging [a wife’s] attention with contests, the latest mod-cons [modern conveniences], and elaborate recipes” in order to keep her in the home did not exactly pan out since the 1950s show even more women in the workforce than in previous years (Kingston 78). Thus the image of the mom and wife presented in the Little Golden Books might have reflected the ideal of what white American society wanted or expected, but the Little Golden Book’s image did not necessarily present the actualities of women in the United States.

When families started moving to the suburbs, a type of male domesticity emerged which is also reflected in several family-centered Little Golden Books. In opposition to female domesticity, an image fraught with the drudgery of housework, a man who shows interest in the domestic sphere does not come home from work in order to change the beds, wash a few loads of laundry, and clean the living room. A husband might show a greater interest in the details of how the entire household operates, but his household participation primarily consisted of chores like

gardening that took him away from indoor housework. In her exploration of suburban families, Marsh describes masculine domesticity as the following:

Masculine domesticity is a behavioral model in which fathers agreed to take on increased responsibility for some of the day-to-day tasks of bringing up children and spend their time away from work in playing with their sons and daughters, teaching them, taking them on trips . . . he took a significantly greater interest in the details of running the household and caring for the children than his father had been expected to take. (Marsh 76)

A man immersed in this behavioral model does not want to simply be a “father” who stands on the side line, he wants to be a “daddy” who actively participates in his children’s lives as soon as they are old enough to not need a diaper changed or a bottle warmed. In taking a stronger interest in their family’s lives, these men regularly spent free time with their own wives rather than their business partners. Moreover, these suburban daddies regularly took their families on vacation, spent more time with their children, physically maintained their own yards, and manually repaired whatever broke around their houses. By spending more time “bringing up the children,” these dads could openly prevent “Momism,” a term coined in by Philip Wylie in *Generation of Vipers* (1942). In this book, Wylie critiques America’s lifestyle complacency and encourages fathers to ensure that their sons would not grow up to be effeminate or smothered under their mother’s care.⁵ In the world of Little Golden Books, much like in American society during the 1940s and 1950s, dads are attentive to the exterior portion of their home when something is in need of repair, but the majority of interior domestic work and child rearing falls on the shoulders of moms and wives.

⁵ In a chapter titled “Common Women,” Wylie rails against mothers in American culture and establishes the term “momism.” For example he write that social clubs “afford mom an infinite opportunity for nosing into other people’s business. . . . Knowing nothing about medicine, art, science, religion, law, sanitation, civics, hygiene, psychology, morals, history, geography, poetry, literature, or any other topic except the all consuming one of momism, she seldom has any especial interest in what, exactly, she is doing as a member of any of these endless organizations, so long as it is something” (Wylie 203-04).

The delineated domestic space and gender specific roles exemplified in the Little Golden Books during wartime and the 1950s reflected the dominant perception of prescribed gender roles that formed the basis of children's popular culture through comics, film, and radio. Moreover, these images of popular culture consistently reinforced that it was "great to be young and an American" (Homme 31). Right before the start of World War II, comic books with overtly masculine heroes such as Superman, Batman, and Hawkman infiltrated children's reading habits. According to William M. Tuttle in "The Homefront Children's Popular Culture," there were at least "150 different comics books selling 20 million copies each month" to a mass readership that did not divide down gender lines (Tuttle 159).

Of notable exception in this male dominated field of comic books is Wonder Woman, the Amazonian warrior who "honed her skills in training with her sisters on Paradise Island, their home" (Tuttle 160). As Tuttle points out, Wonder Woman promoted a feminist message as she fought the Axis spies and proudly wore red, white, and blue. In one particular episode, Wonder Woman teaches the values of self-worth and agency to a woman named Prudence who then declares that she has "learned [her] lesson" and that "from now on, [she'll] rely on [herself], not a man" (Tuttle 160). In this, Wonder Woman's explicit message worked against dominant popular culture images by aligning itself with the actualities of women in the work force. In contrast, a "super" woman image from which to learn self-reliance or independence outside of the home does not exist in the Little Golden Books.

Even though World War II brought an increase in working women who filled in the positions left by men going overseas, at the end of the war, "millions of middle-class American families [took] the path towards polarized gender roles" with the wife in the home and the husband working outside of the home (May 38). In contrast to films that featured strong,

independent, single women who worked outside of the home, certain romantic movies (attended by both adults and children) such as *Since You Went Away* (1944) promoted the gender specific imagery of the passive female wife and the active male husband during the war. In this particular film, the woman diligently and longingly waits in her home with their two children for her man to return from the war. “America’s women participated in the national defense, but in popular culture the institutions that they defended were their traditional domains: romance and marriage, the family and the home” (Tuttle 161). When not broadcasting news about the war, the radio featured predominantly male action heroes in programs like “The Shadow” and “Jack Armstrong — the All American Boy” and single female daytime serial stars in programs like “Our Gal Sunday” and “Portia Faces Life.” As with wartime films, these radio programs promoted gender divisions through sex-typing. Despite the sheer number of women who entered the work force and the armed services during World War II, wartime popular culture still promoted the imagery of the stay at home mom, of the distressed damsel in need of rescue, and of the woman’s desperate need for a husband.

Mommies and Daddies in the Little Golden Books

All of the examples of the at-home mother and the at-work father as well as other divisions by gender in the Little Golden Books are too numerous to examine in detail in this space. The following books from the 1940s and 1950s are used not only because they contain strong representative examples of gender-based divisions in the Little Golden Books, but also because they have each been republished (and in some cases revised) in the last twelve years: *The New Baby* (1948) by Ruth and Harold Shane, *Guess Who Lives Here* (1949) by Louise Woodcock, *Susie’s New Stove: The Little Chef’s Cookbook* (1950) by Annie North Bedford, *Daddies* (1954) by Janet Frank, and *We Help Mommy* (1959) by Jean Cushman. Thus, the images of the at-home

mother and the at-work father that the Little Golden Books published in the 1940s and 1950s are still readily available to children today.

Even though *The New Baby* focuses on Mike, a single child who is about to become a big brother, the assumed roles of the father and the mother are clearly delineated in the original version and then subtly revised in the 1978 reprinting. The first time the reader sees little Mike, he is playing with a red wagon push toy on his family's front porch. The front yard, sidewalk, and street stretch out in front of him from the upper left corner of the illustration to the far right side of the second page, which turns a single page illustration into a full two-page spread.

Placing Mike in the left foreground of the very first illustration in the book immediately identifies him as the main character since, "the protagonist of many picture books ... do tend to appear on the left" as argued by Perry Nodelman in *Words About Pictures* (135). Moreover as readers we "tend to place ourselves in that position and to identify with the objects or figures located there" (Nodelman 135). In *The New Baby* the reader not only identifies Mike's position in the book as the main character, but also empathizes with him as he learns more about the new baby who will soon become a part of his life. Thus, this particular picture book can not only prepare small children for the arrival of a new family member but also guide parents in making the transition smoother for their child. Moving from left to right with the illustration, the reader then arrives at the beginning of the story on the bottom half of the second page.

If the reader assumes after reading the title on the front cover that the main character of *The New Baby* will be the actual baby, then these first two pages of illustration and text work serve to rectify this situation. Mike is clearly a toddler, not a baby. Moreover, the deliveryman is removing a large package from his "big green truck" that has "stopped in front of Mike's house," not a new baby (Shane). Here the title of the book, the illustration, and the text on the first page

must be continually reinterpreted in order to clarify the meaning from all three “since words and pictures give us different insights into the same events” (Nodelman 243). When the new baby arrives at the end of the book, the illustrations unambiguously reflect what the text says. The sentence “Mummy got out of the car, handed the baby to Daddy, and gave Mike a kiss and a hug” is under an illustration of the mother on her knees hugging Mike (Shane). On the right side of the two-page spread is a full-page illustration of Daddy holding the baby near Mike while the neighbors and Aunt Pat rush over because “everyone wanted to see little Pat” (Shane).

The text on the first page also establishes a pattern of questions and answers that not only reinforce Mike’s curiosity about the events taking place every time Mike sees the deliveryman, but also indicate the father’s role in their family. “What could it be? It wasn’t Christmas, so it couldn’t be a Christmas present. It wasn’t a lawn mower. Daddy had a lawn mower. It wasn’t a new tricycle. Mike had a new red tricycle” (Shane). Aligning the “lawn mower” with “daddy” on the opening page is the first indication in *The New Baby* that the father’s responsibilities lay outside of the home. This is not to say that Mike’s father does not love or pay attention to his child. Rather, the father’s affection towards Mike takes a hands-off approach that is subtly reiterated throughout the story. Of the handful of illustrations that include both Mike and his father, the father only interacts directly with Mike in one illustration where the father “boosted Mike into the air and then went into the house” (Shane). Other than this moment of physical contact between father and son, Mike’s father verbally reinforces his affection even if he does not physically do so. The father’s external role in the family is concretely reinforced when he explains to Mike that Aunt Pat is coming to visit because “Aunt Pat is going to help *you and Mummy* feed and bathe the baby [my emphasis]” (Shane). Since he does not use a pronoun like “us,” the father indicates that he will not be helping with the baby, which would not have been

expected of him in the late 1940s. Noticeably, in the 1975 edition of this book, “you and Mummy” is changed to “us” to indicate that he will be helping with the care and feeding of the new baby.

Published one year after *The New Baby*, Louise Woodcock’s *Guess Who Lives Here* defines the terms “mother” and “father” by providing a brief description of each then telling the reader to “Guess who it is!” (Woodcock). The guessing game itself centers on the people who live in and interact with a two-story yellow house depicted on the front cover. Even though the house takes center stage on the cover of *Guess Who Lives Here*, a small blond boy named Terry is the first occupant the reader meets. Everyone else is defined in terms of how Terry, who is still a toddler, perceives her or him.

According to a psychological study⁶ published in 1959 about children and play, “by the time children were four they realized that the primary feminine role is housekeeping, while the primary masculine role is wage-earning” (Paterson). The words and illustrations in *Guess Who Lives Here* jointly describe Terry’s mother and father by these same primary roles. When describing the only woman in the picture book, the text on one page indicates that she “wears a dress and sometimes an apron. She cooks good things to eat every night, / And she tucks Terry into bed with a kiss” (Woodcock). The illustrations on the same page show a pink, conservative, woman’s dress with long sleeves and a high collar, a blue waist apron, a chocolate cake, and a smattering of chocolate chip cookies. Turning the page reveals that the woman who is busy mixing ingredient in a large bowl while standing in front of a wood Hoosier cabinet is “Terry’s mother” (Woodcock). The facing page describes someone who “is very tall” and “walks with

⁶ The full results of the 1959 study are in a *Psychological Reports* article titled “Sex-role preferences and the socialization of the male child” by R. E. Hartley.

long steps” when he “goes out to work in the morning, / And sometimes he brings Terry a present when he comes home at night” (Woodcock). Since most of these attributes are based on physical appearances rather than material objects, the only illustration on this page is of a present wrapped in blue paper. On the next page, the illustration of Terry’s father shows him rushing across the page in front of several city buildings, holding his hat against the wind. His long, yellow trench coat billows out behind him to dramatically indicate either the speed at which he is moving or the strength of the wind against which he is walking. Terry’s mother is depicted in the kitchen, while his father is on the street. The mother is defined by what she wears and bakes, while the father is characterized by what he earns outside the home and the presents he brings. Both the mother and father function within narrowly defined spheres that influence the child’s perception of them.

When Susie gets her own Little Chef Electric Miniature Stove in Annie North Bedford’s *Susie’s New Stove: The Little Chef’s Cookbook* (1950), she decides that she must learn to cook, and her mother immediately tells her all she needs to know about lining up all the dishes she will need, using pot holders, unplugging the stove, and cleaning up afterwards. Since this book contains easy to assemble recipes that use processed foods such as “Pixie’s Delight,” (s’mores with store bought marshmallows, chocolate, and graham crackers) or a “Candle Salad” with a half a banana standing upright in a precut pineapple ring⁷ with a cherry balanced on top, it is primarily a recipe book and co-branding advertisement for the Little Chef Electric Miniature

⁷ I distinctly remember learning how to make a dish similar to this one while watching Saturday morning public service announcements on the ABC television network. In the late 1970s and 1980s, ABC ran a series of 30-second to one-minute segments that promoted healthy eating habits and personal hygiene. One in particular titled “Make a Saturdae” taught children how to place a halved banana in a pineapple ring then cover the ring with a little yogurt before adding a grape on top. The only difference between this Saturdae and a Candle Salad is that the Saturdae has yogurt and the Candle Salad has a slice of lettuce underneath the pineapple ring. Of course, the Saturdae replaced the dye-soaked canned cherry with a fresh grape.

Stove. The book's subtle secondary function, though, is as a conduct book for girls. On the title page a boy and a girl, who the reader will later find out is Mike and Susie respectively, sit at opposite ends of a small table eating something unidentifiable off matching plates. Two full glasses of milk and a larger bowl of food occupy the space between them as they visually replicate an adult heterosexual couple enjoying each other's company over dinner. Midway through the story, a similar illustration of Susie and Mike sitting at the same little table includes a baby doll in a highchair centered between them at the table. Susie and her brother Mike "like to play eating games" together, but the division of gender in their play is evident throughout the book since Susie prepares all the meals for them to eat, while Mike pretends to be a doctor, a grocer, and a seller of lemonade.

Interestingly, in the one hundred years between the Victorian Period and the 1950s, very little about female conduct has changed in that girls are still being taught to feed and care for their brothers as a preparation for their futures as wives. In *The Women of England*, a highly popular conduct book for women published in 1838, Sarah Stickney Ellis admonishes her reader by stating that "no woman in the enjoyment of health should allow her brother to prepare his own meals at any time of the day, if it were possible for her to do it for him" (84). Moreover, a young man should expect his sister to keep him socially manicured and polished just like his future wife will since his sister is "a substitute for what he afterwards ensures more permanently in a wife" (Ellis 84).⁸ Although *Susie's New Stove* does not literally define Susie in terms of her

⁸ Sarah Stickney Ellis goes on to write in *The Women of England* (1838) that Victorian sisters should also take care of their brother's clothing, keep the house neat for his guests, and offer him refreshments. "No woman should allow her brother to put on linen in a state of dilapidation, to wear gloves or stockings in want of mending, or to return home without finding a neat parlour, a place to sit down without asking for it, and a cheerful invitation to partake of necessary refreshment" (Ellis 84). The expectations placed on suburban housewives in the 1950s parallel these Victorian conduct rules in that a wife should clean the house and prepare dinner daily then change into a pretty dress before her husband returns from work. Ideally, his favorite chair and cocktail should also be waiting for him.

potential future role as “wife,” her interest in cooking for her brother parallels her own mother’s role in the book as a housewife who has dinner ready when her husband returns home from work.

The opening paragraph on the first page of the story establishes Susie’s preparation for her future as a homemaker, and the accompanying illustration solidifies the text: “Susie likes to play house. She has a family of dolls. She has a little table and chairs. She has a set of little dishes. And she has a really-truly little electric stove, with a set of little pots and pans!” (Bedford). As readers, “we tend to assume that pictures show characters and scenes in a typical state” which allows us to “read the rooms and furnishings ... for information about their owners’ personalities” (Nodelman 117). On the top half of the page is an illustration of Susie opening her new oven’s door while she turns to talk to someone over her shoulder. Her slight distraction from the potentially hot oven is of little consequence to her well being, since the illustration shows that the oven is not plugged in to the electrical outlet. Behind Susie, her “family of dolls” consisting of a baby doll in a high chair and an older doll in a child-size chair sit in front of their “little dishes” at the same table shown on the title page (Bedford). Susie’s preparation for her future as a wife is further fixed at the end of the book when her mother entrusts her with cooking on the “big stove just this once” for Daddy’s birthday since Susie has already spent multiple days cooking small meals like canned soup, boiled frankfurters, and chocolate pudding for her brother Mike (Bedford).

Mike’s future role as a bread-winning father is seen in illustrations throughout *Susie’s New Stove* as he watches Susie cook, sits at her little table waiting to be served, and playacts being a working adult. Nodelman argues that illustrations place “tremendous emphasis on the moments we do see” which makes those moments become “the most significant moments out of all the

possible one we might have seen” (244). Even though the text occasionally indicates that Mike helps Susie cook, the illustrations contradict this assertion by neglecting to illustrate those moments in the story. When Susie’s “doll baby was sick” she “called Dr. Mike” who quickly set the baby’s arm in a splint (Bedford). The illustration shows Mike with a first aid kit crouching on the right side of the doll baby’s bed. Since Mike is facing left on the page, his position guides the reader’s attention back towards Susie who looks like a concerned parent as she carefully watches Mike’s actions. When she invites Dr. Mike to stay for cocoa, he suggests that she make him a snack as well because he is “a little hungry, too” (Bedford). The next illustration of both Mike and Susie shows him sitting at the little table accepting a plate of scrambled eggs from Susie, who now wears an apron that is the same color as her mother’s in an earlier illustration. For Mike’s next business venture he is a grocer in the “play-store” where he sells Susie the ingredients for Pixie’s Delight (Bedford). In this illustration, Mike eagerly leans over the counter next to a little green cash register. Little details like the pencil tucked behind Mike’s ear and the products lined up in several boxes underneath the register accentuates the seriousness with which these two children playact. The only time that Mike “cooks” for himself is when he makes lemonade to sell at a stand. Here, again, Mike’s ability to earn money is promoted as he markets his own lemonade. Moreover, his production of lemonade does not require any use of Susie’s stove, so Mike still remains separated from domestic chores in the kitchen. Thus, throughout *Susie’s New Stove*, Mike learns to expect women to provide him with nourishment after a hard day at work, while at the same time Susie practices her role as a good future “Suzy Homemaker.”

At the same time that *Susie’s New Stove* and the Little Chef oven tied women and girls to the domestic space of the kitchen, female factory workers in Tacoma, Washington, who worked

for Tacoma Metal Products, assembled the Little Chef Miniature Electric Stove. Unlike today's Easy Bake Oven, which is only an oven, a deluxe version of the Little Chef Electric Miniature Stove contained both a working stovetop and an oven for heating or baking. On the non-deluxe version of the Little Chef, only the stovetop worked. The Tacoma Public Library's Photography Archive contains twelve photographs of the Little Chef being assembled as well as being advertised with Campbell's Soup and *Susie's New Stove*. In one black and white photograph from 1946, a single female worker uses a spray gun to paint the front panel of the oven, while in another photograph, a single female worker assembles the oven's parts. Two other photographs, one in 1946 and the other in 1954, show an assembly line of female factory workers with the Little Chef oven parts in front of them. Again, the juxtaposition of these factory photographs with the message presented in *Susie's New Stove* shows the great disparity between what women were actually doing and what women were perceived to be doing during the 1950s.

Over forty years before the publication of *Mommies*, a Little Golden Book that details the lives of mothers who also hold jobs outside of the home, the Little Golden Books published Janet Frank's *Daddies* (1954), a picture book that most singularly captures the image of the commuter lifestyle of the suburban father. Based on the assumption that the average child reader of the Little Golden Books might wonder what her or his father does all day when he leaves the house, *Daddies* is an extended poem that answers this curiosity by stating that "daddies work while children play" (Frank). The poem then focuses on a series of jobs that "daddies" perform on a daily basis when they are not at home.⁹ According to the book, daddies are tailors ("Daddies fix the clothes we wear"), factory workers ("Dads put food in cans and jars"), and bakers ("They

⁹ Throughout *Daddies*, only two women are depicted. In one illustration a mother waits patiently while her children are fitted for new clothing by a couple of tailors. In another illustration, a female nurse guides a line of children towards the male doctor who is examining them.

make buns and cakes and bread”) among other middle or working class job options (Frank). Even though women comprised the majority of the authors writing children’s books in the 1950s and Frank is a female children’s book author herself, Frank’s poem also states that “daddies sit at desks and write / the books we read in bed each night” (Frank). Most importantly, though, to help define the image of the suburban dad in the 1950s, all of the daddies travel straight home to their families after a full day at work. “By taxi, train, by car and bus, / Daddy rushes home — to us!” (Frank). The quickness with which fathers rush home to their children is punctuated in an illustration showing a sea of men crowding onto a train while other men pour onto some waiting buses and into several taxi cabs. Here in *Daddies*, “daddy” is an important member of the larger community who not only works hard to earn his wages but also spends time at home with his children as long as he is not primarily responsible for them.

Even though Jean Cushman’s *We Help Mommy* (1959) is about how two children help their mother around the house, the actual mother is rarely seen. Instead, the role of “mommy” is defined through a series of domestic tasks. In the illustrations, the reader only sees an illustration of the children’s mother when she buckles her daughter’s shoes, vacuums the living room, and loads the washing machine. Throughout the text, the mother’s voice guides and praises her son and daughter through their activities, but the mother does not narrate the story. That job belongs to Martha, the younger of the two children. Then the father appears at the end of the book to tuck the children into bed and praise them for being a “big help to mommy” (Cushman).

Rather than simply help her mother with the domestic chores around the house, Martha constantly mimics what her mother does as the day progresses in order to practice for or playact in her future role as wife and mother. When Mommy uses a carpet sweeper to clean the living room rug in one illustration, Martha uses a dust mop to clean under the chairs. The figures of the

mother on the left page and the daughter on the right page mirror each other as both people bend over to grasp each cleaning tool's handle. Bobby, in contrast, stands very tall while dusting the top of a wooden side table. His body visually occupies more space than his mother or his sister; yet, he is not the center of attention. In this two-page spread, the illustration bleeds off the edge of the pages and the text is framed in two smaller boxes located near the top of each page.

Together, all three people form a triangle that quickly moves the reader's eye from Bobby on the bottom left to Mommy near the back center and then on the bottom right to Martha, whose dust mop coaxes the reader to turn the page since it is pointing to the right. Moreover, the reader must fight against this strong visual arc in order to pause long enough to read the text that seemingly blends into the background. According to Nodelman, "pictures seem much more like confirmation of what we know already than like additional information" when the pictures follow the same narrative flow as the text (259). Yet neither the text nor the illustration on this page of *We Help Mommy* adds a secondary layer of meaning to each other since both reemphasizes the cleaning activities that are already taking place.

Turning the page reveals that when laundry time approaches, Bobby puts his daddy's clothes in the front loading washing machine, but Martha gathers up her dolly's clothes to wash. Again, this illustration reaffirms that Martha is learning to be a good mother herself since she washes and dries her doll's clothes in the same manner that her own mother is washing and drying the family's clothes. Once the washing is finished, Martha hangs her doll's dress, hat, and socks out to dry on an umbrella clothes dryer that "isn't high like Mommy's" but is "just right" for her (Cushman). In combination, the text and illustration even show the most effective way to hang clothes to dry by using one clothespin for each sock clipped at the top and not the toe, one clothespin for the hat which is hanging by its ribbon ties, and two clothespins for the doll's dress

once it is shaken to remove some wrinkles. On this page, the illustration fills the entire page, and the gutter provides a break between this page and the next in a way that provides a visual pause for the reader. Martha is also facing left as she hangs her doll's dress, which further emphasizes the visual pause and allows the reader to openly study her physical characteristics of innocence.¹⁰ Martha is pretending to be like Mommy even when Mommy is not around to mimic.

A third illustration of Martha baking a pie for Daddy further visually reinforces the gender specificity of who belongs in the kitchen. While Martha and her mother bake pies in the kitchen, Bobby disappears. Bobby might help out around the house by dusting or setting the table, but actual cooking belongs to mothers and potential mothers in training. Martha, though, “make[s] a treat for Daddy,” who will later thank her for “being such a big help to Mommy and me” even though he was away at work all day (Frank). The father's inclusion of “me” in this final sentence indicates that by helping her mother, Martha is in turn helping her father. Thus, through this simple sentence the small female child receives the kind of positive feedback she needs in order to continue preparing for a future role as mother, homemaker, and helpmate.¹¹

In the Little Golden Books, the dawning of a new decade or even cultural changes in America did not minimize these standard roles that define the idealized mother and father. All of the above examples reinforce the image of “mommy” as a person who cooks, cleans, and takes care of the children while “daddy” is a person who provides limited affection since he is away at

¹⁰ As is discussed in the previous chapter, the physical characteristics in a Little Golden Book that imply innocence in a child include chubby pink cheeks, a round face, and fair hair.

¹¹ Unlike in *We Help Mommy* where the mother is absent from most of the illustrations, in Mini Stein's *We Help Daddy* (1962) the father is consistently in each illustration. The mother is only seen when she is baking cookies in the kitchen, placing dinner on the table, and tucking the children into bed.

work all day.¹² The lack of variation on the theme of the woman as “mommy” or the man as “daddy” in the Little Golden Books reinforces suburban limitations of movement and occupation placed on women and men with children.

All of these images of the homemaking mother and the bread-winning father culminate to set the standards and boundaries within which children in the Little Golden Books imagine themselves when playacting adult roles. The adult reader also catches glimpses of her or his own adult roles and the contrived boundaries of those roles. Every time Jimmy or his little sister Polly accidentally breaks something like a plate or a wagon wheel in *Fix It, Please!* (1947), they run to their “Mother” or “Daddy” to fix it for them. Throughout the story, if Jimmy cries or feels sick, then Polly cries or feels sick, too, even if she is not hurt or ill. Polly continually reacts to or joins in with Jimmy’s actions. Both of the children are so impressed with an adult’s ability to fix anything broken that Jimmy declares he wants to be “the fix-it man” when he grows up, to which Polly replies that she will “be the fix-it mommy” (Mitchell). Thus Polly is not choosing a career, but rather expanding her future role as a mother. A collection of poems about playing house with titles like “Visiting,” “House Cleaning,” and “The Postman” equates a woman’s management of household chores to her ability to love and support her family in *Come Play House* (1948). Moreover, the illustrations for each poem delineate domestic spaces by featuring boys primarily in outside activities like delivering the mail, and girls inside the house washing dishes, cleaning clothes, inviting people over, and answering the telephone properly. When five-year-old Christopher imagines what he wants to be when he grows up in *When I Grow Up* (1950) by Kay and Harry Mace, he pictures himself in various gender specific adult male roles such as a

¹² During the late 1990s, the confining space women with children occupied in the Little Golden Books expanded slightly with the publication of *Mommies: All About the Work They Do* (1997) in which mothers are shown in careers outside of the home. In this particular picture book, the reader sees that “mommies” have other options outside of the home, yet the women are still in a position of caring for and helping others.

fireman, ringmaster, contractor, or mechanic. Although both males and females currently fill all of these roles, during the 1950s a female in any of these positions was not common. Even Nurse Nancy in Kathryn Jackson's *Nurse Nancy* (1952), who uses Band-Aid Adhesive Bandages to patch up the boys when they scrape themselves, is playacting her future adult role as an assistant and a comforter, a potential mother and nurse. In capturing the image of the innocent child in the midst of a family, Little Golden Books provide clear manifestations of the mythic nuclear family with clearly defined gender boundaries to which current adults and children can return — albeit a Caucasian, middle-class version of the myth.

1960s and Beyond

During the 1960s as the number of women who worked outside of the home and the number of men who stayed home with the children rose, Little Golden Books continued to divide children into gender specific roles when they playacted as adults. Through a series of rhymes, *Little Mommy* (1967) by Sharon Kane sings the praises of a little girl who pretends to be a mommy to her three dollies. The unnamed little girl bathes, dresses, feeds, and plays with the three dolls. She even calls Doctor Dan when the dollies are sick. Her constant watchfulness and attention makes her almost, but not quite, smothering. While playing dress up with an assortment of clothes in Ilse-Margret Vogel's *When I Grow Up* (1968), a boy and a girl discuss what careers they want to pursue when they grow up in order to be responsible adults. Even though Vogel's version provides options for both boys and girls — unlike Kay and Harry Mace's version of *When I Grow Up* (1950) that centers around a boy named Christopher, the girl always chooses future careers that are only helpful in conjunction with whatever career the boy dreams of following. If he imagines being a doctor, she pretends to be his nurse. When he is a policeman, a deep-sea diver, or an astronaut, she is a policeman's helper, a mermaid, or the owner of a Moonburger stand. She might own her own business selling burgers, but she is in business to

feed the boy who is also on the moon. The early rumblings of the Women's Rights Movement might have promoted a woman's equality outside of and inside the home, but the Little Golden Books still based a woman's importance in direct response to her abilities as a mother, provider, and dependent.

How to be a good mother is doubly reinforced to a female toddler who is given a new baby doll in Esther Wilkin's *Baby Dear* (1962) with illustrations by her sister Eloise Wilkin. When Daddy brings Mommy and their new baby home from the hospital, he also brings home a Baby Dear lifelike doll for his daughter, who remains nameless throughout the story. Immediately after setting up this situation where his wife will take care of the new baby and his daughter will play with her new doll, the father disappears from the entire book. He is neither seen in the illustrations nor mentioned in conjunction with the care and feeding of his new family member. The child, though, simulates her mother's daily activities caring for the new baby. If the mother feeds, bubbles, changes, bathes, walks, or sings to the new baby, then her daughter does the same with her Baby Dear. They even both have books in which to collect information about their growing babies like height, weight, and first foods. By impersonating her mother, this little girl is preparing for the days when she, too, will take care of a baby without a man's help, which, if she grows up in the 1960s and marries in the 1970s, might just as easily occur due to divorce or an unplanned pregnancy. Moreover, since "Baby Dear" is a trademark doll designed by Eloise Wilkin and manufactured by Vogue Dolls, Inc., this book reads like a promotional advertisement warning parents to buy their female child a doll to keep her occupied so she will not be mad at the new baby.

In the 1960s, the Little Golden Books remained constant in their depiction of the child as an innocent component of the larger nuclear family even while the makeup of the family unit

blurred the line between what distinguishes a child from a parent. According to Anne Scott MacLeod in her book *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, the 1960s in America mark a change in children's literature's depiction of the family from a space in which a parent provides stability and safety to a space in which a parent is either irresponsible or vocally unhappy about being a parent. MacLeod examines novels in children's literature such as Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964), which introduces adults who openly admit to the benefits of lying. In children's fiction, as the protective veil between parent (or adult) and child was tattered, children read about the chaotic reality of adulthood that they may or may not have caught glimpses of in real life. During the course of her survey, MacLeod concludes that "the traditional hierarchy of parents and children has been dismantled [after the 1960s], along with, emphatically, the system of mutual respect and affection that once bound fictional parent and child to each other in peace and contentment" (MacLeod 199). In these stories that disassemble the "traditional hierarchy of parents and children," the parent functions more as a child (or adolescent) with insecurities and a dismissal of responsibility, while the child becomes more knowledgeable and is forced into performing as a semi-responsible adult. The role reversal between parent and child is clearly seen in books like Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) where the father is in a walking trance after his wife's death and the son faces adult and teen tormenters daily. Traces of role reversal are even found in Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham* (1960) when Sam-I-Am, a childlike character, takes on the role of a parent convincing a child to try just one small bite of green eggs and ham. Before the 1960s, children's literature predominately upheld a family unit in which the parent provided a moral definition by which the child should, could, and would make decisions, and a nuclear family unit in which the parent is a source of security. As MacLeod argues, during the 1960s, an element of instability

and suspicion started to infiltrate the family unit in children's literature through role reversals and images of independent adolescents.

In contrast with this trend in children's literature, the Little Golden Books remained constant in their depiction of the family unit because they had already built a book megalith on the rhetoric of nostalgia for the nuclear family. To introduce a significant change in format or content was to possibly alienate the very thing that audiences had grown to love and expect. On a larger scale, the Golden Press imprint, which included the Little Golden Books in the 1960s, was clearly hesitant about confronting the serious social issues that permeated the United States. In Julia Mickenberg's examination of the correspondence surrounding the *Kathy Martin* nurse series spanning from 1959 to 1965, which was printed through the Golden Press imprint, she concludes that the "editors and the writers did not always see eye to eye about what was appropriate material for the books" (Mickenberg 161). While both Emma Gelders Sterne and her daughter Barbara Lindsay, primary authors of the series, were politically active and would have created an equally active character in Kathy Martin, editors Carrie Lynch and Pete Borden were determined to keep the books wholesome since consumers buy the books expecting to be entertained. If these two editors are representative of the desires of the Golden Press imprint to keep their books wholesome, then it is understandable that the Little Golden Books also eschewed representing family instability or social upheaval in their picture books.

In the Little Golden Books published after the 1960s, parents are not alcoholics, self-absorbed, money-oriented, or unloving towards their children. Rather, the family unit remains intact with children who explore their surroundings under the vigilant eye of a protective parent or two. When little Carol returns home from kindergarten, she knows that her mother will be waiting for her in Clara Cassidy's *We Like Kindergarten* (1965). Young Mary Ann shows no fear

when going to the hospital to have her tonsils removed in Anne Welsh Guy's *Good-bye, Tonsils* (1966) because her parents are with her. In both of these stories, helpful, protective, trustworthy adults (dentists, doctors, nurses) who are not their parents surround the two girls. In *New Brother, New Sister* (1966) by Jean Fiedler, Paul still receives all the positive attention he needs or deserves from both of his parents without having to act out when a new baby sister is brought into the house. When not actually surrounded by parents, Little Golden Books children playact the positive roles they see in their parents such as in *Little Mommy* (1967) and *When I Grow Up* (1968). Since the Little Golden Books were not "broken," they did not need to be "fixed" or strive to be "trendy" with the introduction of new subjects that might indicate cultural or familial upheavals. Rather, in relation to the previous decade with its gender specific imagery, the Little Golden Books of the 1960s remained a quiet constant in the children's literature market.

Today's America still struggles with war involvement, class poverty, political unrest, child hunger, and social tensions that are both reminiscent of and strikingly different from the preceding conflicts of the 1940s, 50s, 60s or 70s. Yet, throughout all of these marked events and changes in the social climate of America, the Little Golden Books have remained constant in their depiction of the nuclear family and in their popularity on the landscape of children's literature. Their illustrations of middle class America provide images of happy, clever children in a strong nuclear family setting. The republication of popular Little Golden Books through the Classics line further emphasizes the ideals of innocence and security currently attached to glossy images of 1940s and 50s white, middle class America. At the same time these middle class America images — as seen on television shows like "Leave It To Beaver" or in current fashion and culinary trends where tattooed women dress in 1950s style dresses while baking vegan cupcakes — neglect the problematic of that same time period such as segregation or the chasms

between social classes and gender roles. For the people who imagine that life in the 1940s and 1950s upheld core American values to which today's America should return, the Little Golden Books preserve a sweeter, more innocent, mythically all-American time to which readers can return over and over again with hearts full of nostalgia and eyes blinded by the smiling faces of a happy family. Still, teeming underneath that veneer of core family values in the Little Golden Books is the social unrest brought on by the minimization of the varieties of human experience in order to breed conformity and acculturate younger generations of readers.

CHAPTER 6 TRANSPORTING NOSTALGIA: SOUVENIRS OF CHILDHOOD AND THE LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS

A central part of American popular culture, with its current revitalization of pop references pulled variously and seemingly randomly from the 1940s to the 1990s, is a postmodern macro-nostalgia where “there is no space which we authentically occupy, so popular culture fills the gaps by manufacturing images of home and rootedness” (Chase and Shaw 15). The current definition of nostalgia in a postmodern society is further complicated by Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia* when she defines nostalgia as a binary that either evokes a national past and future (restorative) or concentrates on individual and cultural memory (reflective). One way that America fills the “gap” with “home and rootedness” is the commercial repackaging of children’s books for adult consumers and the “manufacturing” of images from those same children’s books as tattoos, t-shirt decals, stickers, collectables, or tchotchkes. These are the types of items that can draw energy from “individual and cultural memory” or promote a “national past and future.” A prime example of the macro-nostalgia-infused repackaging of children’s books is clearly seen in the marketing, collecting, and recycling of today’s Little Golden Books.

Mentioning the Little Golden Books in general conversation often elicits pleasant childhood memories of the gold-foil spine and the little puppy that eats all the desserts or the tugboat that saves the day. These memories are usually followed by a look of surprise mixed with disbelief when the hearer discovers the longevity of the Little Golden Books’ publication history. They have remained a consistent and, according to sales records, popular part of American children’s literature and culture since their inception in 1942, which makes them unique in the American picture book market. By 1992, Janette Sebring Lowery’s *The Poky Little Puppy* had sold over 14 million copies. In 2000, the *Poky Little Puppy* maintained the number one position on the *Publishers Weekly* “All-Time Best-Selling Children’s Books” list for

hardcover children's books ("All-Time"). The top ten slots on this list include three additional Little Golden Books: at #3 is *Tootle* (1945) by Gertrude Crampton, at #7 is *Saggy Baggy Elephant* (1947) by Kathryn and Byron Jackson, and at #8 is *Scuffy the Tugboat* (1955) also by Crampton. The adults who read Little Golden Books as children often continue to buy them for their own children, grandchildren, and friends' children, or even for themselves as collector's items. Since first editions of the Little Golden Books are more often than not marred or destroyed by a child reader, pristine versions of original Little Golden Books from the 1940s and 1950s are highly prized among children's book collectors. Moreover, the continuing popularity of the Little Golden Books is reemphasized at every ten-year milestone when newspaper articles diligently recount their origins; yet, the exchange of influences between nostalgia and the Little Golden Books that leads to collecting and recycling the books' images remains largely unexplored.

Nostalgia, Souvenirs, and Little Golden Books

Nostalgia sells, especially when tied to childhood. As noted by Jean Starobinski in "The Idea of Nostalgia," nostalgia's narrative is one of "decline from use value to commodity, from immanence to instrumentality, from the observing traveler to the possessive tourist, and from the world as being to the world as simulacrum" (Starobinski 87). The satiation of nostalgia produces the inevitable decline of an object through (re)producing, (re)marketing, and (re)purchasing. As object upon object is slightly modified and placed within a consumer's reach, each new replica contains a semblance of the original from which it was produced. In tourism, the take-home relic or souvenir holds much significance for the person who travels, but little significance for the people at home to whom the traveler returns. Yet, collecting such souvenirs evokes a nostalgic remembrance for the time, place, and situation of the treasured find that completes or adds to a growing set of objects. Within the context of childhood memorabilia, a found object such as a

favorite Little Golden Book functions in much the same way as the relic or the souvenir by providing significance for the person who longs for the past invoked by the object.

Despite today's marketable transference of nostalgia and meaning onto collectable childhood objects such as the Little Golden Books, the word *nostalgia* has not always been closely tied to the word *childhood*. Nostalgia, the word and the concept, has a winding history that twists its way through war, separation, psychology, tourism, and collection. Through all of these, *longing* is an inseparable component. During the 1700s, *nostalgia* was medically equated with an acute *homesickness* that stood as a direct connection between a physical separation from home and a visceral longing to return. According to Fred Davis in *Yearning for Yesterday: a Sociology of Nostalgia*, the term *nostalgia* was first coined by Johannes Hofer, a Swiss physician, in 1688. He combined the Greek word *nostos* (to return home) with *algia* (a painful condition) to establish a term that referred to a malady involving an acute yearning to return home among soldiers in the Swiss military. While at first the disease known as *nostalgia* suggested a particularly strong sense of patriotism and national spirit in afflicted soldiers because they "loved their motherland so much that they never wanted to leave it, or for that matter die [somewhere else] for it," several centuries later in the United States the positive connotations of the term changed (Boym 5). By the nineteenth century, doctors believed that an idle use of time led to homesickness and that homesickness "revealed a lack of manliness and unprogressive attitudes" (Boym 6). Ever being reshaped, *nostalgia's* meaning expanded over the centuries to encompass a longing for a better time and a better place that is not occupied in the present. Not surprisingly, "the home we miss is no longer a geographically defined place, but rather a state of mind" (Chase and Shaw 1). Since individual Little Golden Books from decades past are still

being marketed to today's consumer, these books provide a tangible, familiar piece of the past from which a consumer can recreate memories from a "better time and a better place."

Indeed, in the exact same moment that nostalgia evokes a longing for the past, it simultaneously suppresses unwanted memories and emotions. Nostalgia obliterates "all that may have been painful or unattractive about the past" (Harper 14). Even though the first twelve Little Golden Books were published during a time of war rationing and shortages in 1942, those specific Little Golden Books do not connote the hardships of war for those people who now collect or fondly recollect them. Moreover, as noted by Davis, "even where adversity and anguish are known not to have been present, nostalgia still retains the capacity to impart charm and goodness to what at the time may have been experienced as ordinary and uneventful" (38). This transformation of nostalgia's denotation from a military disease to the connotative longing in the midst of loss amplifies its ability to smooth over a painful or unattractive past while at the same time "impart charm and goodness" when bringing that past to the present.

As the definition of *nostalgia* evolved through the centuries, nostalgic yearnings no longer cause a person to want to return to a physical past location; rather, these same nostalgic yearnings now influence a person to gather the physical reminders of a past memory and move the cheerful bits into a present context. In the word's initial denotation, the longing for a past, familiar location require a person to return to that past location or to what was already familiar by returning to a specific home, a specific landscape, a specific comfort. Yet as this longing shifted its focus from a familiar past location (such as home) to a specific memory that could not be returned to through travel (such as a favored Little Golden Book), those affected by a nostalgia started bringing reminders of the past to the present.

Analyzed by both cultural critics and marketers, the commodification of nostalgia ties directly in with the consumptive transportation of a visited site to a place on the mantel through photograph, souvenir, or relic. In *The Imagined Past*, a 1998 collection of articles examining nostalgia as tied to England's history, David Lowenthal notes "nothing nowadays sells so well as the past" (22). Furthermore, "so automatically are nostalgia and money equated that governments assume heritage will yield profits" (Lowenthal 22). The marketing forces in America follow similar guidelines for the marketing of nostalgia by convincing the "public that kitschy copies are historically authentic" (Lowenthal 23). Even though Lowenthal is writing directly about America's tourism exchange, his statements also ring true when applied to the merchandizing techniques that drive the Little Golden Books Classic line, a subsection of Little Golden Books that are reissued as "classics" and draw on the purchaser's nostalgia for the books as a memorabilia of childhood. Since, according to Lowenthal, nostalgia is expressed for "recent pasts" including "lost childhood" and "lost childhood scenes," the Little Golden Books, in this context, function as snapshots, souvenirs, or relics of an imagined ideal of childhood carefully placed in a continuously viewable location like a bookshelf or a mantel or a coffee table (Lowenthal 20). Through this added layer of meaning, a child's book, toy, or other object escapes the restrictive confines of a child-only utilization and transports the adult back to the imaged past of childhood while at the same time hauling articles of that imagined childhood into the center of now and keeping the adult grounded in the present's context. Not only can adults demonstrate their grown-up success by purchasing domestic goods, but they can also define their childhood success by gathering objects from that time period.

The concept of the souvenir, as framed by Susan Stewart in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, is key in defining the transporting power of

the Little Golden Books and associated Little Golden Book memorabilia. By specifically focusing on the narrative of the souvenir, which “magically transports us to the scene of acquisition,” Stewart explores the connections between nostalgia and tourism in chapter five, “Objects of Desire” (165). In this particular chapter, Stewart posits that mechanical modes of production create meaning-saturated objects by replicating or miniaturizing the greater, immovable objects that lie outside of the body’s experience. For example, replicated versions of the Mona Lisa or the Great Wall of China carry a trace of the authenticity of its original no matter how many times the replication is produced. Souvenirs metonymically and nostalgically convey the souvenir’s point of origin even though the souvenir itself more than likely carries no explicit aesthetic or use value. Rather, the value of the souvenir lies in its implicit ability to carry a trace of the original along with personal meaning. Since the replica is movable, it can suppress the longing created through nostalgia. Stewart writes: “the souvenir speaks to a context or origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or of use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia” (Stewart 135).

While these demands do drive the marketing force and purchasing value of the souvenir, they do not solely reside in nostalgia attached to tourism. The “necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia” firmly grasp all objects through which the transference of memory occurs. Generally speaking, the adult consumer does not have a personal “need” for a specific Little Golden Book, since the children’s book does not provide any “use value” for an accomplished adult reader (Stewart 135). Instead, an original or reissued Little Golden Book—like other childhood relics from a personal past—fills a nostalgic adult consumer’s desire to either transfer personal memories of childhood to a younger reader, with whom the book is shared, or to reclaim personal memories by collecting a tangible piece of the past.

Today's Little Golden Books are marketed to both children and adults so that an adult American consumer might take home her or his own piece of childhood to keep in a private collection or to share with others. If, as Bruno Vanobbergen points out in "Wanted: Real Children" an article about childhood innocence and nostalgia, "all people with a history have a paradise, a state of innocence, a golden age," then these recollected or re-collected childhood souvenirs exist in a space that draws the consumer back towards "paradise" while at the same time creating a new paradise in which the consumer can continue to exist on a daily basis (Vanobbergen 171). Access to the Internet, television, and other sources of electronic information enables a person to fulfill the yearnings of nostalgia and to recreate a paradise by obtaining Little Golden Books that already hold meaning or might have been a previously denied part of childhood. Antique and "Classic" versions of the Little Golden Books, along with newly printed titles, are readily available to adults who long for souvenirs of their childhood and have access to the internet.

Acquisition of Little Golden Books

The Web provides both an open space for stumbling upon long forgotten childhood relics and access to a large base of Little Golden Books knowledge. On the About.com web site, writer Elizabeth Kennedy briefly informs readers in the Children's Books section about the history of Little Golden Books as well as the collecting and locating of them. As an additional help to her readers about these points, she directs people to visit collector Steve Santi's web site. Kennedy also emphasizes the new Classic Little Golden Books line and prompts people to post information about their favorite Little Golden Books memories. Despite Kennedy's assertion that most people collect Little Golden Books in order to "ensure [that] our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to enjoy them as we did," collecting in and of itself generally connotes a lack of use since the collected items are primarily for display only and not for being chewed on,

dragged around, or written in by children and grandchildren (Kennedy). Kennedy's other remark about collecting Little Golden Books strikes more to the point: "Others collect them out of a sense of nostalgia and/or as an investment" (Kennedy). Here, again, the use value of the Little Golden Books is not of importance; rather, the fulfilling of nostalgic desire and/or the potential increase in the object's worth drives the collector to search out more Little Golden Books titles. In this instance, the monetary value of the collectable Little Golden Book easily legitimizes the buyer's nostalgic desire even though very few Little Golden Books significantly increase in monetary value.

Through any number of on-line forums, a single person with only a few vague memories of a toy or book can post a question in the hopes that someone somewhere out there in cyberspace will be able to fill in the missing gaps. In an on-line forum for collecting Little Golden Books, hosted by collector Steve Santi, over 219 inquiry threads and 465 reply posts have been registered in the "What's That Title" section since the forum started in August 2003. While these numbers might seem small in comparison to the number of inquiry threads started by television fans on similar forums, in early 2006 the number of questions and replies overloaded Santi's servers so that he had to completely erase these particular forums and start over again. Questions about titles are also fielded in a section of the forum called "Collecting Little Golden Books" that is about collecting the books themselves and tracing their worth. In the "What's That Title" section, people are encouraged to "tell us what you remember about your lost memory and maybe someone will recognize the story. If you mention when you owned it, it may help" (Santi "What's That Title"). In this open forum for discussion, using the word "us" further adds to the sense of community created with this space that is primarily occupied by Little Golden Books lovers or collectors, and Santi proves his collector's expertise by answering

the majority of the questions being posted. When the number of posts in the “What’s That Title” forum is balanced against the number of posts in the “Stories” section, which contained only three topic threads before Santi completely removed this section from his site, the contrast in numbers underscores the participant’s interest in filling in her or his own memory gaps rather than sharing these memories with other people who have similar interests (Santi “Stories”). This community of collectors remains more intent on gathering the Little Golden Books, than on posting the personal stories attached to each book. Quite conveniently, antique or previously owned Little Golden Books are easily consumable through Santi’s on-line store.

Since its early stages, the Internet has provided a space in which a community of collectors can work their way through a tangle of information in order to gather objects that fill out their collections. Rather than simply wanting to experience a general feeling of nostalgia or sharing memories complicated by nostalgia with other people, collectors who gather the Little Golden Books as souvenirs of childhood want to experience the particular kind of nostalgia created by bringing specific objects from the past into the present. On Auctionbytes.com, writer Michele Alice directly ties the act of collecting Little Golden Books to nostalgia by pulling heavily from Santi’s web site in order to inform readers about the collectibility of Little Golden Books. In the article’s opening paragraph, Alice highlights the books’ high visibility in the home and throughout several generations of memories as well as their ability to garner high prices at an auction:

Like many people I know, I have one or two Little Golden Books (LGBs) around the house that I remember enjoying as a child. I'm certain that many of you have also saved these mementos of your childhood, and you most certainly have seen them at yard, church, and estate sales, crammed into boxes along with baby clothes, plastic toys, and Candyland games. But did

you know that LGBs are highly collectible, with some titles commanding prices as high as \$100+? Not bad for books that originally retailed for as little as 25 cents! (Alice)

Here, nostalgia coupled with a significant increase in the object's monetary value acts as a viable collecting point for childhood memorabilia and products when presented to a primarily adult audience. These Little Golden Books carelessly "crammed into boxes" along with other bits of childhood such as "clothes, plastic toys, and Candyland games" are "commanding prices" of a hundred dollars or more (Alice). While concentrating heavily on the age and rarity of the more collectable Little Golden Books, Alice barely touches on the importance of the condition of the book other than to send readers to Santi's web site and to his collector's book on Amazon.com. But the condition of a Little Golden Book plays a large part in determining the book's value as a collectable. Since the Little Golden Books are meant to provide educational, inexpensive reading materials for a primarily preschool audience, both the rarity and the condition of these books is determined by whether or not the books were used accordingly. Therefore, the child owner more than the adult collector paradoxically establishes the monetary value of today's Little Golden Book when it is up for auction because the condition of the book depends on how it was treated by its first owner. If an adult is gathering Little Golden Books in response to a nostalgic longing to collect souvenirs from the past, then the Little Golden Books move from the dominion of the child to the proprietary space of an adult. Yet, Little Golden Books that are part of an adult's collection could still be placed into the hands of a child if the collector chooses to mediate the nostalgic gap between childhood and adulthood by sharing her or his memories.

Collecting and Little Golden Books

Clearly today's cultural and marketing trends are trying to capitalize on America's interest in reliving and revitalizing the past by appealing to a wide spectrum of adults who nostalgically

remember the relics of their childhood and have the financial means to acquire those relics as souvenirs. By bringing bygone mementos to the present, producers spur on nostalgia-driven consumption and further enable the culture of collecting in the United States. The finding and keeping of these objects creates a presence built on what *was* (childhood, memories, vagaries, notions) rather than what *is* (adulthood, facts, reality, essentially whatever is not childhood). This seeing and remembering creates a loss of and a longing for displaced items, which in turn feeds the product consumption of those items through an adult's power to purchase items indiscriminately. Additionally, the easy-click purchasing power of on-line auctions and shopping sites adds heightened accessibility when searching out the childhood items needed to fill out or even start a collection.

In the wake of America's nostalgia for childhood and all its affiliated mass-produced merchandise, the Random House Children's Books division started republishing books during the late 1990s from the original lineup of the Little Golden Books collection first published as early as 1942. Once again, copies of *Doctor Dan, the Bandage Man* (1950) complete with "two real Band-Aid Brand Adhesive Bandages"—down from six real bandages in the original—sits proudly on display next to newer, less white, male-dominated Little Golden Book titles like *It's Fiesta Time!* featuring Dora the Explorer. On the cover of *Doctor Dan*, a brown-headed Dan still applies a Band-Aid Brand Bandage to his little sister's doll while their dog Spotty watches. Inside the book, Dan still nicks his finger and cries while playing cowboys with the neighborhood kids, cleans up and band-aids an old scratch on the back of his sister's leg, and earns his nickname of Doctor Dan after bandaging up a cut on his own father's finger. Since the more recent publication of *Doctor Dan, the Bandage Man* is not updated, it continues to uphold the family values of 1950s suburbia where men went off to work and women stayed home while

children played cowboys and Indians in the front yard, reenacting Manifest Destiny. The only marked difference between the *Doctor Dan* of the 1950s and the *Doctor Dan* of today is that today's cover carries the additional imprint of being a "Little Golden Book Classic."

On the back cover of the 1999 Little Golden Book Classic reissue of *Doctor Dan the Bandage Man* (1950), Editor Diane Muldrow addresses the "Dear Reader" in a short letter in which the rhetoric underlines the nostalgic underpinnings of the Little Golden Book Classics, while furthering the buyer's need to collect more than just a single Classic title at the same time:

Dear Reader,

Each of us remembers our own favorite Little Golden Book.

I've searched our archives for the best Little Golden Books ever published to bring back as keepsake editions. You've just selected one!

I'm sure this cherished classic will delight parents and grandparents as well as today's fun-loving kids. After all, lively, satisfying stories never go out of style.

Look for *your* favorite Little Golden Book Classic!

Sincerely,

Diane Muldrow, Editor (Muldrow)

The letter, in a centered text, is framed by a circle of classic Little Golden Book characters ranging from the Poky Little Puppy to the chicken and duck from *The Animals of Farmer Jones*. At the top of the circle is the current Little Golden Books logo that depicts a lower-case "g" reading a golden-spined Little Golden Book. Moving clockwise, the circle also contains the following characters: the Poky Little Puppy, a rabbit from the *Golden Sleepy* book, the Shy Little Kitten, the chicken and duck from *The Animals of Farmer Jones*, Tootle, the Tawny Scrawny Lion, Scuffy the Tugboat, and the Saggy Baggy Elephant alongside various colorful flowers and vines.

Even though Muldrow's letter addresses the general "Reader" which could include adults or children, in the first line she invites the reader to "remember" her or his "favorite" Little Golden Book, and in the last line she prompts the reader to again "look for [her or his] favorite"

Little Golden Book published as part of the “Classic” line (Muldrow). In evoking the Dear Reader’s memories, Muldrow is indicating that the Reader—who is also, more than likely, the purchaser—must be old enough to have had previous contact with the earlier Little Golden Books in order to appreciate or even have a “favorite” book to look for among the Classic line. An additional layer of importance shrouds the Little Golden Book Classic since it has been retrieved from the “archives,” an unenterable space in which collected objects of importance are stored, and is being presented as a “keepsake edition,” which stresses the book’s value as a treasure worth protecting. The underlying intent of these Classic reprints is to reel in adult buyers by tugging on heart and/or wallet strings connected to both nostalgia and the collectable. Rather than hand a Classic reprint over to be consumed by a potentially raucous child, these books are meant as “keepsake editions” that will “delight parents and grandparents” primarily and “today’s fun-loving kids” secondarily. Even though Muldrow’s letter to the Reader attempts to indicate that parents, grandparents, and children will all find the same level of “delight” in the Little Golden Books Classics, the child reader becomes secondary to the adult collector who can “remember” a “favorite” book that is worthy of functioning as a “keepsake.”

Since their inception, the phrase “Little Golden Book” has connoted a distinct level of cost efficiency because one of the major selling points of the line is that they are easily replaced after a full day of being treated poorly by children. Cost wise, these books are obtainable for almost nothing (25-cents in the 1940s, \$2.99 today); yet, they provide hours of seemingly educational entertainment. Nonetheless, the simple addition of the word “classic” to the Little Golden Book cover changes its cost efficient connotation by creating a secondary level of importance. Not only have “classics” been around for generations, but a “classic” book should also be treated with a respect, dignity, and reverence that is not often afforded to a child’s toy. A “classic” book

should be kept on a shelf out of reach so as to be admired from afar. Despite the fact that the Classic line of Little Golden Books is identical to the not-classic line, through the addition of this “classic” connotation, the Little Golden Book imprint aligns these affordable children’s books with other “classic” leather-bound books that are generally sold as part of a series and designed for formal, not daily, use. This is not to say that children are not or will not read a Little Golden Book that is physically labeled as a “classic.” Rather, identifying certain Little Golden Books as “classic” solidifies the historical and cultural importance of the books themselves and induces nostalgic memories.

To further capitalize on this “classic” connotation, Random House also debuted a new line of treasuries in 2004 and 2005¹ consisting of three faux-leather Little Golden Book collections titled *Animal Tales*, *Sleepytime Tales*, and *Farm Tales* that are oddly large (10.4 x 8.0 x 1.0 inches) when compared to original Little Golden Books (7.9 x 6.7 x 0.2 inches), yet not terribly out of place next to a coffee table book or large format picture books. Even though these collections contain childhood favorites such as *Sailor Dog*, *The Animals of Farmer Jones* or *I Can Fly*, the sheer size and bulkiness of each collection (2.6 pounds as opposed to the approximately 4.0 ounce singular story book) negates a child’s ability to drag the book² around and make the book her or his own. Clearly these oversized collections are meant to be kept on a shelf as treasured keepsakes³ and only read through in the presence of an adult who can easily

¹ In late 2006, perhaps in response to customer comments, Random House released smaller (8.1 x 6.7 x 0.8 inches), lighter (1.4 pounds) editions of these keepsake treasuries that contain fewer stories per book (down from twelve to nine) and now sport the signature gold-foil spine.

² On Amazon.com, some on-line reviewers also point out that these three debut books are too large for a child to wield successfully on their own.

³ This connection between oversized editions of Little Golden Books and the treasured keepsake is reiterated in customer reviews on Amazon.com.

share⁴ such a large text with the child. Rather than capitalize on the recognizable gold-foil spine that marks original Little Golden Books, a gold-leafed vine frames the picture on the front cover of these oversized texts, thus providing an outside border that further mimics the look of a “classic,” canonical text. Even the outside edges of the books pages are brushed in gold. By stepping away from the recognizable design of the original series that evokes images of children’s playrooms and messy bookshelves, these newer larger-sized collections step towards the preconceived imagery of a stuffy, darkened, smoke-filled home library where similarly designed collectable books exist to be seen but not read. This stepping away also moves these copies of the Little Golden Books further away from the presumably grimy hands of a child audience and into the cleaner hands of the “classic” collecting adult.

This particular marketing of Little Golden Books Classics to an adult consumer further supports the rumored disappearance of children’s literature. As pointed out by Jerry Griswold in “The Disappearance of Children’s Literature (or Children’s Literature as Nostalgia) in the United States in the Late Twentieth Century,” the stalwart boundaries between literature for adults and literature for children is and has been eroding. No longer are children the primary consumers of children’s literature. Current sales data shows that “between 1982 and 1990 [the] sales of children’s books quadrupled” even though the sheer number of small children and births in the United States fell (Griswold 37). Concurrently, children’s literature enjoys a significantly greater prestige and acceptance in the realm of higher education with an increase in university-level children’s literature courses and in literary scholarship. What all of this suggests, then, is a

⁴ Buying a book to give to a child is distinctly different than buying a keepsake quality book that must be shared with the child, since a child can only prove ownership by maintaining personal control of the book. Even the oversized, attractive gift-books traditionally given by parents or grandparents to children in the early 19th Century more often than not remained under the jurisdiction of the adult who controlled where and when the gift-book could be viewed by the young child.

“considerable *adult* interest in children’s books” (Griswold 38). Clearly, as the adult interest in children’s books grows, so will the adult interest in other personally significant bits of memorabilia based on and culled from childhood—reflecting nostalgia for both the actual object itself and for the products connected to that same object. In trying to recapture cherished memories of childhood, adults will buy both an actual Little Golden Book and spin-off products with Little Golden Book images such as t-shirts or stuffed animals that look like the Poky Little Puppy or the Shy Little Kitten.

Recycling Little Golden Book Images

Even as Little Golden Books are sought as souvenirs of childhood or gathered into a collection, their high visibility in American culture provides a starting point for the replication of specific characters and the mimicry of the books’ overall design. A consumer culture that thrives on the collection of physical objects is driven by the same nostalgic underpinnings that stimulate the recycling of fashion, film, and other consumable mass products. Whether ironic or sincere in its intent, the recycling of images and motifs springing from the Little Golden Books line further generates an appeal across multiple generations.

Two separate flash-generated cartoons on the Homestar Runner (H*R) web site feature parodies of a recurring character interacting with a Little Golden Books replica. Rather than place the low price that Little Golden Books are known for in the upper left-hand corner, these two replicas include the phrase “Cheap as Free,” an indication of the books’ low cost and easy replacement value (Brothers Chaps “sbemail84”). In the first cartoon, a child-like character named Strong Bad revamps the contents of his brother’s book⁵ *Everyone is Different* by drawing

⁵ Viewers know that this particular book actually belongs to a character named Strong Sad who is Strong Bad’s brother because he signed his name in the “This Book Belongs To” emblem on the inside front cover, which is another highly recognizable characteristic of the Little Golden Books line.

over the pictures and the text with a thick black marker. As Strong Bad turns the pages, he edits the story's lesson, built on the acceptance of other people's differences, into a horrifying tale of mayhem where "some people are squirrel-handed," "some people are being fangoriously eaten by a gelatinous monster," and "no two people are not on fire" (Brothers Chaps "sbemail84"). In the second cartoon, Strong Bad edits a Little Golden Books replica commemorating Decemberween, a holiday celebrated specifically by characters on the Homestar Runner web site. Much like the first manipulated text, Strong Bad introduces gross elements into an innocuous story by writing phrases such as "now a million eyeballs fall from de bove. The boy gets financial advice from the rat king" or "the store is crowed with robots bursting out of people. Oh the humanity" on the pages of the book (Brothers Chaps "dween_kidsbook"). Replicating a child's knack for writing or coloring over her or his own book, in both of these examples, the easily recognizable cuteness of childhood is transformed to entertain a primarily adult audience through the manipulation of these childhood themes. The interaction of Strong Bad with the Little Golden Books replica not only plays with the various uses of a Little Golden Book in the hands of a child, but also nostalgically recalls common childhood actions for an adult viewing audience.

Initially, these cartoons might appear to be anti-nostalgic and maybe even anti- Little Golden Books because the replicas are mangled by a child rather than cherished by an adult. Since Strong Bad is in the midst of his childhood, he is not filled with a nostalgic longing for pristine souvenirs of the past, nor does he care about preserving the book's immediate spotlessness. But the primary audience for the Homestar Runner web site consists of adults with computers, therefore much of the humorous subtext of these cartoons is based an adult audience's remembrances of the past. By defacing a Little Golden Books replica, these two flash

animations bring into question the idealized innocence of childhood that clings to the Little Golden Books and mock the style seen most often in Little Golden Books coproduced with Sesame Street during the 1970s which advocated inclusiveness despite physical differences. By layering one story over the other, Strong Bad brings childhood's dark, though not evil, side to the surface. No longer just cute, these flash animations make the defacing of Little Golden Books cool by subtly playing on how the viewer's perception of nostalgia and of the souvenirs of childhood changes as the viewer moves away from childhood.

The docile, innocent, and cherubic Little Golden Books child is further mocked in another on-line manipulation of an actual Little Golden Book written by Jane Werner Watson and illustrated by Eloise Wilkin: *My Little Golden Book about God*. On his web site, Jason Yungbluth takes this book and graphically manipulates it into a biting satire that challenges the saccharine sweetness of children by changing the text but leaving the illustrations intact. In this, *My Little Golden Book about God* becomes *My Little Golden Book about Zogg*, a translation of the "baby powder scented Final Solution" that has been distributed among the human race from our extraterrestrial "enemies from beyond" (Yungbluth). *My Little Golden Book about Zogg* is a guidebook that informs aliens masked as children about how to manipulate and destroy the adult population, thereby taking control of the entire planet for the use of Zogg. Comparing *My Little Golden Book about God* to *My Little Golden Book about Zogg*⁶ reveals Yungbluth's implicit argument against the docile, uncalculating nature of children proposed in Wilkin's illustrations. On one illustration-filled page, a young white girl is depicted playing by the ocean, hanging Christmas stockings, and being generally groomed for domestic situations by holding a baby doll

⁶ The inclusion of African American children along with white children in the illustrations indicates that the template book being used by Yungbluth is not the initial 1950s publication, but instead is a copy that was republished after the Civil Rights Movement. After printing the initial edition, a scattering of nonwhite children replaced the previously all white cast of children in *My Little Golden Book about God*.

or watching mom care for an infant brother. Under these images are two simple sentences: “Mimic human infant traits until gametogenesis begins. Devour any competitor spawn” (Yungbluth). Rather than simply accept and conform to the domestic role of women as it is shown in the illustrations, Yungbluth’s two sentences indicate the need for these alien children to mimic motherhood in order to destroy all other human children. Most startling is the image of a small white girl hugging a man in order to understand that “God is . . . the warm, strong hug of our daddy’s arms” (Watson). The reader can only see the father from behind, but the child’s empty, blue, glassy-eyed, stare is devoid of any emotion and underwritten in Yungbluth’s manipulated version by the sentence, “The humans are weak” (Yungbluth). Whether or not a reader is familiar with Watson’s original text, the Yungbluth version highlights a child’s ability to manipulate adults with a look of wide-eyed innocence, which is a strong contrast to the image of the pure, feckless child drawn by Wilkin.

The ultimate example of cute childhood memories repackaged as adult cool culminates in Hot Topic, a clothing store that features designers such as Dickies, Morbid Threads, and T.U.K., while also focusing on music, fashion and pop-punk trends that commodify rebellion in childhood. Hot Topic carries everything from Care Bears t-shirts and “Made in the 80s” air fresheners to vinyl bustiers and chain wallets. In 2003, Hot Topic marketed three different Little Golden Books formfitting t-shirts to their female clientele. One shirt featured the Poky Little Puppy; another shirt featured the Shy Little Kitten. A third shirt reproduced the highly recognizable “This Book Belongs To” emblem from inside a Little Golden Book’s front cover surrounded by various characters including the Tawny Scrawny Lion and the Little Engine That Could. This same ring of characters appears on the back of the 1999 reprint of *Doctor Dan the Bandage Man* and other books in the Classics line. In addition to these designs available through

Hot Topic, the clothing manufacturing company Passing 4 Sane printed another shirt featuring the Fuzzy Duckling. This particular iron-on transfer and the other transfers featuring Little Golden Books characters were all printed on two distinct subcategories of t-shirt that evoke the nostalgia of both childhood and past styles: the solid baby-doll and the ringer t. Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *The Body Project*, part of which recounts the blurring of the line between adult and juvenile clothing, critiques this current trend where "the age homogeneity of the contemporary wardrobe helps adult women feel less matronly" and children are unwittingly marked as sexual objects (118). Similarly, screen-printing an image as cute and innocent as the Shy Little Kitten onto the front of a clingy, curve-enhancing t-shirt introduces sexiness overlaid with childhood innocence on the teenage or adult female body. The recycling of these Little Golden Books images on t-shirts sold at Hot Topic highlights their continued significance among white, middle class, suburban shoppers with a penchant for rebelling against the nostalgic souvenirs of childhood.

These Little Golden Books and replicated images can then, in turn, be passed down from one generation to the next as adults grow nostalgic for a piece of their own childhood and search for more products. The Little Golden Books thrive because they can tap into and even be manipulated by both restorative and reflective nostalgia as defined in *The Future of Nostalgia*. By recycling image from the Little Golden Books on t-shirts or through tchotckes, the Little Golden Books represent aspects of reflective nostalgia which "cherishes shattered fragments or memory and temporalizes space" while being both "ironic and humorous" in its reflection (Boym 49). In order to market them as collector's items, the Little Golden Books must rely on their ability to stimulate memories of both an American national past and an individual adult's childhood through their idealized images of the 1940s and '50s. Undeniably, a key component of

the continued success and longevity of the Little Golden Books is tied to the American consumer's reliance on material objects that will fill in the gaps created by nostalgic longing.

CHAPTER 7
“FOR THE MASSES, NOT THE CLASSES”: AN EPILOGUE

In 1992, the Little Golden Books celebrated their “golden” 50th Anniversary. To mark the occasion, Western Publishing produced a commemorative box set of the original twelve Little Golden Books that capitalized on consumer nostalgia and included titles that are still popular today, like *The Poky Little Puppy*, *Prayers for Children*, and *The Little Red Hen*. Through a book donation from Western, the Smithsonian Institute also established a permanent exhibit in 1992 titled “Little Golden Books and American Culture, 1942-1992” in the National Museum of American History. Most interestingly, though, the Chair of Western Richard Berstein essentially declared that the Little Golden Books would last forever as an American icon because they are “for the masses, not the classes” (Goddard 28). This single lilting phrase, recorded by *Publisher’s Weekly*, captures all that the Little Golden Books have stood for since their inception: quality picture books at an affordable price. By trying to make their picture books readily available to all consumers in the United States regardless of financial status, the Little Golden Books in the 1940s committed themselves, purposefully or not, to helping disseminate the middlebrow concept of culturally raising oneself through reading. Clearly, the early influences of middlebrow culture still permeate the rhetoric surrounding today’s Little Golden Book since Berstein places the “masses” in direct contrast to the “classes.” Although, whether or not children benefit from reading the Little Golden Books was still up for debate in 1992 since, as Berstein quips, children “are as likely to eat their [Little Golden] books as read them” (Goddard 28).

Six years before the Little Golden Books’ 50th anniversary, the one billionth Little Golden Book rolled off Western Publishing’s printing presses in Racine, Wisconsin, on 20 November 1986. The moment was celebrated by the staff in Racine before the book itself was rushed to the

New York Public Library's Central Children's Room at the Donnell Library Center. Settled into an oversized reading chair provided by Western Publishing, actor Tony Randall read the one billionth Little Golden Book printed—*The Poky Little Puppy*—to a crowd of children in attendance. As quipped by Leonard Marcus in *Golden Legacy*, “few of those present were old enough to appreciate the extreme irony of the setting” since the Little Golden Books have a history of being eschewed by librarians (210). The celebratory act of reading *The Poky Little Puppy* out loud in the New York Public Library not only exemplified the continued popularity of one of the twelve original titles from 1942, but also showcased the extent to which the Little Golden Books have been accepted as an integral part of American children's culture since the setting of the reading mocks the historical notion that librarians hate the Little Golden Book.

As Western celebrated the one-billionth book to roll of the presses in 1986 and their 50-year anniversary in 1992, few could have foreseen the trouble that laid ahead for the parent company of the Little Golden Books named Golden Books Family Entertainment, Inc.¹ Between 1993 and 1996, Western lost more than \$140 million due to “excess inventories” and “alleged financial mismanagement” (Bianco). The Little Golden Books, a seemingly magical institution that survived wartime rations, shaped the production of children's picture books, and spanned multiple decades, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy twice in the late 1990s. The general public feared that the Little Golden Books were about to sing their swan song until Random House Inc. and Classic Media Inc. jointly bought out the company in 2001 “for \$84.4 million and the assumption of most of the company's liabilities” (Kirkpatrick). Random House not only bought the licensing rights previously owned by Golden Books but they also restored good faith in the

¹ In 1996, Western Publishing changed its name to Golden Books Family Entertainment, Inc. when a new investment group gained controlling interest in the company.

Little Golden Books' name by setting aside money to continue providing dental and health care benefits to retirees, a move that went against current bankruptcy settlement trends (Rovito).

By creating picture books of merit that were not only beautiful and well-written, but also affordable, Western has over the years built an iconic name in American children's literature and reached a nation-wide audience of young readers who range from nameless working class children in daycare centers to celebrity icons. In 1996, Richard Snyder, former owner of Western Publishing and the "Little Napoleon of publishing," readily declares that the name Golden Books is "priceless" because "no one buys an S.&S. [Simon and Schuster] book or a Random House book because of the name" (Rosenblatt 1). Snyder goes on to argue, speaking in delighted hyperbole, that "every mother alive has read Golden Books as a child and will buy them for her children" (Rosenblatt 1). For example, Jacqueline and John F. Kennedy's daughter Caroline is quite famously pictured sitting next to her mother while holding a copy of her "favorite book"—Ruth Krauss's *I Can Fly* with illustrations by Mary Blair (Canemaker 72). Prior to Random House's purchase of the Little Golden Books in 2001, a bidding war ensued for the company because, as noted by Steven Zeitchik in *Publisher's Weekly*, "there's something appealing about what Golden does" (Zeitchik). Moreover, the "ability to license characters to TV and movie studios" is what makes the purchase of Little Golden Books "an important (not to mention cuddly) way to keep revenues high" for the new owners (Zeitchik). Clearly, the Little Golden Books were, are, and will continue to be designed to delight children from all class structures, which might be the reason why their name carries such cultural currency in the United States.

The currency of the Little Golden Books does not end with their name, though; over the decades they have also inspired the work of award-winning writers and illustrators. In his 2003 Newbery acceptance speech for *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, Avi states that his life long love of

reading perhaps began with *The Poky Little Puppy* when “at the age of five [he] breathlessly announced ‘I can read! I can read!’”(Avi). Author and illustrator of Little Golden Books’ *The Red Lemon* (named one of the 10 Best Illustrated Children’s Books in 2006), Bob Staake notes that the Little Golden Books from his childhood in the 1960s inspires his current work which is why he enjoys seeing “that trademark gold spine hugging [his] artwork” (Staake). In particular, Staake “admire[s] the work of Aurelius Battaglia” who illustrated *Little Boy with a Big Horn* “with a wonderful less-is-more approach” (Marcus 220). Craig McCracken, creator the *Powerpuff Girls*, states that the Little Golden Books “were big influences on a lot of us” at CalArts, where “everybody discovered the great design from those books” (Lloyd 2). Certainly, the influence of the Little Golden Books has reached beyond the nursery room door.

As a matter of fact, the allure of the Little Golden Books does not end at either shore of the United States. According to an article in the *Racine Journal-Times* in 1950, Western Printing signed a contract with the Toppan Printing Company in Japan to “publish in the in the Far East the same line of Little Golden Books that ... have gained fame in this country [the United States]” (“Japanese Publishers” 4). Additionally, an exhibition of Garth William’s illustrations titled “The Picture Book World of Garth Williams” and featuring his work in the Little Golden Books traveled the country between 2002 and 2003. Also in 2003, a Little Golden Books exhibition in the Netherlands “marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Little Golden Books’ first appearance in that country” (Marcus 218). Some Little Golden Books that have been out of print for years in the United States like *Bobby and His Airplanes*, first published in 1949, continue to be reissued in Dutch in the Netherlands by the Rubinstein publishing house (Strom).

Every ten years, the Little Golden Book anniversary is greeted with much fanfare in the children’s book publishing world, the recycling of Little Golden Book titles based on a mix of

consumer-driven nostalgia and popularity, and the addition of new, unique titles to the Little Golden Books catalogue. In 2002 Random House marked the Little Golden Books' 60th anniversary by producing another boxed set of books culled from the Little Golden Books Classic line, which had launched one year earlier. This "Classic" line of Little Golden Books brought "back popular vintage Little Golden Books titles based on consumer demand" and the availability of the original artwork ("timeline"). According to Random House, several of the first six books reissued as part of the Classic line sold over 200,000 copies in their first year. These first six books include Richard Scarry's *Good Night Little Bear*, Jane Werner Watson's *The Lion's Paw* with illustrations by Gustaf Tenggren, J. P. Miller's *The Little Red Hen*, and three titles illustrated by Tibor Gergely — Ilo Orleans's *Animal Orchestra*, *The Fire Engine Book*, and *The Good Humor Man*. More recent reissues through the Classic line include Gergely's *The Happy Man and His Dump Truck* (2005), Miriam Norton's *The Kitten Who Thought He Was A Mouse* (2008), and two more of Scarry's books titled *Chipmunk's ABC* (2007) and *The Bunny Book* (2005).

During an email exchange, Diane Muldrow, the current Little Golden Books editor, pointed out to me that the availability of original artwork is a strong factor in determining which Little Golden Books will be reissued as Classics. Artwork that is already in the Little Golden Books archives or that can be borrowed from an artist's family for digital scanning is always ideal because a high quality visual that captures the textures and details of the original artwork can be produced from it. In contrast, scanning illustrations from an actual book or from a film image produces a poor quality visual. Thus, when Muldrow writes on the back covers of Classic Little Golden Books like *Dr. Dan the Bandage Man* that she has "searched our archives" for the "best Little Golden Books ever published," she is literally unveiling part of her decision making

process since which older books can be reissued is determined by what artwork is in the archives (Muldraw). Unfortunately for Little Golden Book collectors, Muldraw will not divulge which Little Golden Books, if any, cannot be reissued due to a disintegration of the original artwork.

Today, Muldraw picks new titles to publish that contain “classic” subjects in line with the existing catalogue. She has found that “people's tastes for their children don't change that much” (Muldraw 16 Nov.). Whether “people’s tastes” influence the new Little Golden Books or the Little Golden Books themselves have influenced people’s tastes over the decades is a circular chicken or the egg question that could spark many speculations but few definitive answers. Yet, the word “classic” and all that it connotes seems to be the current driving force behind both new and reissued Little Golden Books. When discussing which Little Golden Books are worthy of reissuing, Muldraw notes that the book must be “well written,” contain “content [that] is classic enough for the kids of today to relate to,” and incorporate art work with “a classic sort of flair or charm” (Muldraw 18 Nov.). Here, Muldraw’s use of the word “classic” indicates her belief—and quite possibly the company’s long standing conviction—that certain childhood interests about the world never have and never will go out of style. Moreover, artwork with a “classic sort of flair” is generally derived from Little Golden Books first published during the 1940s when middlebrow culture was on the rise and then from books published during the 1950s and 1960s. Muldraw readily admits that she “rarely reissue[s] anything from the 1970s” because that style of art “has not dated well” (Muldraw 18 Nov.). While reissued titles must be “classic enough” for today’s child, new titles like Dennis Shealy’s *I’m a Truck* and Trish Holland’s *Lasso the Moon* have the potential to “become the classics of tomorrow” (Muldraw 16 Nov.).

Over the past 65 years, the Little Golden Books have worked their way into public library systems, remained consistent with the ideals of middlebrow culture, and repeatedly influenced a

cadre of writers and illustrators, which is why this epilogue is a continuation rather than a conclusion. If the Little Golden Books flourish for another 40 years, they will celebrate their 100th anniversary in 2042. Considering the consistent popularity of the Little Golden Books in the United States, reaching a century milestone does not seem completely impossible. We should all look forward to seeing how the Little Golden Books continue to grow in numbers, respond to socio-cultural changes, and shape American children's literature in the years to come.

APPENDIX A
LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK ADVERTISEMENTS

From 1956 to 1964, Golden Book products were advertised on the back of Little Golden Books. The following is a listing of the books and/or subjects arranged by the heading under which they were advertised:

Big Golden Books for Growing Minds

1. Astronomy
2. Science
3. Natural History
4. History of the World
5. Geography
6. Encyclopedia

Craft and Hobby Books

1. Camping
2. Indian Crafts
3. Crafts and Hobbies
4. Make-It (Do-it) Book
5. Chemistry Experiments
6. Wild Animal Pets
7. Nature Crafts
8. Gardening

De Lux Golden Books

1. The World We Live In
2. The Human Body
3. The Golden Book of America
4. The Sea Around Us
5. Walt Disney's World of Nature
6. The Golden Book of the American Revolution
7. The Golden Treasury of Myths and Legends

Fiction for Boys and Girls

For girls:

1. Vicky Loring — *A Career for Vicky*
2. Penny of Paintrock — *Trouble at Paintrock*
3. Kathy Martin — *Junior Nurse*

For boys:

1. Dig Allen — *Journey to Jupiter*
2. Ellery Queen, Jr. — *Mystery of the Vanished Victim*
3. Brains Benton* — *Case of the Painted Dragon*
*(Lots of girls can hardly wait for the newest Brains Benton title.)

Giant Golden Books for Growing Minds

1. The Story of Flight
2. Science
3. Astronomy
4. Bible Atlas
5. Geography
6. Encyclopedia
7. The Fairy Tale Book

Giant Little Golden Books

1. 5 Bedtime Stories
2. My Christmas Treasury
3. Favorite Stories
4. Donald Duck Treasury
5. Dogs
6. Animal Stories
7. Wild Animals
8. Mother Goose
9. Nursery Tales
10. Birds
11. Dictionary
12. Adventures of Lassie

Golden Beginning Readers

1. Little Black Puppy
2. Where Do You Live?
3. The King Who Learned to Smile
4. Belling the Cat and Other Stories
5. The Wonderful House
6. Round Round World
7. Just for Fun
8. Too many Bozos
9. Where's Willie?
10. The Large and Growly Bear
11. Pear-Shaped Hill
12. Sylvester the Mouse with the Musical Ear
13. George the Gentle Giant
14. A Pickle for a Nickel
15. Jonathan and the Dragon
16. The Whale Hunt

Golden Books for the Very Young

1. Wonders of Nature
2. Three Bedtime Stories
3. Animal ABC
4. The Color Kittens
5. Baby Farm Animals
6. Birds
7. My Big Golden Counting Books

Golden Capitol Adventure Kits

1. Rocks
2. Sea Shells
3. Insects
4. Birds
5. Stars
6. Weather
7. Plants

Golden Guides

1. Southwest
2. Southeast
3. Northwest
4. Photography
5. Weather
6. Stars
7. Zoology
8. Mammals
9. Flowers
10. Fishes
11. Trees
12. Birds
13. Seashores
14. Reptiles and Amphibians
15. Insects
16. Rocks and Minerals

Golden Library of Knowledge

1. Prehistoric Animals
2. Walt Disney's White Wilderness
3. Indians and the Old West
4. Famous American Ships
5. Birds of the World
6. Walt Disney's Wildlife of the West
7. Butterflies and Moths
8. The Sea

Golden Nature Guides

1. Birds
2. Flowers
3. Insects
4. Stars
5. Reptiles and Amphibians
6. Fishes
7. Weather
8. Mammals
9. Seashores
10. Trees

Golden Q&A Adventure Books

1. Birds
2. Insects
3. Coins
4. Stars
5. Weather
6. Underwater Life
7. Nature Crafts
8. Human Biology
9. Chemistry
10. The Human Mind
11. Magnetism
12. Rocks
13. Growing Plants
14. Shells

Golden Quiz-Me Books

1. Snakes
2. Planes and Pilots
3. Indians
4. Birds
5. Cats
6. Dogs
7. Wonders of the World
8. Dinosaurs

Golden Stamp Books

1. Dog Stamps
2. Flag Stamps
3. Science and Inventions
4. Birds of the World
5. Disney's Secrets of Life
6. Animal Stamps
7. United States: a Geography Book
8. Disney's Sleeping Beauty
9. Snakes, Turtles, and Lizards
10. American history
11. Indians
12. Insects
13. Trucks
14. Animals of the Past
15. Boats and Ships
16. Animals of the Sea
17. Automobiles
18. Bible Stories
19. Wonders of the World
20. Disney True-Life Adventures

New Golden Activity Books

1. Molly and Mike
2. Nature Stamps
3. Animal Punch Out
4. Giant Punch-Out
5. Puppet Playhouse
6. Boy Mechanic
7. Boy Engineer
8. Boy Scientist

Walt Disney Big Golden Books

1. Uncle Remus
2. Peter Pan
3. Treasury
4. Bambi
5. Dumbo
6. Cinderella
7. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
Pinocchio

APPENDIX B LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK FABRICS

The following information about the Little Golden Books fabric comes courtesy of an interview with Holly Everson, a Little Golden Book collector. For other information about Little Golden Books, her web site address is <<http://www.goldenbook.com/>>.

As of this moment, Everson has found 11 Little Golden Book designs on multiple background colors. She believes the fabric was produced in the early 1950s, since the characters depicted are from books published between 1946 and 1956. Moreover the bolt length is 36-inches as opposed to the more common and recent width of 45-inches. The selvage, which is not present on all of Everson's pieces, provides copy write information that resembles the following format: [copyright symbol] S&S, A&W MADE IN U.S.A. "A LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK" FABRIC "THE CIRCUS ABC" BY J. P. MILLER. Here, "S&S" indicates Simon and Schuster and "A&W" refers to the Artists and Writers Guild. The selvage also indicates the book title and author from which the fabric is designed. The 11 designs owned by Everson are as follows:

1. *The Animal Fair* — designs from the book's end papers on both cream and white backgrounds.
2. *The Circus ABC* — designs from the title page on both pink and white backgrounds.
3. *The Color Kittens* — the kittens variously posed on a white background.
4. *The Little Fat Policeman* — depicts different characters on yellow and blue backgrounds.
5. *The Five Little Firemen* — one design shows ladders on an aqua background; another design shows ropes and firemen holding safety nets on green, pink, and yellow backgrounds.
6. *Pirates, Ships, and Sailors* — images from the book on a cream background.
7. *Scuffy the Tugboat* — the tugboat is randomly repeated on a yellow background.
8. *Seven Little Postmen* — letters and mailmen on a pink background.

9. *Mr. Noah* — images from the book on an aqua background and a yellow background (seersucker fabric).
10. *The Three Bears* — images from the book on a pale pink background.
11. 'A Golden Book Fabric' — the alphabet on a pink or blue background.

Everson also owns some fabric that is designed to look like the end papers of the Little Golden Books on a yellow or blue background. Since the selvage is unmarked and the fabric design does not exactly match the Little Golden Book design, Everson believes this particular fabric design could be pirated.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Julie Sinn Cassidy started her academic career at the community college in her hometown of Fort Scott, Kansas. She continued her undergraduate education at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, and majored in Secondary Education with a minor in English and journalism. During this time, she also spent a semester in Cork, Ireland, studying Irish folklore, fairy tales, and material culture. After graduating from K-State in 1997, Cassidy crossed the border into Missouri where she taught eighth grade and sophomore English, coached JV volleyball, organized the junior-senior prom, and advised the yearbook staff in a small town named Archie. Motivated by her growing interest in children's and young adult literature, Cassidy packed her life into her little red truck and returned to school full-time at the University of Florida in 1999. Over the years, she has taught various undergraduate and graduate English courses on topics including fairy tales, picture books, adolescent novels, methodologies research, and Victorian children's literature in computer-based and traditional classrooms. In preparation for her dissertation, Cassidy read over 600 Little Golden Books, 72 of which already sat on her childhood bookshelf.