Third Time's the Charm

Revisions in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Story of Sara Crewe

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Abstract

Denne masteroppgaven tar for seg Frances Hodgson Burnetts tre versjoner av historien om Sara Crewe, publisert i perioden 1887-1905 som kortroman med tittelen *Sara Crewe: Or What Happened at Miss Minchin's,* som skuespill med tittelen *The Little Princess* og som roman med tittelen *A Little Princess.* Siden fortellingen er publisert i tre versjoner i en periode hvor barnelitteraturen var i utvikling, er det mulig å vurdere revideringene gjenomført av forfatteren opp mot endringer i litterærere trender, sosiohistoriske forhold og holdninger om barn.

Første kapittel utforsker hvordan alle tre versjonene av historien om Sara Crewe fremstår som en smeltedigel av litterære og historiske allusjoner samt intertekstualitet. Burnett bryter med noen litterære tradisjoner og sjangre, men velger å inkorporere andre, noe som illustrerer at hun lot seg påvirke av aktuelle litterære bevegelser, spesielt innenfor barnelitteraturen.

Andre kapittel undersøker det nære forholdet mellom historien om Sara Crewe og eventyrsjangeren. Aller nærmest er dette forholdet til eventyret "Askepott." Ved å spille på elementer fra eventyret plasserer fortellingen seg i en etablert littærer tradisjon. Noen elementer av eventyret blir mindre tydelige i de senere versjonene, og det virker som om endringene gjør fortellingen mer realistisk og enklere for en ung leser å forholde seg til.

Tredje kapittel retter søkelyset mot ideologi og didaktikk. Her er det tydelig at det er motstridende meldinger i tekstene. Det didaktiske budskapet som er presentert er nobel, og fremmer idealer som likhet og nestekjærlighet, men klasse- og kjønns-ideologiene kompliserer til dels dette buskapet. I tillegg finnes det motstridende presentasjoner av imperialismen og dens effekter i hjemlandet og i koloniene. Det er derfor en uoverensstemmelse mellom tekstenes beviste og ubeviste budskap.

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In memory of my grandmother who introduced me to the magical world of Sara Crewe.

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Introduction

> Between the lines of every story there is another story, and that is one that is never heard and can only be guessed at by the people who are good at guessing. The person who writes the story may never know all of it, but sometimes he does and wishes he had the chance to begin again. (Burnett, "The Whole of the Story" v)

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) was a very productive author, and with regards to her literary output it would appear that she saw stories "between the lines of every story." In her preface to *A Little Princess,* "The Whole of the Story," Burnett addresses the child reader and provides a reason for publishing a new expanded version of one of her more famous works. Because it is directed at her child audience the preface might not seem plausible to the adult reader, and it does not really provide a true motivation for the decision. One can never find her true incentive for changing the story, although possible explanations are that it might have been because she was in need of the profits it could provide, that she found that the earlier versions of the story were not of a desired quality, or that she responded to requests from readers or publishers. The story of Sara Crewe, which will be the main focus of this Master's thesis, was published in three different versions, a novella, a play, and the last and most famous version, a full-length novel: *Sara Crewe: or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's* (1887), *The Little Princess: A Play for Children and Grown-up Children in Three Acts (*first performed in 1902), [1] and *A Little Princess: Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told for the First Time* (1905). All three versions will throughout this thesis be referred to collectively as "the story of Sara Crewe," and if addressed separately their distinctive titles will be used: *Sara Crewe, The Little Princess* and *A Little Princess.*

This thesis sets out to examine how the three different versions reflect general trends in the development of children's literature at the time when they were published. One of the main reasons why it is intriguing to examine the different versions of the same basic story lies

[1] The play was copyrighted in 1911.

in discovering to what extent changing attitudes to children's literature and socio-historical developments in general are reflected in the implied value systems and didactic elements of the different versions. When looking back at the developments in children's literature, it is the broad strokes of development that are focused upon, such as the general move towards less overtly didactic books. Against the backdrop to these broad strokes of development one can find the actual works of the time, and it is interesting to examine how the development is reflected in them. The way in which the different versions of the story of Sara Crewe diverge from and conform to the more general developments of children's literature will be subjected to scrutiny in an attempt to give concrete examples of the elements and influences that were part of shaping children's literature of the late nineteenth century in general, and the story of Sara Crewe in particular.

To shed light on the revisions of the story about Sara Crewe, the thesis will draw on theorising about the didactic element of children's literature, reception theory, intertextuality and ideological critique. The didactic aspect will be an overarching focus throughout the thesis, also when examining intertextual relationships and ideological subtexts of the three texts, because the texts are written with a juvenile audience in mind, and it is safe to say that the texts set out to teach the reader something.

Martyn P. Thompson discusses reception theory, and differentiates between "substantialist text theory" and "pragmatic text theory" (251), which focus on recovering authorial intent and the meaning a text assumes in the hands of the reader respectively. While examining the development of the story of Sara Crewe this thesis operates in a borderline between these two theoretical approaches. In some respects it is "substantialist" because it accounts for the author's background and speculates about authorial intent, while taking into account reader reception in some instances. Reception theory may shed light on how the works were first received by the public and how the text becomes "realized" through a variety

of readers over time. As Thompson argues, if the text has the ability to attract a wide audience over time, age and physical space, its content has great "multivalency" (252). What provides this "multivalency" is of interest, and will be given further notice.

Although the body of criticism concerning the story of Sara Crewe is surprisingly small compared to her other successful books for children, as we will see, it contains examples of diverging theories and approaches. This Master's thesis aims to address some questions that have previously been ignored in studies of the three versions of the story of Sara Crewe. Roderick McGillis, for instance, points out that too little attention has been brought to the different versions of the text (32), but rarely mentions the previous versions in his 105 pages long critical account of *A Little Princess*. In his *Introduction to Children's Literature* Peter Hunt observes:

> It is arguably impossible for a children's book (especially one being read by a child) not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology and, by extension, didacticism. … Children's writers, therefore, are in a position of singular responsibility in transmitting cultural values, rather than 'simply' telling a story. And if that were not enough, children's books are an important tool in reading education, and are thus prey to a whole area of educational and psychological influences that other literatures escape. (*Introduction* 3-4)

Accordingly, I consider that further research focusing on the didactic functions of the texts and their inherent ideologies is called for.

Burnett wrote all three versions of the story of Sara Crewe during the period of "children's literature's development towards maturity" (see e.g. Hunt, Grenby). This was the period when children's literature began developing from overtly didactic works in the eighteen-fifties to works written for the enjoyment of children (Hunt, *Introduction* 9). What can be gathered about the time period is that we can see a change in children's literature as it began developing into a distinct literary field, aiming to entertain and not only educate children.

The fact that the literary canon has traditionally been dominated by works written by a white, male, middle class, and that children's literature is primarily written by female writers, contributes to making it invisible in literary circles (Hunt, *Introduction* 6-7). This does not lessen the impact that children's literature has on the lives of ordinary people. Children's literature has a dual readership in that it has to appeal to parents and children, and these two groups' sometimes divergent expectations of literature add to the success of its writers. Hunt makes the claim that books for children survive changes in fashion better than their adult counterparts (*Introduction* 26). This could be due to the passing down of much loved children's books from parent to child, for generations. Another explanation is that didacticism is a more obvious component in children's literature than in adult literature. Some ideals and lessons conveyed in children's literature appear to be more constant.

Because books for children in the Victorian era were expensive, they were to a large degree reserved for the upper classes, and were often expected to have a beneficial purpose: an educational or didactic effect. Children who enjoyed reading were likely to look for entertainment in all kind of literature available (see e.g. Grenby 42; Hunt, *Introduction* 41-42). Michelle Smith points to the fact that as literacy increased because of educational reform, "the juvenile publishing market flourished in the late nineteenth century. While books were part of this efflorescence of children's print culture, periodicals, which were more affordable, had wider distributions and greater readerships" (23). The fact that most of Burnett's children's books appeared first in periodicals is a testimony of her wide readership.

One thing that becomes clear when looking at the twelve pages of advertisements with pictures in the back of *Sara Crewe,* is that there existed plenty of literature targeted at children, or in this case "juveniles," contemporary to the novella's publication. On the top of the page it even is stated in bold typeface that it is "Scribner's Books for the Young." It is difficult to determine whether these adverts were directed at children or adults. Phrases such

as: “The boy or girl who reads this book will be astonished at the amount of curious and entertaining information which it contains about little insects …” indicate that they are meant for parents, because they emphasise the possible learning outcomes. The bulk of the stories featured in “Scribner’s Books for the Young” are promoted with reference to their educational potential, which shows that the shift towards stories that were less didactically marked was not complete.

The majority of works mentioned in the adverts seem to be targeting a masculine readership; however, this might not reflect the real readership of the texts. Edward Salmon has examined the results of a survey conducted in 1884, where it is clear that girls “refused to be restricted to the less prestigious books designated for their gender” (116). One such sub-genre specifically targeted at boys is the adventure or travel story, but in “Scribner’s Books for the Young” there were also adverts for the more gender neutral fairy tale. Adverts containing texts with educational content numbered at sixteen, adventure and travel stories numbered at ten, while there were four adverts for fairy tales. The number of texts that were difficult to categorise, or belonged to other genres alone, was nine.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the relationship between children and parents changed, and families got smaller (Hunt, *Introduction* 31). Changes in family structure would allow parents more time and attention for their children, and could therefore be part of influencing the change in children’s literature. There were great class differences in the nineteenth century; life was quite different for people of the poorer classes than for the affluent who could attend school. Children were not allowed to work before the age of ten after 1881, and in 1891 26 % of boys and 16,3 % of girls were working between the age of ten and fourteen (Horn, Appendix 1). Children at the same age as those featured in the story of Sara Crewe could therefore be workers. However, there seems to have been a general trend that the number of child workers went down during the Victorian era (Horn, Appendix 1).

According to Pamela Horn, there was great concern that the number of children living in poverty in the British cities should become an Achilles' heel for society, so attempts were being made to remove children from the streets and sending them into elementary schools. This was however not especially effective, and societal differences remained quite large (6-7).

Burnett's books would have been coloured by the time period in which the texts were written and the time when she grew up. When writing for children authors are writing for, and often about, an age group that they no longer belong to. While everyone has been a child, time has passed from the author's childhood until they write for children. This means that to some degree authors have to use second-hand experiences, or reminisce about the bygone days when they were children themselves. Burnett was born in Manchester, England, but moved to America with her mother in her teenage years. [2] The family lived comfortably economically in England as long as her father lived, but after his death they experienced difficulties in keeping up the standard of living that they had been accustomed to. They had financial problems, but were never part of the lower classes in England. America did not have as strict class divides as England at the time, but when the Burnett family moved there they still struggled at times to make ends meet. Burnett regardless felt hope in moving to America from England:

> Reduced resources in a great town or city where one has lived always, mean change of habits and surroundings, shabbiness, anxiety, and annoyance. They mean depression and dreariness, loss of courage, and petty humiliations without end. In a foreign land among mountains and forests they mean seclusion, freedom, and novelty. (*One* 286)

This optimism towards America seems connected to the ideal of "the American dream," which is built on the assumption that people have the ability, through hard work, to achieve anything they set their mind to. Burnett, in a sense, became the self-made woman, who through hard and arduous work became a successful author, able to pull her own family out of

[2] All information about the author's childhood is derived from the main biographies on Burnett written by Thwaite, Vivian Burnett and Bixler unless otherwise is indicated in the text.

poverty. She worked hard, and changed copyright laws in Britain in 1883, which led to great appreciation from other authors (Thwaite 111), and remained a dual citizen with close ties to England and its culture. This is clear in her literature, as a majority of her works are set in England.

Burnett travelled and moved around a great deal, in a style that was common for people of affluence at the time. Francis J. Molson reports that she "derived from her writing an income higher than that of any other contemporary author, American and British" (36). Biographers such as Ann Thwaite have stated that she felt the need to write in order to make enough money to conduct her lavish lifestyle. Burnett was a sought-after writer, and her life was to a large degree public. This is evident in the vast number of newspaper articles about her, where a substantial amount has little to do with her authorship, but is more concerned with her sometimes frivolous lifestyle. [3] The death of her son Lionel occurred in 1890 between the publication of *Sara Crewe* and the play *The Little Princess*, surely affecting her greatly, and according to Thwaite and contemporary newspapers Burnett suffered from poor health, and was at least on one occasion admitted into sanatoriums ("Authoress in a Sanatorium").

Burnett authored over 29 books and several plays, her breakthrough being *That Lass O'Lowries,* published in 1877. Even if the majority of her works were intended for adults, it is the children's books that she is most remembered for. *A Little Princess, Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and, perhaps the most famous, *The Secret Garden* (1911) are still read by children and adults to this date.

Most of Burnett's children's stories were first published in *St. Nicholas Magazine,* which was a contemporary periodical featuring children's literature. This is also true for *Sara Crewe.* The six months following the publication, *St. Nicholas* received over seventeen letters

[3] *The New York Times* featured over 800 articles about her between 1880 and 1930, and Thwaite refers to others in her biography.

from all over the world, praising *Sara Crewe* and the previously published *Little Lord Fauntleroy*: "I think that 'Sara Crewe' was splendid, and I am so sorry it is finished" and "We thought 'Sara Crewe' was going to be a much longer story, and hope Mrs. Burnett will soon write another" ("The Letter-Box" 557). Praise such as this testifies to the popularity of Burnett amongst children, but because literature for children is dependent on a dual readership in order to have success authors must take also into account that parents buy books for their children.

There are today several new versions and editions of Burnett's works, but these will only be mentioned when deemed necessary. The texts used in this thesis are as close to the first editions of the original texts as it was possible to procure, and they are all American publications. Other scholars have already examined differences in the works between the American and British edition, and found them to be no other than differences between standard American and British writing and grammar (Resler 40-41). The novella and the novel were both copyrighted in the year they were published, while the play was not copyrighted by Burnett until 1911.

There are some substantial differences between the three texts. First of all, there is the difference in genre and medium of publication. *Sara Crewe,* which was first published as a serialised novella in the periodical *St. Nicholas Magazine* in 1887-1889, is quite short. *A Little Princess,* published in 1905, is more than three times that length and is categorised as a novel. The last text is quite different, as it is a play. *The Little Princess* was first performed under the title of *A Little Un-Fairy Princess* in London, 1902. Shortly thereafter, in January 1903, it was performed in New York, under its publication title. A play is a dynamic entity in the sense that each staging is different and subject to interpretation of the script. Its British staging received moderate success, but the American production was very well received (V. Burnett 304). The only thing that is known from the first staging is the original cast. The play is

written in a frugal way, covering only sixty pages, with little directions as to the appearance or costume of the performers. Its shortness could be ascribed to the fact that it is written as a complement to the novella, where some things are described in more detail, which also indicates that the script for the play was not intended to be read. Another important factor is that Burnett was personally involved in the production of her plays. A play presents some natural limitations due to its medium of presentation; a stage has limited place to arrange props, there is a limitation as to how many characters the audience can relate to, the audience has a limited attention span that will affect the length of the performance, and during a performance there is a limitation as to how many times you can change and rearrange the scene. These limitations are apparent in the play, since events that otherwise are crucial to the story have been changed or removed. Despite these limitations, however, quite a few characters and events have been added.

The novella *Sara Crewe* tells the story of Sara Crewe as she comes to England from India to attend Miss Minchin's Select Seminary. In the novella it does not take long before the reader is told that Captain Crewe, who is Sara's father, has passed away, leaving Sara nothing. Her stay at the seminary becomes a miserable one, but her happiness is soon restored through the charitable actions of Mr Carrisford carried out through the servant Ram Dass. Later she is recognised by Mr Carrisford as the daughter of his late business associate Captain Crewe, and she regains her wealth.

The play *The Little Princess* is similar to the novella, but begins when Captain Crewe dies. Becky, Lottie and Lavinia are added as entirely new characters. Ermengarde and Amelia have more influential roles. A scene in which Sara is charitable towards a beggar girl named Anne is left out of the plot, whilst "the big family" assumes a more prominent role. The play centres around three main acts: when Sara is told of her father's death, life at the seminary and the transformation of the garret, and the discovery that she is Captain Crewe's daughter.

The novel *A Little Princess* seems at first glance to have incorporated both versions without substantial changes; this is not entirely true however. Some characters, such as the big family and other servants, have been given less emphasis in the novel. The everyday events of boarding school life and the interaction between the parlour boarders are allotted more space, and the scene in which Sara meets the beggar girl Anne is re-introduced.

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Chapter one, "The Stories within a Story: Intertextuality and Inter-Texts in the Story of Sara Crewe," discusses intertextuality in the three versions of the story of Sara Crewe. Some intertextual references, such as specific in-text references or allusions to book-titles, historical events, or persons might be easily detectable, whilst others, such as genre influences, are more obscure. The effect these have and the development throughout the publications will be the main focus of the discussion.

Chapter two, "Rewriting 'Cinderella' and Recycling Fairy Tale Motifs," concerns the link between the story of Sara Crewe and fairy tale motifs in general and "Cinderella" specifically, thus to some degree continuing the discussion of intertextuality. Stereotypes and stock characters are a common feature of fairy tales, and they are also present in the story of Sara Crewe, and are enforced through the use of illustrations. The symbolic significance of the description and illustrations of the characters in the text will be compared to the stock characters of the fairy tale.

Chapter three, "Ideology and Didacticism in the Story of Sara Crewe," examines the ways in which ideology and didacticism permeates the text of Sara Crewe, and how the readership, literary trends and contemporary society are part of shaping the text. The discussion also takes into account how the ideological and didactic content of the text has changed throughout the three versions and how it functions for a different audience over time and geographical and social borders.

Chapter 1
The Stories within the Story
Intertextuality and Inter-Texts in the Story of Sara Crewe

> "It is a story," said Sara. "Everything's a story. You are a story—I am a story. Miss Minchin is a story." (Burnett, *Little* 123)

The epigraph of this chapter captures the essence of the analysis in this and the next chapter. When finding a way of coping with her new reality of living in poverty, the main character Sara Crewe points out that everything is a story. The effect of such an utterance is playful, since the reader knows that Sara and Miss Minchin are part of a story. In a sense this points to the way all events can be made into a story, and that every story may contain other stories, which is what will be discussed in this chapter, and the next chapter will address concerning the special relationship between the story of Sara Crewe and the fairy tale.

According to Daniel Lee, "Intertextuality is the name often given to the manner in which texts of all sorts (oral, visual, literary, virtual) contain references to other texts that have, in some way, contributed to their production and signification" (121). The first and the second chapter will rely on an understanding of intertextuality exemplified in John Stephens' *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* and John Stephens and Robyn McCallum's *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture,* in which they examine children's literature and the distribution of inter-texts in such works.[4] One incentive for examining intertextuality in the story of Sara Crewe is to compare how each version of the text relates to previously established literary genres, identifiable texts, and what Stephens refers to as "socio-historical narratives or moments" (85). Sara lives her life with the lines between fiction and life blurred, stating that "Everything's a story" and making stories come to life through narration (123, 46). She is described by her father as "always sitting with her little nose burrowing into

[4] If not stated otherwise, the discussion will not take into account the theories of intertextuality by scholars such as Gérard Genette, Julie Kristeva and Mikhail Bakthin.

books. … she gobbles them up as if she were a little wolf instead of a little girl" (*Little* 10). Sara is described as devouring stories, as other people might devour food. As a bookworm she is familiar with literature, even to such an extent that a fairy story is the first thing that pops into her head when she discovers that her room has been transformed by Mr. Carrisford and Ram Dass: "The room of her dream seemed changed into fairyland—and it was flooded with warm light, for a bright lamp stood on the table covered with a rosy shade" (*Little* 209).

As with most literature for children, the story of Sara Crewe draws on intertextual elements from different genres in order to create a cohesive and appealing text for children. Some might question the relevance of intertextuality in children's literature, as there is no guarantee that children, as adults, are familiar with the references that are being made. As Stephens suggests, the importance of intertextuality is rather that texts employ other works "to produce determinable meanings and to acculturate the audience," and that it is less important that the reader is already familiar with the specific "pre-texts" (85-86). He argues that the relationship between a "focused text," which is to say the text that is object of research, and other texts may take numerous forms, the most obvious being references to specific "pre-texts" that are alluded to or directly quoted in the focused text (Stephens 84). In chapter two I argue that an obvious pre-text in all three versions of Sara Crewe is the fairy tale "Cinderella," and that Burnett's stories represents what Stephens and McCallum refer to as "re-versions" (4). A less specific intertextual relationship can be found in instances where unidentifiable pre-texts are based on "a range of generic features" (Stephens and McCallum 5). Both the inference of specific pre-texts and generic features could be said to evoke genre recognition, which might be comforting for the younger reader. Elements from the allegory or the "exemplum," the novel of sentiment, the school story and the fairy tale all colour the realistic story of Sara Crewe, making it almost possible to imagine it as a mosaic or tapestry of

different literary influences. It is impossible to write a story uninfluenced by other literary works, because an author is continuously exposed to literary surroundings throughout life.

What makes elements of the fairy tale, or any intertextual reference and literary allusion in a work of literature, critically engaging is the question of what socio-historical connotations and didactic ideas lie beneath the presence or absence of specific references. As Stephens suggests, "intertextuality is exploited to inculcate knowledge about contemporary culture and to illustrate how that knowledge is to be used" (115). Authors therefore draw upon intertextual elements in order to reflect upon the contemporary culture, and employ this social knowledge within a frame that might appeal to the reader. If it is clear that some elements are omitted, for instance in the case of a "re-version," the significance of this could be a wish to remove such influences from what is being "acculturated." As our texts draw upon borrowed elements from different genres and traditions, such as the novel of sentiment, the school story and the allegory or the "exemplum," it is interesting to examine how these influences were developed and changed throughout the different versions of the story. As a result of the substantial lengthening that the story of Sara Crewe underwent, one may expect that there will be an increase in the elements borrowed from these influences.

One form of intertextuality that will be examined is what Stephens calls the relationship between the focused text and "socio-historical narratives or moments" (85), that is, allusions to influential historical works or important historical events. Although the dialogical relationship to such texts might be obvious, I include them because of their ideological implications as well as their dramatic effect. In all three versions of the story of Sara Crewe, references to role models from the French Revolution have persisted, whilst other textual or historical references have been changed. There is a shift in the latest version, *A Little Princess,* which is much longer, where some literary allusions have been removed. The resulting text is perhaps more timeless or less ideologically marked. It will be of interest

to see whether it is possible to detect a pattern or logic behind the added and excluded elements and influences.

Stephens and McCallum make the claim that it is common in children's literature to include a large proportion of textual references: "When compared with general literature, the literature produced for children contains a much larger proportion of retold stories," in which the retold stories' function is to "serve to initiate children into aspects of a social heritage, transmitting many of a culture's central values and assumptions and a body of shared allusions and experiences" (3). I would argue that intertextuality in the form of retellings, re-versions or drawing upon generic features is especially apparent in children's literature because of the ideological and didactic function of this kind of literature in society. Most critics of children's literature and the fairy tale agree that fairy tales and children's literature are not stable entities, unaffected by the passing of time. Fairy tales, and by extension literature influenced by the fairy tale, have been reconstructed and changed throughout time, and can therefore reveal information concerning the adult agenda, and shifting attitudes towards children and children's upbringing (see e.g. Tatar and Bettelheim). In addition children's literature, as opposed to literature for adults, usually has an agenda of teaching social skills. This agenda is usually present regardless of whether the author consciously adds it or not, because literature is based on the author's experience of society. Therefore, the revised retellings of different pre-texts, borrowings from different genres and allusions to prominent works of literature could be read as indications of societal attitudes in general, and ideas concerning children and children's literature more specifically.

The story of Sara Crewe draws upon several influences that shape the texts and reader expectations. Hence, the story can be considered an example of realist fiction drawing upon other subgenres, such as the fairy tale and the "romance novel." Critics tend to label the story

a "child romance," and emphasise Burnett's romantic tendencies.[5] While some realist authors were highly critical of the romance and sentimental fiction (Crane 156), Burnett was less critical of incorporating elements from these subgenres. Thwaite suggests that around the time that she wrote *Sara Crewe,* Burnett had a change in attitude, and instead of conducting thorough research, which she had done in writing her earlier novels, she "was apparently no longer interested in causes, only in effects" (96). Without moving away from realistic elements in her texts, it would seem that she settled on a formula where she added elements that were more "fantastic" and "sentimental" than one would normally encounter in the realist novel. While the story seems to draw upon and borrow elements from several subgenres, the subgenre that is most salient in the story of Sara Crewe is the novel of sentiment.

Sentimental Values and Setting an Example

The novel of sentiment is usually not a literary genre used to describe stories for children, but I would argue that it is possible to find elements typical of the novel of sentiment in literature for children as well. Children are in some respects more demanding readers than adults, and they need literature that can sweep them away and keep their flighty attention. According to Gregg Crane, the novel of sentiment builds upon the powerful emotions and reactions which can be sparked in the reader, and usually depicts a moment of conversion (103-04). As a subgenre, the novel of sentiment is used to describe works from the late eighteenth century in France and England (Abrams 328), while Crane describes the tradition of sentimental literature in nineteenth-century United States. Elements typically found in the novel of sentiment can be found in abundance in *Sara Crewe* and *A Little Princess,* and to some degree in *The Little Princess,* although the play relies on dramatic rather than narrative strategies. Sara, the focalised character, could be said to be the bearer of a specific role which often is

[5] See e.g. Bixler 86, Molson 36, and the title of Vivian Burnett's biography of his mother, *The Romantick Lady*. Vivian Burnett even makes the claim that "Realism was the smallest part of Frances Hodgson Burnett as she lived and wrote" (V. Burnett vi).

present in the novel of sentiment: She is what Crane identifies as an exemplary child (104). An exemplary child behaves in a way that is so commendable that it sparks what is known as the moment of conversion in the novel of sentiment, where "a flood of emotions transforms the individual, revealing moral truths and human connections" (Crane 104). This conversion has typically been of a religious kind, which is not the case in our texts; rather it has to do with morality and virtue.

Sara's behaviour is so exemplary that other children and adults notice, and in some cases change their attitude (see *Little* 147, 171-72, 253). Her exemplary behaviour most often does not lead to conversion, but rather leaves other people affected, or even astonished. The cook, for instance, is baffled by the contrast between Sara's situation and her level of politeness, but does not seem to have the ability to adopt her example. The woman in the bakery, on the other hand, is so astonished by the actions of the drudge that she begins to live by her example. It seems that she is swayed by the generosity of someone who has so little: "I'm bound to say I've given many a bit of bread away since that wet afternoon, just along o' thinkin' of you. An' how wet an' cold you was, an' how you looked, --an' yet you give away your hot buns as if you was a princess" (*Sara* 81). In the case of Miss Minchin, the owner of the seminary, and her sister Miss Amelia, the story reveals little concerning to what extent they are affected by her behaviour. Although Miss Amelia experiences a moment of clarity, Miss Minchin does not seem to understand the reason or ideal behind Sara's "feeling like a princess," and there is little reason to believe that she will ever change her ways (*Little* 252-54). The uncertainties concerning to what extent other characters are converted or affected may be due to the fact that whereas the exemplary child tends to be a minor character in the novel of sentiment, Sara Crewe is the protagonist.

In some examples of the novel of sentiment the exemplary child is held in such high esteem that it would seem impossible for child readers to identify with them. Sara is

exemplary in her behaviour, and as opposed to adult figures such as the cook, Miss Amelia, and Miss Minchin, she sees the world with youthful optimism. Sara is not the complete angelic child, however; she fumbles in her optimistic sense of justice and struggles to uphold her ideal of behaving like a princess. Her ability to emphasise with other people's situations and feelings is one of the things that mark the most striking resemblance to the novel of sentiment (see Crane 105). One of her characteristics is that she is able to disregard her own suffering or needs, and both please and help others, such as when giving away most of her buns, and when allowing the son of the big family to give her his money: "There was something so honest and kind in his face, and he looked so likely to be heartbrokenly disappointed if she did not take it, that Sara knew she must not refuse him. To be as proud as that would be a cruel thing. So she actually put her pride in her pocket, though it must be admitted her cheeks burned" (*Little* 128). Although she considers it a great defeat to accept the money, she realises that the little boy would be greatly disappointed if his charitable action is not appreciated.

Phyllis Bixler Koppes indicates that instead of a conversion, or change in the behaviour of Sara, which would normally be the case of the main character in a novel of sentiment, there is a change in circumstances instead. This change in circumstances is in essence a test of "virtue and the relationship between appearance and reality" (194). The test is to see if she has the ability to behave as "a princess in rags and tatters" (*Little* 146). These testing situations usually revolve around Sara's fantastic ability to imagine things. This ability to "pretend" seems to play a big part in creating an image of her as the exemplary child, because the use to which she employs it helps her behave exemplary. One example of this could be her imagined princess-like behaviour: "'If I was a princess—a real princess,' she murmured, 'I could scatter largess to the populace. But even if I am only a pretend princess, I can invent little things to do for people'" (*Little* 57). As is possible to infer from this passage,

Sara realises that although she has not the means or the power to make any real change, she can try as hard as she can with the means that she does have. Mavis Reimer suggests that the princess role that Sara adopts is merely a way of upholding "status" after her father dies, but this seems to belittle the effect of this role. After her demise she continues with her "princess" behaviour, even if her means might only afford her to "scatter" smiles to "the populace" and it being a solely moral endeavour.

One of the moments when Sara struggles to maintain her exemplary behaviour happens when she is tired and seeks comfort in her doll Emily. As opposed to other times, this time "pretending" about the doll does not suffice. This leads to a minor breakdown where Sara acts very uncharacteristically and impatiently with the doll before she is able to regain her composure (see *Sara* 20-24; *The Little* 32-33; *Little* 131-34). Her ability to regain her composure is important, however, and ensures the reader that everyone will experience loss of faith sometimes. This scene is one of several adapted without change from *Sara Crewe* to *A Little Princess*, which indicates that Burnett considered it an integral part of the story, perhaps to show that Sara is not perfect, but rather that she strives to become the best version of herself.

Another moment where Sara struggles with maintaining her optimistic outlook is right before the "magical" transformation of the garret, and it is manifested in an utter loss of faith in herself. Sara utters that she "can't pretend anything more to-night" and it is stated that she "did not feel like a princess – only like a tired, hungry, lonely, lonely child" (*Sara* 52). Instead of leaving this scene untouched from the first version of the story, Burnett has changed it so that in the play and in the novel Sara is able "to pretend" and envision that she is in her dream surroundings after Miss Minchin has shut down their party instead of leaving her in a state of despair. (*The Little* 48; *Little* 207). Although the two versions of this scene feature Sara about to give in to misery, the way she handles herself changes to the better. The "pretending" of a

better living situation functions as a foreshadowing of what the transformation of the garret will be like, but also gives an indication that she does not give up and has the ability to remain an exemplary child, and in time make it through the test of virtue.

Despite these moments of weakness, Sara, and the way she behaves, sets an example for the readers of the texts and she remains the exemplary child. Her struggle to be the best person she can possibly be, despite the circumstances, is an example of the texts' didactic function. The exemplary behaviour and ability to convert other characters is not only common to the novel of sentiment, but also part of another branch of literature for children that Koppes refers to as "the exemplum," which underwent dramatic changes during the time that the writing and re-writing of the story of Sara Crewe took place.

An Updated Version of the "Exemplum?"

Since the protagonist's behaviour in the story of Sara Crewe sets an *example* for the reader, it might be easy to accept it as belonging to the subgenre "exemplum," without giving much thought to what belonging to such a genre entails. Koppes is one of the critics that claim that Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* are heavily influenced by the fairy tale and what she calls an updated version of the exemplum (191). The exemplum is a moralising tale, often a part of a sermon (Abrams and Harpham 9). James Janeway's *A Token for Children: Being an exact Account of the Conversion, holy and exemplary Lives and joyful Deaths, of Several Young Children* (1671) would serve as an example of a religious, moralising tale of the earlier period (see e.g. Hunt, *Introduction* 39). Koppes has adopted this term for the moralising tales that dominated children's literature from the late eighteenth century until the early nineteenth century. Critics of children's literature mention literature that is highly didactic, educational, moralising or Puritan. [6] The moralising function of these tales made them popular at a time when children's literature was meant to have a strong didactic

[6] See introductory works such as Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature;* Maybin and Watson, *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories*; and Hunt, ed., *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* for a more thorough discussion of early children's literature.

function. The literature that Koppes refers to in her article, and which Burnett expresses her dislike of and offers an example of in her own memoir, seems to be of the kind which was highly religious, where misbehaving and nice children all seem to meet the most terrible fates in order for them to realise that God is the rescue (e.g. Burnett, *One* 25, 110-11). Most likely Burnett had been exposed to and drawn inspiration from the literary tradition of the allegory, and its manifestations such as the fable, the parable and the cautionary tale. Burnett's example seems to resemble the cautionary tale, a highly religious moralising tale that was becoming more and more marginalised by the time Burnett started writing.

Two years after Burnett published *A Little Princess* in 1907, Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children: Designed for the Admonition of Children between the Ages of Eight and Fourteen Years* was published as a parody of earlier cautionary tales, consisting of verses such as "Henry King, / Who chewed bits of String, and was early cut off in Dreadful Agonies" and "Matilda, / Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death." Parodies of this earlier accepted branch of literature for children and other contemporary works for children indicate a shift towards a tradition where some authors opposed pathos, and others built upon pathos by rewarding exemplary children for being nice (Griswold 876-78). Burnett is one of the authors who wrote about exemplary children instead of opposing pathos, which is exemplified in the story of Sara Crewe and a number of her other works for children. Hence, it is safe to say that the kind of works derived from the allegory, and more specifically those based on the cautionary tale, were not dying out, but rather taking on a different form.

In contrast to the cautionary tale, the story of Sara Crewe and similar contemporary books appear to be headed towards a tradition where virtue is rewarded, rather than where vice will lead to disaster. Sara serves as one example of where virtue is rewarded. She shows that good morals and virtue might be difficult to achieve, but that one is triumphant if one is able to do so: "If I am a princess in rags and tatters, I can be a princess inside. It would be

easy to be a princess if I were dressed in cloth of gold, but it is a great deal more of a triumph to be one all the time when no one knows it" (*Little* 146). The reward Sara receives for acting like an ideal is not only triumph, but her new home and father figure can also be seen as a reward. This resembles the transformation and turn of fortune that can be found in many fairy tales. The incentive of good morals being rewarded and how they may influence others are also discussed by Phyllis Bixler, who has done an extensive study of most of Burnett's work. She states: "In her child romances, Burnett conflated the magical transformation typical of the fairy tale with the conversion of others, often adults, brought about by the model child in the moral and religious exemplum" (120). As we have seen in the discussion above, Sara is an example, but maintaining this position is not always easy. Keeping this in mind, it is fair to say that the character Sara in these works is intended to be a realistic role model; she has a didactic lesson to teach both children and adults within the text itself, and its readers. This is exemplified through scenes such as when the haughty Miss Amelia tells Miss Minchin that she could have been in quite a different situation had she just treated Sara a little better (Burnett, *Little* 253-54).

The three versions of the story of Sara Crewe display few references to Christian moral. Some names feature religious connotations such as Melchisedec, referring to the king and priest of Salem who blessed Abraham, although there does not seem to be any importance to such intertextuality. Although Christianity is implicitly fronted, and there are scenes where other religions are discredited, such as when they find out that the Indian gentleman has idols and a Buddha shrine (*Little* 137), this is not given particular emphasis in the texts. As with the religious exemplum it seems as though Burnett was taking a step away from expressing an explicit religious moral.

There is one instance in *A Little Princess*, in which Sara tells Lottie about the place where both their deceased mothers live (42-43). This is an example of intertextuality as the

Book of Revelation is clearly referenced as well as "heaven," which is obviously the Christian heaven. Later this intimate moment between the two girls is criticised by Lavinia:

> "You wicked thing," said Lavinia, turning on Sara; "making fairy stories about heaven."
> "There are much more splendid stories in Revelation," returned Sara. "Just look and see! How do you know mine are fairy stories? ..." (*Little* 49)

Although this scene from the novel is not subversive in any way, it does indicate a stance towards religion. This reflection upon the afterworld only occurs in the versions published after Burnett herself experienced the loss of her son. Some critics have discussed Burnett's faith, and Thwaite states that although she was religious, she did not depend on any organised religious communities to conduct her faith (88). Her faith was a private matter, and one could also make the argument that Sara's is as well. While Lavinia, on the other hand, represents a conservative position by insisting that the authority on religion cannot be found outside the established conventions. All versions of the story of Sara Crewe create this distance from the earlier religious and moralising tales and signal that religion is a personal matter.

A School Story: "as if it was another world"

With the Education act of 1870, the school story gained more prevalence around the time when the story of Sara Crewe was published. According to Hunt, the school story usually represented the gender-specific stereotypes of the affluent society at the time (*Introduction* 35). He points to the appeal and limitations of the school story because of its limited scope; within the closed world of the school there are "initiation and hierarchies, rules and rituals, and a clear relationship to adult life" (55-56). As a genre the school story is dominated by British authors, and although some previous works are considered school stories, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) is regarded as a model work (Ray 348-49). As most literature for children the school story often features a strong didactic component, as well as quite strict gender demarcations. Sheila Ray claims that the school story for girls experienced its peak in

the 1920's and the 1930's, and that they emphasised "middle-class virtues such as good manners, the need for self- discipline, a sense of responsibility and a respect for authority" (351). The ideological and didactic message that the school story conveys is therefore in accordance with the stereotypical gender roles of the society, which is further discussed in chapter three. Smith states that, "The girls' school story appeared in the 1880s, substantially later than the mid-Victorian boys' genre, and, as it became a publishing phenomenon in the twentieth century, developed to reflect modern femininity" (60). According to Ray however, Burnett and other authors like her did not build upon the school story in their work, because "school is just a small part of the heroine's experiences" (350). Burnett published *Sara Crewe* as early as 1888, before the peak of the school story for girls, but I will argue that the story of Sara Crewe is in an intertextual relationship to generic features found in the school story.

One of the appeals all three versions of the story hold is the way they introduce the reader to a closed-off universe. This universe, and its imposed class demarcations as well as rules of behaviour, was one a middle- to upper- class readership would be familiar with. Horn writes of the social exclusiveness that boarding school offered to its pupils, they were expensive, exclusive and girl only, thereby limiting what she calls "undesirable contacts" (32). According to her, homeschooling and boarding schools were the only respectable options for girls of a certain position (32), and it therefore seems likely that by playing upon those same established conventions for girls, the readership would feel familiarity with the story. Especially the all-girl setting and the dynamic between the parlour boarders become strengthened as the story is revised and the number of "supporting" characters increases.

The boarding school universe is set in a realistic frame, but nonetheless functions as an isolated place. In this story the place or universe is the ugly, "hard-surfaced" school of Miss Minchin. The opening scene of *Sara Crewe* and *A Little Princess,* as well as the first act of *The Little Princess*, describe the school. Instead of being homely and welcoming, it is

"respectable and well furnished, but everything in it was ugly" (*Little* 7). This reflection upon the interior of the school functions as a foreshadowing of how Sara's life will become "ugly" as well after the death of her father and the loss of her fortune. The school assumes the form of Sara's whole world.

Sara's belonging to the school becomes reinforced when her father dies, and this event in particular limits her access to the world beyond the seminary. Before his death she still had a life in her father's home in India to look forward to, which marked the temporality of her stay at the school, but once she becomes an orphan her future at the school stretches out into an uncertain future. Because the school is conveniently isolated from the outside world, as well as being the only thing separating her from being turned into a homeless drudge, Miss Minchin sees the possibility of using Sara in whatever way she sees fit. The only thing Miss Minchin is afraid of is her outward reputation: As long as what happens inside the school's walls does not tarnish its reputation, she is happy. This can be seen in examples such as when Sara receives the parcels of clothes, or when she is segregated from the other students in order to avoid talking amongst them and their parents about the condition she is kept in (see *Little* 227, 100-01). In some regards, the school goes from being an institution to a prison, where from her "cell" at the top Sara can look down upon the unreachable normal world.

This imagery is played upon more heavily in the last version of the story, where Becky is pictured as her "co-prisoner" and Miss Minchin as the "jailer" (*Little* 196). In fact Sara compares the room in the garret with the Bastille: "I am a prisoner in the Bastille. I have been here for years and years—and years; and everybody has forgotten about me" (*Little* 109). This particular pretending of Sara's is accepted and transferred to other characters such as Ermengarde and Becky: "And she sat down again and talked until Ermengarde forgot that she was a sort of escaped prisoner herself, and had to be reminded by Sara that she could not remain in the Bastille all night, but must steal noiselessly down-stairs again and creep back

into her deserted bed" (*Little* 123). Although the reference to the Bastille also represents an example of a different type of intertextuality, the transformation of the closed world by using prison imagery and the introduction of more rules and rituals for the people involved, creates a recognisable isolation for some readers. The boarding school setting was, as mentioned, familiar to many contemporary readers, and isolation is most likely a feeling all children can relate to. Playing upon recognisable narratives helps the audience assume an appropriate subject position based on their past experience, which might best help them actualise a text's potential meaning (Stephens 55). The prison imagery is first introduced in the play, where by means of dramatic effects it may have been added in order to represent the change in mood before and after Sara's downfall, and is further employed in the novel. However, it is important that the closed-off universe of school is a prison only for those who have limited options, such as Becky and Sara. For the other students, and Sara before her demise, it is only a temporary closed-off universe that is still connected to the real and familiar world. This shift in focus from the school itself to a closed-off place that could be re-shaped by its inhabitant, is also reflected in the change of the original title: *Sara Crewe: Or What Happened at Miss Minchin's.* The new title employed for the play and later the novel display a shift in focus to the invented world that Sara creates in *A Little Princess.*

Motifs and Allusions

Featured in all three different versions of the story of Sara Crewe, are references and allusions to literary works and historical figures. Their explicit presence in the text is part of shaping reader expectations and perhaps sheds light on the author's political agenda or what she thought was appropriate reading for an exemplary child. Intertextuality or linking the story of Sara Crewe to a specific pre-text or "socio historical narratives or moments" is of importance because of the connotations they might evoke in the reader (Stephens 85-86). One example of intertextuality is a version of Frances Browne's *Granny's Wonderful Chair* which is inserted

into *The Little Princess.* In the play, Browne's story is made the object of what Graham Allen calls metatextual commentary (99), and in chapter two I argue that its function in the text is to reinforce the connection between the story of Sara Crewe and the fairy tale.

Also present in the texts are the references to historical places and people related to the French Revolution as well as to works which take a stand on the political debate of the time such as Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution.* Carlyle's depiction of the French Revolution is brought up in all three versions (*Little* 186, *Sara* 28-31, *The Little* 36), and is presumably the dramatic source of "the gory records of the French Revolution" that Sara shares with Ermengarde (*Little* 188). *The French Revolution* is in many ways a master narrative where "Carlyle had all but reenacted the French Revolution for himself and his readers" (Scurr 2-3). While his account of the French Revolution hardly would be considered fitting literature for a young girl today, it functions as a source for Sara's references to historical people and events. By including references to this work, systematically within all three versions, Burnett has situated herself within the political debate of the time.

Carlyle's presentation of the revolution was that of an observer, making it come alive to the reader. He has therefore been accused of creating a text more influenced by personal opinion than most historical accounts, even if all historical accounts are stories built on facts to some degree. Sara also makes historical motifs come alive by creating more vivid depictions throughout the three versions of the story. Ruth Scurr writes in her introduction to *The French Revolution* that "From Edmund Burke to Simon Schama, many commentators on the Revolution have depicted it as an unnecessary and gratuitously bloody mistake. Carlyle is not among them. For him it was a transcendental phenomenon, 'the world-Phoenix, in fire-consummation and fire creation … the Death-Birth of a World!'" (11). As a result, his work is placed in opposition to those of traditionalist conservatives such as Burke. Any work concerning the French Revolution in the political climate of Europe at the time was bound to

create controversy. Questions of monarchy and the distribution of wealth were on the agenda. Carlyle thought "the ancient regime … was rotten, and deserved its fate," although he was sympathetic to "innocent victims falling prey to forces men could not control" (Doyle 4, 6).

As Carlyle in *The French Revolution,* Burnett presents Princesse de Lamballe and Marie Antoinette as ideals, rising above the ridicule of the mob. Sara uses the ideals of princesses that remain strong despite their downfall and public scorn to nourish her goal of being a princess "in rags and tatters" (*Little* 146):

> "You know they put her [Princesse de Lamballe's] head on a pike and danced round it," Sara explained. "And she had beautiful floating blonde hair; and when I think of her, I never see her head on her body, but always on a pike, with those furious people dancing and howling." (*Little* 188-89)

> There was Marie Antoinette: when she was in prison and her throne was gone, and she had only a black gown on, and her hair was white, and they insulted her and called her Widow Capet,- She was a great deal more like a queen then than when she was so gay and had everything grand. I like her best then. Those howling mobs of people did not frighten her. She was stronger than they were, even when they cut her head off. (*Little 146*, *Sara* 33)

The incorporation of the Princesse de Lamballe and Marie Antoinette in the story of Sara Crewe suggests that they were suitable ideals. More radical supporters of the revolution would probably find this problematic, especially as Marie Antoinette contributed to the estrangement between the people and the rulers through her extravagant lifestyle. Elizabeth Rose Gruner examines role models in the story of Sara Crewe, and she points out the opposition that some of these present. The way they are presented in a text might be up to role model standards, whilst the way they are perceived by people in reality does not support this notion (164-65). Reference to the two historical figures can be found in all three versions of the story. In light of Stephens' observation that intertextuality is used to spread knowledge of "contemporary culture and to illustrate how that knowledge is to be used" (115), there is

reason to consider the effect of the use of such specific ideals for the ideological message to the reader. As we know that these references take part in an ongoing political debate, it might have estranged some of her readers.

The distribution of historical persons or literary texts is restricted to one-time appearances and they are seldom featured in all three versions, but it is still possible to see some coherence in the chosen references and allusions. In general, the people of historical significance mentioned tend to be royalty who are unjustly treated, such as Mary Queen of Scots (*Sara* 28) and Lady Arabella (*The Little* 33), who were both imprisoned for their love of the wrong men. References to characters from the literary world are present in the novel and the play, such as Doctor Manette from Charles Dickens'*A Tale of Two Cities* (*The Little* 37), and Edmond Dantès from Alexander Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* (*Little* 109). Doctor Manette and the Count of Monte Cristo counter the examples of royalty treated unjustly, because these characters can rather be seen as victims of corrupt regimes. Doctor Manette for instance, was locked up in the Bastille for knowing a secret about a powerful family. As already noted, the Bastille is compared to Sara's living situation in the story, and it was a symbol of despotism, a place where people could be unjustly imprisoned and was leveled with the earth early in the revolution (Doyle 67). The references to unjustly treated royalty is countered by the presence of Doctor Manette in the play and removed altogether in the novel. The ideological implications of the different allusions to historical figures and events are contradictive and leave no clear idea of the political climate of the time or Burnett's political agenda. They do on the other hand show that the different versions of the story of Sara Crewe are situated in a dialogical relationship with other contemporary texts and socio-historical narratives and events. In addition to this, the allusions to the French Revolution create powerful imagery which can be used for dramatic effect, as in the case of the Bastille metaphor.

Intertextuality and its Effects

Taken together, the different influences and instances of intertextuality and inter-texts that have been discussed illustrate that there are some substantial differences between the three versions. However, most of what has been kept or expanded upon in the two later versions serves to refine and create a more realistic story. Although the dominant literary mode is realism, Burnett has drawn heavily on elements of more "romantic" influences, particularly the novel of sentiment. Sara bears striking resemblance to the exemplary child of these novels and serves as an example to others, sometimes leading to moments of conversion. As Koppes indicates, Sara is subjected to a test of virtue when her wealth is lost, which she at times struggles with. This makes her a realistic ideal for young readers, as it is impossible to never waver in one's kindness.

The incorporation of different elements from the school story, the allegory, the novel of sentiment, together with literary and historical allusions indicates that it aligns itself with a tradition in children's literature, which allows parents and children find recognisable narratives engaging and challenging because of the possibility they offer to reinterpret and reshape experience. Burnett reshaped the story of Sara Crewe three times, and the use of intertextual references and other revisions can be seen as indicators of how Burnett's works relate to the tradition of writing for children. For instance, it appears that Burnett has taken a step away from the earlier popular religious and moralising tales that Koppes refers to as the "exemplum." Thus her works were part of a more general trend in children's literature, where some authors created texts purposely avoiding moralising of this kind, whilst others set out to teach a moral lesson indirectly through rewarding good behaviour, which Burnett has done in the instance of the story of Sara Crewe.

Another apparent influence is the school story, a literary genre which limits the scope of the story to a secluded place. In the story of Sara Crewe, the school story has been infused with the even more secluded prison metaphor. As we have seen, both in the prison metaphor

and throughout the play, Burnett employs textual and literary references to the French Revolution, literary works, and contemporary personas, such as the Bastille, Carlyle's *The French Revolution,* Marie Antoinette, Princesse de Lamballe, Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo,* Dickens' *A Tale of two Cities* and Mary Queen of Scots, which all centre around the ambiguity and difficulties concerning monarchy and rebellions. Such references might have been added only for dramatic effect; but as they are part of a political debate of the time, the last chapter will address their ideological implications in the texts of Sara Crewe.

It is possible to say, in accordance with Stephens and McCallum's claim that children's literature contains more retold stories than literature directed at adults (3), that Sara Crewe contains a high portion of retold stories, proving the point that "Everything is a story." The intertextual references that can be found in the story of Sara Crewe change the way the moral and didactic message of the text is presented. For instance, the removal of influence from the cautionary tale leads to a less clear moral, and both the story itself and the main character become less amiable and more relatable. The elements borrowed from the school story also add to this, and contribute to creating a more realistic and recognisable story in the latest version. Influences from subgenres such as the cautionary tale, the novel of sentiment, the school story, and ideas related to Christianity or historical events such as the French Revolution, create an image of the story as a melting pot of influences and not a mosaic or tapestry. This is because the pieces are not readily discernible from the whole within the story. Rather they work together to create a harmonious story.

Chapter 2

Rewriting "Cinderella" and Recycling Fairy Tale Motifs

> Am I the same cold, ragged, damp Sara? And to think I used to pretend and pretend and wish there were fairies! The one thing I always wanted was to see a fairy story come true. I am living in a fairy story. (Burnett, *Little* 221)
>
> It is because, though she is not exactly a fairy, she will be so rich when she is found that she will be like a princess in a fairy tale. We called her the fairy princess at first, but it didn't quite suit. (Burnett, *Little* 234-35)

The fairy tale featured in the title of this chapter, "Cinderella," will most likely bring associations into most people's minds about a girl being mistreated by her evil stepmother, who in the end overcomes difficulties, marries the prince, and lives happily ever after. Sara talks of living in a fairy story and touches upon the "magical" of the fairy story, whilst the children of the "large family" think only of the happy ending and restored wealth as part of the fairy tale. It is true that most fairy tales have a happy ending, but they also contain other elements.

The fairy tale has become commonplace because of the work of collectors of folk tales, such as Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm and Charles Perrault, and in turn the popularisation of these tales by the Disney Corporation and their iconic movies for children. Why is the fairy tale "Cinderella" important for a discussion regarding three different texts by Burnett dealing with a little character named Sara? The texts discussed have clear similarities to the fairy tale. These similarities are so prominent that some critics go as far as Koppes, who writes: "The frequent references to fairy tales and magic make it difficult to mistake *A Little Princess* for a realistic novel of child life" (195). This she does without spending time on explaining how the they compare, mostly it seems because the link is more obvious than in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Secret Garden.* Vivian Burnett utters about his mother's writing for children, in this case specifically about the dramatisation of *Sara Crewe:* "When

writing in the juvenile field, Mrs. Burnett's work always seemed to go on fairy wings, and she literally revelled in the idea of taking the "magic transformation" scene she had sketched in the short story of Sara Crewe and expanding it, in all its dramatic possibilities and possibilities of detail alluring to children, for the stage" (303). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the story of Sara Crewe has intertextual relationships to specific pre-texts, generic features and what Stephens refers to as "socio-historical narratives and moments," but as Vivian Burnett draws attention to, the story's intertextuality also encompassed some "fairy wings," kept within reasonable boundaries.

Because the story of Sara Crewe was written over hundred years ago, some content in the story might seem dated and appear unfamiliar for the readership today, and the mystique it holds may also make it appear to be more similar to the fairy tale. This is because fairy tales are traditionally situated in non-defined locations and in vague time, such as: "There was once a gentleman who was widowed, and married again" (Perrault 130). However, for its contemporary American and British audience around the turn of the twentieth century the story would, as we have seen, have been familiar and more plausible. Gruner even makes the claim that adaptations of the fairy tale were especially well suited for the Victorian didactic because it encompasses "Victorian feminine virtues of self-sacrifice, cheerful obedience and quiet beauty" (166-67). Therefore it is interesting see if a connection to the fairy tale was clear when the texts were published. This chapter aims to examine this relation.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the story of Sara Crewe contains a large portion of retold stories and literary elements typical for the development of literature for children in the period that it was written. Stephens and McCallum state that the retold stories' function is to "serve to initiate children into aspects of a social heritage, transmitting many of a culture's central values and assumptions and a body of shared allusions and experiences" (3). Ideological or political connotations of intertextual references are discussed partly in chapter

one, and more extensively in chapter three. U. C. Knoepflmacher claims that the novel is "especially receptive to infusions from those old wives' fairy tales that had become fully embedded in the popular imagination," because it "welcomed renovation, modification, and cross-fertilization" (21). I argue that the link between the story of Sara Crewe and the fairy tale is general and concerns the fairy tale genre in a wide sense, but also specific in the sense that Sara Crewe is a re-version of the fairy tale "Cinderella."

There is an extensive body of criticism pertaining to the fairy tale and its literary heritage. All versions of the story of Sara Crewe will be examined from both a present and historical perspective in order to see if there are differences in the dispersion of fairy tale genre traits and in order to examine the effect of these. A re-version is a text with a clearly identifiable pre-text, to which it has such clear similarities that the link between two works is immediately obvious (Stephens and McCallum 4). The relationship between a pre-text and the re-version is dialogical, and questions the ideologies of both texts (Stephens and McCallum 9). Differences between the pre-text "Cinderella" and the texts of Sara Crewe can be especially revealing because of the assumption that fairy tales, and by extension literature influenced by the fairy tale, can reveal information about attitudes towards children and children's upbringing (see e.g. Tatar and Bettelheim). What has been kept and discarded might therefore reveal changes in the contemporary adult agenda. Koppes notes that the way to analyse Burnett's most famous children's books is as demonstrations of the "fairy tale-exempla," and dismisses critics that focus "on the increasing depth and subtlety in the portrayal in her main characters," (191). While this might be more suitable when examining the works as a whole, I think it that it is necessary in the case of the story of Sara Crewe to keep in mind both. This is because the story is published in three different versions, and the way Sara is portrayed in them changes in some ways, as I will argue, in the opposite direction from the stoic main characters of the fairy tales.

It is, even if one refutes that the story of Sara Crewe is a re-version, at the very least possible to say that the texts are influenced by specific model characters or archetypes, such as the "lost child" or the "lost Princess," which are also recurrent stock characters in fairy tales such as "Cinderella" (Stephens 85). Superficially, the resemblance between Sara Crewe and the fairy tale in general, and "Cinderella" specifically, centres around what Stephens and McCallum call the "*field*" and the "*tenor*" of the two stories. This entails that the situation that grounds the story is similar, and that the relationships between the characters of both tales are similar (10). As Gruner has noted, the resemblance between the two main characters becomes more nuanced in the later versions, which will be discussed later on. Similarities can be found in the "transformation scene," where both Cinderella and Sara are given new clothes and receive help to recover from drudgery. The lost mother who is replaced by a new mother's figure is also similar, as well as the distant father. These new "caretakers," in the form of a stepmother and a school supervisor, take care of them, but do not act as caregivers. The primary caretaker, in the shape of a father, is alive, but vanishes into the background in *"*Cinderella," whereas he is first distant, and then removed completely after his death in *A Little Princess* and Burnett's earlier versions. Both Sara and Cinderella are kind, mistreated and experience a happy ending. The fairy tale of "Cinderella" is so deeply imbedded in our culture, that it is difficult to imagine reading the story of Sara Crewe without drawing parallels between the two.

The Fairy Tale Tradition

The significance of the pre-text depends on whether the reader is likely to recognise it, and the ways in which the new text takes part of and relates to an already established discourse. Literacy was not as widespread and books were not as abundant when Burnett's stories were published, as they are today. An examination of works that were published simultaneously reveals there were plenty of examples of fairy tale collections being edited and published; one

may assume, then, that the people who had access to children's literature were likely to have access to fairy tales featuring stock characters such as the "lost child" or the "lost princess," if not one of the numerous versions of "Cinderella*"* itself (see e.g. Salmon 119-30 and "Scribner's books for the young").

Fairy tales had been established as suitable children's literature around the time when Burnett was writing. Since several versions of the most famous fairy tales were in circulation, it is useful to explore which version of "Cinderella" that Burnett could have been inspired by. Even if Burnett most likely drew her inspiration from Perrault's version, I will introduce briefly the differences and the similarities between the Grimm Brothers' and Perrault's versions of the tale, because they are considered the collectors of the two best known versions of the tale in the western world. Burnett might have been familiar with both the European and American tradition of fairy tales and "Cinderella." It seems as though both versions were known in Europe, whilst the Perrault version was most prominent in America. The Perrault version was popularised in the "late Victorian England," and Gruner therefore highlights this specific version as the one most likely to have influenced *A Little Princess* (166). In addition to being the works that Burnett would have been familiar with, Perrault's and the Grimm brothers' versions of the tale are the ones that would have been familiar to the contemporary reader, which in turn are the versions that would interact with the story of Sara Crewe. Today the story of Sara Crewe would interact with Disney's version of the tale, since this is almost exclusively the only version a young audience is exposed to (Stephens 88).

Perrault collected fairy tales and wrote them down in old French. He is known for having edited them quite severely in terms of removing any trace of violence and inappropriate content. This can be seen in his version of "Cinderella," which stresses the fact that Cinderella is prettier and more virtuous than circumstances would normally allow. A fairy godmother magically helps Cinderella, with the result that she is able to impress the

prince. At the end, instead of bearing grudges towards her stepsisters, who treat her poorly, she forgives them and even uses her newly found influence to help them.

The Perrault version of *"*Cinderella*"* has been the foundation for several translations and retellings, amongst others the versions by Andrew Lang, which Gruner suggests was widely known during the nineteenth century (166). Even by merely translating the original work changes will be made, but sometimes translating the works is not enough. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch was the writer of an English retelling, and although it does not differ much from the original he felt the need to rewrite Perrault's version in his own fashion (Quiller-Couch, Preface par. 8-9).

The Grimm brothers were, as Perrault, collectors of folk tales, and in 1812 they published the *Children's and Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen)*. The Grimm brothers' versions of tales were considerably more violent, and probably truer to the original tales, than the earlier edition by Perrault. The Grimm Brothers moderated and edited their tales throughout the century in order to justify marketing them as children's tales. Amongst the works they collected and published was "Cinderella" ("Aschenputtel"). Cinderella's mother dies in the beginning of the tale, and tells Cinderella: "be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect thee, and I will look down on thee from heaven and be near thee" (Grimm and Grimm 81). Mostly the violence of the tale is directed at the evil stepsisters. They cut off their own heels in order to fit Cinderella's golden shoe, and when they attend Cinderella's wedding, "wanting to get into favour with Cinderella and share her good fortune," birds peck out their eyes, leaving them blind (Grimm and Grimm 85). Instead of the now traditional fairy godmother, Cinderella is helped by birds, and by chanting verses in front of a tree grown from her tears on her mother's grave.

Before the Grimm brothers and Perrault edited and published versions of the tales, the folk tales were part of an oral tradition for the lower classes. The introduction of the printing

press changed the wonder tale, which is known in its written form as the fairy tale (Zipes 27). In this transition the tales had to change, both in form and in content. Crude language and inappropriate content were weeded out, in order to make them more acceptable. Children were not the primary audience of the folktales, but traditionally whole families gathered and shared stories (Tatar, *Enchanted* 56-59), which means that children heard tales told amongst their parents. But as is true with all literature for children, "adults have always read, censored, approved, and distributed the so-called fairy tales for children" (Zipes 33). Adults have established the standard in regards to what ideals, lessons and ideologies children should be allowed to hear.

The reason to discuss the fairy tale and how it was developed, whether by the translating or editing of already collected works or works published by collectors themselves, is to show that fairy tales, in their original form, were not dying out and replaced by works such as the story of Sara Crewe, but were very much alive and widely distributed. The difference we see around this time is that authors now built on the success of fairy tales in order to sell books that could be merchandised along the lines of the fairy tale. In a 1905 review in the *New York Times, A Little Princess,* is referred to as "a story which every little girl will read many times, which her papa and mamma will read, too" ("Children's Books" n. pag.). This broad family appeal is one of the characteristics of the fairy tale as well. In the same review a collection of foreign fairy stories is adverted as being "told a little differently," but the readers are reassured that it is fine, because "one never tires of reading fairy stories of any kind" ("Children's books" n. pag.). This gives assurance that fairy stories in all possible forms were present in children's literature at the time. In addition to this it seems as though there is a general appeal of the fairy story in different versions, as well as across generations.

With the creation of a specific market for children's literature, the decision of what literature to choose for one's children became commercialised. Editors and publishers began

deciding what was appropriate for children to read or be read, based on, among other things, audience reception. Children's literature became standardised, and publishers could decide to not publish works that they deemed unfit for children. One of the elements of a story that would dictate how well it is received is the ideals that it presents to the reader. Gruner talks of role models that are presented in children's literature, with a focus on "Cinderella, Marie Antoinette, and Sara" and finds that, "Role models exceed their functions, change, and perpetuate themselves whether we want them to or not" (165). Newer versions of the fairy tale could take form as retellings such as the Quiller-Couch edition, or be what Stephens and McCallum refer to as a "re-version" along the lines of the story of Sara Crewe. Other popular works of the time such as *Peter Pan,* and works by Beatrix Potter drew upon the fairy tale genre. The widespread success of works such as these show that parents were inclined to approve of fairy stories, or stories inspired by fairy stories for their children.

Sara's "unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper"

As mentioned above, there is a resemblance between the story of Sara Crewe and the stock characters of the fairy tale "Cinderella." Even if these similarities are very prominent, it is also possible to detect differences between the characters featured in the story of Sara Crewe and "Cinderella." Miss Minchin, the "caretaker," takes advantage of Sara's decreased status, just as the evil stepmother and stepsisters in "Cinderella." However, it is not love for her own daughters that drives Miss Minchin to treat Sara badly. On the contrary Miss Minchin is the complete anti-hero that seems to have no care for any of the girls she keeps. What motivates Miss Minchin is money and reputation. As long as her pupils are unable to provide her school with that, they are worth nothing to her. Before her downfall Sara is paraded at the front of the line when the school is out walking, and she is showcased when the parents are present. Later, after her demise, Sara is sent out of the way of the other pupils, and made to eat in the kitchen, sleep in the garret, and study on her own accord. Once she is poor she is no longer

regarded as a child, but rather a labourer, and even some times a threat to Miss Minchin. Her ability to cope with this transition from star pupil to drudge and remain cold headed and polite, even when suffering the worst of trials amazes her oppressors:

> Miss Minchin saw her for the first time when she entered the school-room to hear the little French class its lessons and superintend its exercises. And she came in with a springing step, color in her cheeks, and a smile hovering about the corners of her mouth. It was the most astonishing thing Miss Minchin had ever known. It gave her quite a shock. What was the child made of? What could such a thing mean? (Burnett *Little* 217-18)

Miss Minchin is frightened by Sara's resistance to ill treatment and abuse. As the exemplary child, Sara keeps her moments of weakness to herself. Not only does she seem unaffected by her treatment, but she manages to silence the people who try to ridicule her by saying something indisputably kind or pious:

> Lavinia could not think of exactly the right thing to say. Several times she had found that she could not think of a satisfactory reply when she was dealing with Sara. (Burnett, *Little* 64)

Her ability to not let unjust treatment change her temper and let her sink to the level of her oppressors marks a resemblance with Cinderella who has "unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper" (Lang 42). This resemblance between *Sara Crewe* and "Cinderella" evokes and builds upon insecurities concerning being loved and belonging.

Sara's superiority to the other characters is more prominent in the latest version, but can be found in all three. There is a shift however, from the third-person narrator stating her superior qualities, to narration of actions highlighting them. Her kindness and intelligence are two of the character traits focused upon the most in the story, especially after her father dies and she achieves the status of a drudge. However, her kindness is not unnatural, as Cinderella is presented in the original Perrault version. This deviation from the fairy tales' stark contrasts shows that children were being given more realistic and less didactic ideals than earlier. For

instance, Sara does not want to go back to Miss Minchin after her wealth has been re-instated, whereas Perrault's Cinderella lets her abusing stepsisters live in the castle and arranges good marriages for them (*Sara* 76, Perrault 139). Other instances such as this, when she has to struggle with herself in order to behave calmly and nicely, serves to render the text more realistic. For instance, during a discussion with Miss Minchin, Sara has "deep strange thoughts" that "surged up in her breast," and she ultimately ends up losing her temper and being insolent towards her (*Little* 94).

Moments such as these, when it is possible to see her temper going astray, makes Sara more human and easier to identify with for the child reader. This also happens when she loses her temper with Emily and Lavinia (*Little* 63 and 133). These temporary lapses from her natural kindness come at times when she is more vulnerable than normal, and shows the child reader that it is natural to be angry, and that it is not possible to be exemplary all the time. This is also illustrated by the internal struggle that Sara experiences when being good. On her first encounter with the beggar girl Anne, she knows that she is hungrier than herself and therefore is in more need of the hot buns. Regardless of this she finds that her "hand trembled when she put down the fourth bun" and she has to convince herself that she is better off than the "ravenous" creature that is starving (*Little* 170). Even so, she feels obliged to give up the buns, because that is what her image of a princess would do: "scatter largess to the populace" (*Little* 57).

Because there are more characters to be kind to there is naturally an increase in inwards battles in the novel. This shift towards more characters also allows Sara to identify more with the other characters, and lets the reader see that there is intimacy between the ideal character of Sara and the minor characters. The contrast between Sara and the other characters is on the other hand illuminated in the novella:

> She had never been intimate with the other pupils, and soon she became so shabby that, taking her queer clothes together with her queer little ways, they began to look

> upon her as a being of another world than their own. The fact was that, as a rule, Miss Minchin's pupils were rather dull, matter-of-fact young people, accustomed to being rich and comfortable; and Sara, with her elfish cleverness, her desolate life, and her odd habit of fixing her eyes upon them and staring them out of countenance, was too much for them. (*Sara* 19-20)

This distance to the other characters is removed both in the play and in the novel, where she takes on the role as a helpful asset to the other students. The fact that she is not an equal playmate, but rather is in a position where the other students depend on her enforces the picture of Sara as being superior to the other characters, but avoids the picture of the lonely outcast, and also counters the impression that Sara believes herself superior.

The Fairy Tale Reinvented

The set of characters and their roles in *A Little Princess* and *The Little Princess*, as well as in those instances they appear in *Sara Crewe*, can be traced back to the pre-text of *"*Cinderella*"*; it is fairly easy to see that they share a lot of traits. For instance Sara would be the typical fairy tale heroine that is being tormented at "home," which is what Miss Minchin's Select Seminary has become. To add emphasis, the novella describes the seminary's building as Miss Minchin's home instead of a school, underlining the fact it is not merely an educational institution, but rather meant to be more permanent. This emphasis is taken away in the novel, and the whole scene of arrival at the school is removed altogether in the play. Captain Crewe is the absent or dead father, whilst Miss Minchin can be said to share similarities with the evil stepmother. In the seminary, Sara's co-pupil Lavinia and the cook can be compared to the evil stepsisters. Ram Dass, and by extension Mr. Carrisford, compare to the fairy godmother, granting gifts and enabling Sara to rise up even further in wealth than before. However, in place of a prince and marriage at the end, Sara is given a father figure. Making the main male influence a father figure helps contemporary child readers identify with the story, as in the wealthier circles of society the age of marriage was substantially higher than thirteen, which

is Sara's age. Smith quotes an answer from a question column in *The Girls Own Paper* where the ideal age to get married is stated as being twenty-five or twenty-six onward (29). Therefore the story becomes more realistic and easier to relate to by having a father instead of a prince. Carrisford is not only able to help Sara, but he is able to recover his health by being reinvigorated by Sara (*Little* 260), which adds to the image of her as an asset to the other characters and counters the typical image of the fairy tale princess who is just the passive recipient of goodwill.

Sara shares quite a few similarities with the heroine in "Cinderella," but also to the stock character of the "lost princess" that is featured in a variety of stories such as "Rapunzel." In stories such as these the girl who is destined to be the princess does not know it, but through luck or kindness is restored to her rightful place in the end. This is similar to the stereotype of the "lost child," wherein a character is lost in the world because the parents are lost or dead. By the ending of such stories, in proper fairy tale style, the child is restored to a good life. In many respects Sara is more fortunate than many other children, both in contemporary England and in fairy tales, even when she is degraded from her privileged position she has a roof over her head and is fed, however scarcely. This is quite similar to the plot of "Cinderella," where the main character could also have been worse off. However, for children living in affluence the injustice of the treatment of "the lost princess" is apparent. Somehow in most fairy tales and stories based on this kind of motif the prize is a prince, and with him royalty and substantial wealth. Sara is treated as a little princess both at the beginning of the story and in the end, but she neither is nor becomes royal even if her wealth is substantial. Instead of adopting the unrealistic ideal of becoming royalty, Burnett has focused upon creating an image of a princess that is figurative instead of literal. Although Gruner points to Marie Antoinette as this model of behaviour based on her being "a model of fortitude and resistance," I argue that her idealisation of princesses runs deeper than this

(169). Sara strives to act like a princess, based on moral qualities rather than power, wealth or social position.

By transforming something material into something symbolical, Burnett has perhaps avoided one of the more questionable morals in fairy tales: the difference between being rewarded for being good and looking good. Traditionally there seems to have been a focus upon both, but later on especially female characters seem to have become more passive and relied on a man as their saviour (Tatar, *Classic* 102). This is perhaps more common in the later fairy tales, but can be seen in Perrault's *"*Cinderella*"* as well. Perrault's version of the tale has been criticised for basing the attention given by the prince, and with him wealth, on Cinderella's good looks, gifted by her fairy godmother. As opposed to this, the Grimm brothers' Cinderella acquires clothes on her own, and the prince recognises her even without her beautiful attire. Cinderella is equally kind in both versions, but the prince is not persuaded by kindness in either. Sara is noticed, on the other hand, despite her rags, because of her kindness to Ram Dass, and when returning the monkey to its owner.

Sara's character remains mostly unchanged in the texts, which leaves us little to say concerning her development. As Koppes states, Burnett was not concerned with "character change or development …, but rather character revelation" (193). The amount of space devoted to Sara increases, but the character development is limited. As will be discussed further, the other characters that are added to the story play a big part in shaping the image the reader has of her. Koppes claims that "the change comes within others" (193), which is true, but not only in the sense of Sara's ability to convert others. The way the other characters relate to Sara changes the way the reader sees her. But possibly because Sara is the most developed character from the beginning, her image as the kind, good-hearted, fairy-tale princess that she is presented as in the novella remains pretty constant.

The "in media res" beginning of the play, where the story begins when Captain Crewe dies, emphasises similarities with "Cinderella." Even if Sara's father is physically absent it is possible to say that his "presence" before he dies forces Miss Minchin to hide her true self, because exposing her true self would limit her income to the school and herself. As a result of Captain Crewe's early death in the play there is very little time to reflect upon the way his "presence" affects Miss Minchin's behaviour towards Sara. As soon as Captain Crewe has passed away Miss Minchin shows her true colours, and even if she is kind in letting Sara stay, she is portrayed as being unreasonable and purposely mean towards her former star student.

As in *"*Cinderella,*"* Miss Minchin wants to limit the contact between Sara and the other characters. She is therefore sent up in the garret to sleep in a room that is unfit for a child (Burnett, *The Little* 31). As Miss Minchin states in *A Little Princess:*

> 'I will not have her forming intimacies and talking to the other children,' that lady said. 'Girls like a grievance, and if she begins to tell romantic stories about herself, she will become an ill-used heroine, and parents will be given a wrong impression. It is better that she should live a separate life—one suited to her circumstances. I am giving her a home, and that is more than she has any right to expect from me.' (100-01)

As already established, Miss Minchin no longer sees Sara as a child. She is considered a worker along with the cook or the scullery maid Becky, who are the inhabitants of the other room in the garret. The way it is compared to the tower of the Bastille creates associations to princesses in fairy tales, but also to political prisoners who were imprisoned because the monarchy feared their influence on the public. Miss Minchin is afraid of Sara's influence on the other students. The cook is replaced by Becky in the two latest versions in order to provide a co-prisoner to Sara. The way Miss Minchin treats Sara and how she is estranged from the other children remain similar in all versions of the story.

The other inhabitants of Miss Minchin's Select Seminary go from being a homogenous group of "others," to being a part of the story, which results in both positive and

negative repercussions for our heroine. The lost princess is usually an isolated character who is swept away by the prince, but Sara, who shares character traits with the lost princess, becomes less isolated in the play and the novel. Sara is extremely lonely in the first version, not really bonding with any of her fellow students, keeping only the company of books and her doll Emily. The only other named pupil of the seminary in *Sara Crewe* is Ermengarde, whom Sara only considers a way of accessing reading materials (Burnett, *Sara* 24). Amongst the good characters of the school, Becky, Lottie and Ermengarde stand out. Sara's isolation in the novella is replaced by closer contact to the other child characters in the later versions of the story. This distances the story from "Cinderella," because Cinderella is always presented as an isolated character. By making Sara less isolated and "friendlier" towards the other characters, Burnett has made Sara easier to identify with for the child reader. Other students are identified and developed in the play and the novel, and it is in some instances possible to find similarities between the characters of the story of Sara Crewe with the characters of "Cinderella." Johanna Elizabeth Resler provides an overview of all the characters and where they are featured, classifying them as adversary, friend or neutral (43-45). Her classifications show the vast expansion of the number of characters between the first and the later texts. However, only a limited number of these characters make an impact on Sara.

Evil Forces and Fairy Godmothers

As already mentioned, the classical *"*Cinderella*"* story usually encompasses two evil stepsisters, who are neither as pretty nor as kind as Cinderella. These stock characters are transferred into the story of Sara only in the last two versions. One could perhaps argue that in the novella all the other children at the school could be seen as dull or mean opposites of Sara and therefore be characterised as homogenous stepsister-like characters (Burnett, *Sara* 22). The character fitting the bill of the evil stepsister the most is Lavinia. She is cruel and openly jealous of Sara, exposing her and her friends while they are having their midnight party.

Lavinia serves to illustrate how two girls who are similar in terms of position and treatment might end up quite differently. Previous to Sara's appearance at the school Lavinia was the leader of the other pupils, and held the position as the best dressed (*Little* 36). The only way Lavinia maintained her position was by "making herself extremely disagreeable if the others did not follow her," as well as assuming "grand airs" (*Little* 36). Lavinia therefore resembles the stepsisters in more ways than being mean to Sara; she is afraid that if she and Sara are equal in social standing and in wealth Sara would be superior to and better liked.

"The moral" of Perrault's *"*Cinderella" opens with the lines: *"*Though beauty's a treasure that women desire, / For everyone's fond of a pretty young face, / Cinderella had gifts with a value much higher, / As she showed in behaving with charm and with grace" (Perrault 140). Sara has charm and grace, and shows this by being helpful to people who are worse off. This is one of the reasons the reader is happy that her prosperity is restored, and one admires Sara at the end when she manages to remain polite to Miss Minchin when declining to go back. Both Cinderella and Sara end up in a better position than those opposing them at the end. Those who oppose Sara and Cinderella, whether it is the "stepsisters" or the "evil stepmother," do so because they are afraid of their superior. Miss Minchin therefore makes it apparent that Sara is worth less than the other students by excluding her, making her do menial work and dressing her in rags. Lavinia and her supporting group of friends reinforce this illusion by laughing at her clothes and avoiding her, which makes it possible for Lavinia to go back to her original position at the school.

Besides Lavinia, another character that inhabits some of the stepsister characteristics is the cook. The cook is not such an obvious candidate as Lavinia, but her way of letting her own misery affect Sara, and later Becky, is significant. She is not one of the privileged students at the school. Rather, she is a worker like Sara later becomes. Somehow, because she is an adult perhaps, the cook enjoys a higher social standing than Sara after her demise.

Instead of being able to relate to the misery that Sara is going through the cook releases tension from her own misery by blaming Becky and Sara for her wrongdoings, or venting her foul mood on them (see e.g. *Little* 183, 192-93). So in a sense where Lavinia serves as an example of how two girls of equal wealth can end up quite different in terms of demeanour, the cook illustrates that there are people who behave badly because of their own misery: having a "good" life does not necessarily result in good people, and a "tough" life does not necessarily render you a bad person.

Two characters with a particularly important role in the story, and who realise most of the "magical" fairy tale-elements within the story, are Mr. Carrisford and the agile performer of his commands, Ram Dass, who transforms the garret, provides food and gives Sara new clothes. They also are kind enough to let Sara assume that the transformation of the garret is real "magic"; their sole motivation seems to be to change a poor drudge's life. Even if they do not know that she is the girl they have been looking for all along, they decide to make life a little more comfortable for at least one person. It is possible to question their motifs in helping Sara as opposed to Becky, whose life is just as miserable as Sara's, which will be touched upon in the next chapter. Although their interference with Sara's life is not part of revealing her true identity as Captain Crewe's daughter to Mr. Carrisford, it is an important tool in keeping up her faith and spirit. As with other prominent fairy tale characteristics of the story, the nature of the good deeds done by Ram Dass and Mr. Carrisford remain virtually unchanged throughout the three versions, likely for the same reasons that Sara's personality remains consistent throughout the three versions. She remains true to her idea of what it means to be a princess and the transformation of the garret is an essential part of the story. The biggest variation between the three versions is in the description of this transformation, where in the later versions of it becomes more stressed that Mr. Carrisford is the benefactor, as opposed to it being Ram Dass' idea in *Sara Crewe* (70-71).

At the end, the newly dressed Sara is discovered by Mr. Carrisford to be the late Captain Crewe's daughter, and he becomes her new father figure. With him she becomes wealthier than she was before the death of her father, and she is adopted into a new household. It re-enforces the image of him as her benefactor that he continuously showers her with presents the way that her father used to do when he was alive.

Fairy Tale Stereotypes Revived

The story of Sara Crewe contains both textual descriptions of appearance and illustrations, which reinforce the stock characters of the fairy tale and creates a more prominent link to the fairy tale genre. Maria Tatar brings up an interesting perspective on beauty in the earlier fairy tales when she focuses on the undefined or abstract beauty of fairy tale heroines (*Enchanted* 73-75). Stereotypes in fairy tales have been subject to a lot of attention recently, for instance through the creation of seemingly unrealistic beauty ideals in movies created by Disney. As discussed above, the beautiful princess theme is avoided by Burnett by making the focus of the ideal princess a moral achievement, rather than basing the ideal on appearance, wealth or power. She seems to have avoided focus on outward appearance, perhaps trying to counter the stereotype of the beautiful princess. As already stated, Sara is noticed by Ram Dass not because of her appearance, but because of her kindness. In the traditional fairy tales heroines were generally described as beautiful, such as Cinderella: "Even in her ragged clothes, she looked a hundred times more beautiful than either of her sisters, despite their splendid dresses" (Perrault 130). Beauty is used as an intensifier of other good characteristics. Sara displays modesty in all three versions when being addressed as a beautiful child, as can be seen in the passage below:

> "Why does she say I am a beautiful child," she was thinking. "I am not beautiful at all. Colonel Grange's little girl, Isobel, is beautiful. She has dimples and rose-colored cheeks, and long hair the color of gold. I have short black hair and green eyes; besides

> which, I am a thin child and not fair in the least. I am one of the ugliest children I ever saw. …" (Burnett, *Little* 8)

There are, however, several ways of being beautiful. Any child reading the story of Sara Crewe would be inclined to imagine Sara as a beautiful child; her lovely manners, imagination and outwards characteristics aid the child in creating a positive image. In *Sara Crewe* Burnett has included a comment from the French teacher highlighting her potential: "'Zat leetle Crewe. Vat a child! A so ogly beauty! Ze so large eyes! Ze so little spirituelle face. Waid till she grow up. You shall see!'" (13). This is removed from the later version, as well as further descriptions of how Sara perceives her own appearance. Without this description children are free to imagine how she looks themselves, not having to rely on accounts of her outwards appearance. This is however countered in the illustrations of the texts where Sara is not portrayed as an unattractive child. This is especially true before her loss of fortune, but I would argue is discernible also after her demise (see e.g. fig. 2). Even if Sara is not portrayed as a typical breathtakingly beautiful fairy tale princess, it would seem as though the focus upon beauty, or general appearance as an enforcer of other characteristics, is otherwise borrowed by Burnett from the fairy tale tradition.

fig. 2: Sara as a Drudge, ill. Ethel Franklin Beths

The two illustrators for the original publications were Reginald Birch, who was the original illustrator of *Sara Crewe* and later added a few drawings for a later edition of *A Little Princess*, and Ethel Franklin Beths, who was the original illustrator of *A Little Princess.* In children's literature illustrations are an important factor, and Stephens makes the claim that illustrations are part of a book's language (14-15). As the illustrations are an integral part of the story of Sara Crewe they play a role in forming the ideological and didactic message of the texts, which is discussed further in the next chapter. But the illustrations are also a part of

what Knoepflmacher calls the "fairy tale permutation," and must therefore be seen as one of the ways in which modern stories incorporates traditional fairy tale traits (22). The stock characters of the fairy tales are to a large extent reproduced in the story of Sara Crewe, and as a result of this they might also be reproduced in the illustrations.

The novella and the novel are not picture books, so the pictures serve to accentuating the textual content. The play uses the tradition of showing, rather than explaining character traits. Stage directions, which give us an indicator of how the *dramatis personae* are intended to be presented on stage, show that also here appearance enforces the stereotypical stock characters of the fairy tale that appear in all versions.

fig. 3: Sara and Miss Minchin, ill. Reginald Birch

The most stereotypical portrayal in the story of Sara Crewe seems to be of the character Miss Minchin, and the stereotype is further enhanced through the illustrations. She is portrayed as being mean, as well as not looking particularly attractive. The narrator renders Sara's impression and thoughts from her first meeting with both her and her sister Amelia:

> The instant she had entered the house, she had begun promptly to hate Miss Minchin, and to think little of Miss Amelia Minchin, who was smooth and dumpy, and lisped, and was evidently afraid of her older sister. Miss Minchin was tall, and had large, cold, fishy eyes, and large, cold hands, which seemed fishy, too, because they were damp and made chills run down Sara's back when they touched her … (*Sara* 11).

Reginald Birch (fig. 3) and Ethel Franklin Beths (fig. 4) have both portrayed her as looking stern. The portrayal is most obvious in The Birch edition which portrays Miss Minchin as skinny, with a stern look on her face, as well as a great hooked nose. The illustrations enforce the negative image of the antagonist of the story. Because the illustrations are few, they do not always enforce the textual description of the characters of the story, as opposed to what we

see with Miss Minchin. Then the textual description of their physical appearance is all the reader has to base his or her image of the character's personality on. This is true of the description of Ermengarde, who first is described as being "a fat, dull pupil" (Burnett, *Sara* 24), and this description is later expanded in the novel to being "one little girl, about her own age, who looked at her very hard with a pair of light, rather dull, blue eyes. She was a fat child who did not look as if she were in the least clever, but she had a good-naturedly pouting mouth" (Burnett, *Little* 24). In the play Ermengarde states that: "Well, if I am the stupidest girl in the school, Sara's the nicest" (Burnett, *The Little* 12). Her own comments show that there is continuity in her portrayal as being less intelligent than Sara, but there are no stage descriptions that indicate her appearance. Besides the comment on her stupidity, in the play she is given the role of the "class clown," making a lot of noise and trying to be funny. It is clear that characteristics such as being "dull" and "stupid" manifest themselves in physical traits such as being "fat" and having "dull eyes." This connection is also apparent in the case of Miss Amelia Minchin who is presented as a coward (e.g. *Little* 11, 94, 131, 224). Cowardice is manifested through the physical manifestation of lisping and being "smooth and dumpy." All such manifestations of physical character traits that are correlated with personality traits illustrate a stereotyping of characters; they are not presented as complex beings.

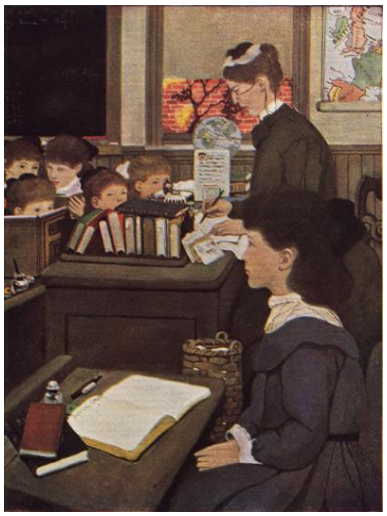

fig. 4: Miss Minchin Hoovers in the Background, ill. Ethel Franklin Beths

Although several characters are added, first in the play and then in the novel, there is no clear pattern for how characters are developed. As illustrated by Miss Minchin and Ermengarde, it is possible to see an increase in the descriptions of characters that were part of the story from the beginning. The newly added characters seem to be given less poignant

descriptions. However, there are exceptions, such as Becky. Nevertheless, as a general rule the new characters seem to have been added in order to indirectly develop Sara's character, as they are shallow characters sharing a lot of traits with the stock characters of the fairy tale. Generally in fairy tales it is easy to see that there are recurring characters, both in the original tales and in later edited versions of the tales.

The Fairy Tale: Evoking Cultural Experience

As we have seen, the story of Sara Crewe might in some ways appear dated for the present readership, but the moral lesson, the relationships between the characters, as well as the characteristic happy ending still appeal to children. Some children's books become classics, and people continue reading them beyond their normal "expiration date." Fairy tales in general are an example of this, though they exist in many different versions. Tatar explains that, "As we read fairy tales, we simultaneously evoke the cultural experience of the past and allow it to work on our consciousness even as we reinterpret and reshape that experience" ("Introduction" xii). *A Little Princess*, and to some degree the previous versions of the story, operates on the borderline between what is realistic, and what is more fantastic, but throughout keeps its strong influence from the fairy tale. The story of Sara Crewe is undoubtedly inspired by "Cinderella" and the "magic" of fairy tales, but the story is modernised and made more realistic in order to please the contemporary audience.

The play does not incorporate the same fairy tale elements that can be found in the novella and the novel. It does not however, appear as though Burnett has been able to leave the influence of fairy tales completely behind. One of the manners in which fairy tale influences are apparent in the play is through the incorporation of their oral tradition. Sara tells part of the fairy tale *Granny's Wonderful Chair* by Frances Browne, as well as singing a made up "fairy tale inspired" song for the other children (see Burnett, *The Little* 18-20, 45-47). These scenes are probably added to dramatise Sara's ability to capture her audience, and

the ability of the fairy tale to completely engulf children. The storytelling session is given metatextual commentary by characters in the play: "What a nice place," "Oh, how lovely" and "Oh, what splendid clothes," indicating the power fairy tales have to draw the reader into an imagined world (Burnett, *The Little* 18, 20). The story of *Granny's Wonderful Chair* is not inserted exactly the way it is written by Browne, but it is discernible nonetheless. This represents another kind of intertextuality, in the form of a retelling of a fairy tale. In effect it shows that fairy tales are not stable entities, but that they are shaped and edited for the intended audience. Burnett indicates that she had previous knowledge to, and was inspired by, the fairy tale by incorporating an already famous fairy story in the play.

There is no evidence that Burnett was consciously using the fairy tale as a backdrop to critique social and moral values as so many other writers have done. Rather it seems that the continuation of fairy tale genre traits preserves tradition and transmits universal values. The traditions and values that the story of Sara Crewe and the fairy tale, especially "Cinderella," share allow them to be read over a long time span. Incorporating elements from the fairy tale grants the story to take part in an already established literary tradition. As Tatar says about fairy tales, "the staying power of these stories, their widespread and enduring popularity, suggest that they must be addressing issues that have a significant social function– whether critical, conservative, compensatory, or therapeutic" ("Introduction" xi). Burnett's combination of tradition and realism has created works that, although not entirely current, have adopted this staying power.

In addition to the fairy tale's long oral tradition that makes it a traditional influence for the story of Sara Crewe, it is also possible to make the claim that the way in which the fairy tale is used in the story of Sara Crewe is progressive. The fairy tale underwent changes in order to make them more suitable for a juvenile and upper class audience at the time that the story of Sara Crewe was written. This means that edited versions and re-versions of the fairy

tales intended for a child audience were very much a part of the developments that were occurring in children's literature.

It should be evident that the story of Sara Crewe is a re-version of the fairy tale "Cinderella," and that it draws upon model characters or archetypes such as the lost child or the lost princess. The widespread recognition of fairy tale elements is significant in terms of how the readers would have approached Burnett's story of Sara Crewe. As Bruno Bettelheim puts it: "The fairy tale simplifies all situations. Its figures are clearly drawn; and details, unless very important, are eliminated. All characters are typical rather than unique" (8). Throughout the three versions of the story the characters other than Sara remain fairly stereotypical and limited, although they in the two later versions create an image of a less isolated Sara by becoming her "friends" and adversaries. There is a link between appearance and personality in the story of Sara Crewe which results in correlations such as kind Sara being pretty, naïve Ermengarde being fat and mean Miss Minchin being ugly. These correlations are represented both visually through the illustrations and textually, especially in the novella and the novel.

Chapter 3

Ideology and Didacticism in the Story of Sara Crewe

> I pretend I am a princess, so that I can try and behave like one. (Burnett, *Little* 64)

> Some say, when they're asked what this story might mean,
> That these were the gifts that her godmother gave;
> Cinderella had learned from her how to behave
> With such grace and such charm that it made her a queen. (Perrault 139)

The fairy tale often includes a "moral" at the end which clarifies what the reader should have learned from the tale, such as "Cinderella's" two lessons in verse added by Perrault. While children's books from the "Golden age" and onwards rarely include this kind of explicit moral lesson, Hunt argues that all books "must teach something," and that particularly writers for children have "singular responsibility in transmitting cultural values, rather than 'simply' telling a story" (*Introduction* 3). The cultural values that children's literature usually conveys are part of the ideological content, which, again, is integral to the didactic content. Instead of appending a moral lesson at the end, the different versions of Sara's story are all centred around the moral implications of her statement "I pretend I am a princess, so that I can try and behave as one" (*Little* 64). Texts might set out to teach "something" to the reader, but that might not always be what the text actually implies and inculcate in the reader. James H. Kavanagh states that, "Ideology is a social process that works on and through every social subject, that, like any other social process, everyone is 'in,' whether or not they 'know' or understand it" (311), it must permeate every society. Therefore the moral of a story might be overshadowed by underlying ideological structures that counter the message that is being imposed, and here the implicit, covert and passive ideologies tell a different story, often by using contrasting rhetoric, where some underlying assumptions of gender, class and race shine through. Ideology is, as a result of it being what Kavanagh calls a "social process," dynamic, even if it does not necessarily keep up with the ideals of society. Rather, ideology is always

present and reinstates and perpetuates the way society works at all times. As a result it is at all times difficult to detect and be aware that one might be manipulated or persuaded by ideologies, as they most of the time just represent what is taken to be the way that things are.

This chapter will focus on the ideologies present in the story of Sara Crewe and the didactic message it conveys, with an eye to detect differences in the three versions and contrasts between what is overly and covertly promote. The most immediate issues that will be addressed are contemporary ideological influences regarding class, gender, empire and violence or corporal punishment, and to what extent they influence the didactic message.

Parents often choose literature for their children with a dual ambition: the text chosen should teach important lessons and cultural values to their children, as well as entertain them. Therefore, many children's books have what Hunt refers to as a "double address," where the author addresses both the adult and the child reader (*Introduction* 12-13). This dual ambition is reflected in the tradition of literature for children. Stephens argues: "Much, perhaps most, early writing for children sought to assert meaning within a very particular interpretation of reality, situating its texts within a dominant religious, moral, social and economic world-view" (74). Because this sometimes is a natural effect of authors' belonging within a "dominant religious, moral, social" or "economic world-view," Stephens' statement is borderline redundant. M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham summarise one of the basic tenets of Marx and Engels as follows: "In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies, and serves to legitimize and perpetuate, the interests of the dominant economic and social class" (181), which is to say that most literature "assert[s] meaning" that conforms to the ruling ideology in society.

Hunt states that, "It is arguably impossible for a children's book (especially one being read by a child) not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology and, by extension, didacticism" (*Introduction* 3). Although the dissemination and

extent to which didactic content is included in children's literature is subject to trends, one of the most important things that children need to learn is how to function in a society.

The term ideology might bring connotations of political ideologies such as Marxism. As Stephens points out ideologies are not "undesirable"; they are often necessary in order to master social communication, and to function in a society (8). By that it is possible to say that as social beings, humans are dependent upon social interaction, which in turn is governed by ideologies or more general social codes of conduct also reflected in the moral and didactic aspects of a given text. Ideologies permeate every aspect of life and society, and are therefore found in literature. Stephens accedes to this view and claims that as signifying meaning is infused with ideology, so is the discourse of a book (1-2). In instances where ideologies are "overt" or visible, and therefore obvious in a text, the writer clearly discloses social, political or moral beliefs (Stephens 9). It is fairly easy to detect overt ideologies and see how they interact with the didactic content of a text. Older works of current interest may contradict contemporary ideologies. A text that makes the reader reconsider and question certain aspects of life may make more of an impact. The story of Sara Crewe suggests the subversive idea that children can make a difference, and promotes kindness and charity across social divides.

Where ideologies are "covert," hidden or implicit, it is more difficult to recognise the ideological content and how it might affect the reader (Stephens 9). Ideological content that is embedded in the underlying value systems instead of being spelled out explicitly can be more influential. For a contemporary reader who shares the same value system and ideological background, these ideologies become taken for granted and normalised by the reader (Stephens 9). A distance in time makes it easier to detect covert ideologies because of historical change, which is part of the reason why discussing them is now possible. Hollindale suggests that one category of ideology in children's literature is "passive ideology," in which the author's unconscious ideological influences are presented unknowingly in the text

(Stephens 10). Hollindale's passive ideologies are one kind of covert ideologies, and therefore pose the same difficulties to detect.

The Story of Sara Crewe and the Reader

The dominant economic and social class that is "legitimized and perpetuated" in the story of Sara Crewe is middle class families; people that had means to afford books that were meant for amusement, and not only for education. Books in general were a luxury that not all could afford, and Burnett herself addresses the difficulty of obtaining enough books in her autobiography: "Little girls did not revel in sumptuous libraries then. Books were birthday or Christmas presents, and were read and re-read, and lent to other little girls as a great favor" (*One* 112). The story of Sara Crewe seems to address an implied reader that would conform to the social and economic class that would be able to indulge in books, and the target readership would be children or young adults, perhaps primarily female, who would read this story alone or in the company of their parents. As Barbara Wall states, the audience or the narrate that is similar to the implied reader, "though perhaps not directly addressed, is as clearly sensed, as his or her age, sex, interests and propensities are constantly being defined in the text" (5). One could argue that there is a clear link between the inscribed ideologies, the protagonist or the social environment focused on in the texts and the implied readership or target audience. This is closely related to the subject position that the reader is invited to assume, as Stephens puts it "subject positions are constructed and ideological assumptions inscribed" through the "narrative point of view" (81). The easier a child can relate to certain aspects of the text and assume the subject position inscribed in it, the easier it is for the child to identify with and "approve" of the covert and implicit ideologies the text conveys. The intended readership would easily identify with the ideologies of the text.

Stephens makes the claim that, "Identification with focalizers is one of the chief methods by which a text socializes its readers, as they efface their own selfhood and

internalize the perceptions and attitudes of the focalizer and are thus reconstituted as subject within the text" (81). This is not to say that readers who do not identify with focalised characters will disapprove of the content. As Thompson states: "The meanings of texts and their critical assessment vary with time, with place, and with the specific characteristics of readers. No reader reads a text without some experiences and some expectations; what is got out of a text is always in part a function of them" (252). Different readers at different points of time in history can find the same text enjoyable and "fitting," even if their understanding of it may differ.

A text will usually try and appeal to the readers to make them feel empowered by the text. Stephens discusses the idea that a text is not made up of events, but creates emotional spaces where the reader has to build on his or her own previous experiences to feel something. This moves the reader into a so-called subject position which facilitates the ideological impact the text has on a child (14). One way that Burnett creates these emotional spaces in the two later versions of the story is by reducing the role of the intrusive narrator and rely on showing rather than telling, for instance by letting Sara speak more on her own account. Even when she is not interacting with the other characters, she speaks or thinks out loud, as children do, "in an imitation of young children's egocentric speech," as Maria Nikolajeva puts it (97). An example of this is when she makes it clear that it is immoral to laugh at Ermengarde, proving her kindness without imposing it on the reader: "'It isn't funny, really,' she said between her teeth, as she bent over her book. 'They ought not to laugh'" (*Little* 26). This makes it superfluous for the intrusive narrator to comment on her thoughts and feelings, which would constitute telling. The reader then has to interpret and assume the character's thoughts and feelings based on what is presented in the text. Nikolajeva makes the claim that "'Showing' and 'telling' are viewed in literary criticism as two major and opposed

narrative strategies, with the former regarded both as more demanding for the writer and more engaging for the reader" (98).

The "passive ideologies" reflect the author's personal experience, as well as his or her social and economic standing. Some events, such as Burnett's at times low economic standing in her early years, are part of shaping the ideologies that are infused in the story of Sara Crewe. Burnett's early life shows that she was aware of hardship, but that she did not identify with the lower social classes. When becoming too poor to conduct the desired lifestyle in England, the family left in order to avoid "change of habits and surroundings, shabbiness, anxiety, and annoyance" (*One* 286). The move illustrates both the family's and Burnett's desire to be part of the dominant social group, and signals that Burnett believed special structures in England restricted class mobility. Her reflection upon the differences between American and British class demarcations, such as the fact that "manner of speech is in England a mark of breeding" (*One* 74), underscores this. Their move from England would have given her the distance to be more critical of British society and its customs.

Burnett's inclination for charity and shedding light upon less fortunate people through her literary works indicates that avoidance of the lower classes was not out of disgust and shows that she was conscious of her work's effect with regards to the poor. Although it is possible to detect concern for the less fortunate in her later works, as well as the stories of Sara Crewe, it seems as though her generosity is coloured by her own social standing as well as the general ideologies of society concerning charity. Burnett reminiscences about her experience of the lower classes as a child in her autobiography, describing an incident where unknown children sat on "their lamppost": "They were evidently not only 'Street children,' but they were 'Back Street children,' a race more exciting to regard as objects, because their customs and language were, as it were, exotic" (*One* 77). That Burnett's finds the lower classes "exotic" outsiders represents an example of the demarcations of society at the time

Changes in Children's Literature and the Story of Sara Crewe

During the time span of the publication of the three version of the story of Sara Crewe literature for children experienced a metamorphosis. Hunt describes the changes that began taking place in literature in the late eighteen-sixties as a move towards "a tone that is increasingly 'single address'; the books become more complex, and any didactic intent (which is, perhaps, inescapable) is a poor second to entertainment. In a sense, children's literature was growing up – growing away from adults" (*Introduction* 59). Although entertainment was now being appreciated as the main agenda of children's literature, parents selecting books for their children would still consider their morals and values even if the didactic intent was kept to a minimum.

With reference to Burnett's works specifically, Wall states that there is a shift within the story of Sara Crewe from "dual address" to "single address" between the novella and the novel (169, 175). According to Wall, *Sara Crewe* is "Burnett's most effective piece of writing for a dual audience" on the grounds that it is "short and economical" as well as having a narrative voice which is "detached, even slightly tart" (169). This has later been replaced with "single address" in *A Little Princess,* which is neither short, nor has the same detached narrative voice. I question that *A Little Princess* is reduced to "single address," although it may have lost some of its "tartness." *A Little Princess* balances the child and adult audience in a good manner, as a contemporary review in the *New York Times* indicates, where it is referred to as "a story which every little girl will read many times, which her papa and mamma will read, too" ("Children's Books" n. pag.).

Part of the reason why the later versions of the story have been deemed to address children more than adults, might be that with time the distaste of didacticism became stronger. Thwaite states about *St. Nicholas Magazine* that, "When Mary Mapes Dodge had started the magazine in 1873, it had been with the intention of providing wholesome entertainment to offset the didacticism which dogged most writing for children. She encouraged Frances to

send things to her, and most of Frances' children's books first appeared in the pages of *St. Nicholas"* (82). The policy of *St. Nicholas Magazine* may have influenced the process of writing *Sara Crewe,* which was written originally for it. The development from overtly didactic content was still underway when Burnett was revising the story into a play and a novel, and the didactic content in these works is less overt than in *Sara Crewe.* Instead of having a clear didactic message, the later versions provide the didactic message through example. Burnett describes *A Little Princess* as "the nice, detail kind of thing children love," and uses a metaphor of serving muffins to children in order to illustrate their desire to know the "why" and "how": "it delights children to know why they had muffins & how the muffins were baked" (Burnett, Letter to Richard Watson Gilder). The "why" and "how" of a story may constitute the parts of didacticism that would be left out through overtly "telling." One example of this is instructing children that they should not eat too much ice cream through showing that too much ice cream will result in stomach aches.

What Is the Right Thing?

One of the didactic precepts presented in the texts of Sara Crewe is to always do the right thing. Often in stories for children right versus wrong is clearly spelled out. In the case of the story of Sara Crewe the reader should be in no doubt what is "right," although a more perceptive reader might question the story's conflict between what is morally "right" and legally "right." Stephen and McCallum make the claim that the overarching principle of truth and justice traditionally trumps the law in western culture, making it easier to accept the lawbreaking if it is in order to follow "courtesy" or generally accepted norms of behaviour (6). This is also true in instances where the severity of the wrongdoing is less serious than breaking the law. The arbitrary rules of an establishment such as Miss Minchin's seminary, are an example of rules that when broken can be considered doing the "wrong" thing, but still is considered "right" if done in order to follow general standards of courtesy or behaviour.

The first version of the story, *Sara Crewe,* is less conflicted in its representation of what is considered right and wrong, and Sara can be said to always do the right thing. In the novel and the play, Sara is presented as having several friends who come to visit her in the garret at night. Although this wandering in the halls after lights-out is not allowed, readers will sympathise with the rule breakers rather than the enforcer of school rules. If one compares this with "Cinderella," it is equally justifiable that Cinderella breaks the rules set by her stepmother in order to go to the ball. Both Cinderella and Sara are portrayed as kind and exemplary, and therefore the reader is ready to accept that they would do no wrong, and that the rules that are enforced are wrong.

Although parents want their children to listen and follow rules, they also want them to think for themselves and not take things for granted. The development of a critical sense is important, and might be prompted by literature. There is a difference in how the texts justify the breaking of rules, due to the way in which the play and the novel rely on showing rather than telling. In the play and the novel Sara is so hungry and cold that a night-time party seems necessary. Her hunger, and the attempt by Miss Minchin and Amelia to alienate her from the other students, justifies breaking the household rules. Consequently, one way of justifying breaking the established rules is through undermining their "fairness." Another thing that justifies breaking the rules is inconsistency in enforcing the rules. For instance, Miss Minchin is ready to punish children for playing in the dark, but reconsiders once she learns that it was Sara who initiated it, since she is the star pupil of the school. Once Sara becomes penniless, however, she is subject to both the previously unenforced rules as well as new ones. Miss Minchin is as a result both unfair and inconsistent.

This kind of rule breaking is not present in *Sara Crewe*, and to forge a negative image of Miss Minchin, Burnett has added more direct description. In a sense it is more overtly didactic in the way it tells the reader who is good and who is bad. The omniscient narrator

possesses some ideological power to control the reader's response, for instance by stating things as though they were commonsensical (Stephens 22). When doing that, the reader might be lured into accepting those judgements without questioning the narrator's ulterior motifs or reliability. Besides repeating comments made by Sara in the novella, the narrator sometimes makes use of direct characterisations: "Downstairs Miss Minchin was as cruel and insulting as ever, Miss Amelia was as peevish, and the servants were as vulgar. Sara was sent on errands, and scolded, and driven hither and thither, …" (*Sara* 57-58).

Sara is presented as morally right throughout the novella, and therefore the reader is ready to accept what she says as the truth. The third-person omniscient narrators, and the way the texts are largely focalised through one character, give little room for describing other characters. Although direct characterisation might be less engaging for the reader, it has the possibility to make something clearer in a less space-consuming manner. The play is likewise largely focused on Sara, although the other characters' direct speech is used to bring more insight into how terrible conditions are for Sara, and how Miss Minchin is driving her too hard. This can be seen in examples such as when Ermengarde reflects on the poor living conditions she is kept in, and where she states that "She's treated worse than poor little Becky" (38).

While Miss Minchin is portrayed as a despot, Sara clings to the ideal of being a princess. As discussed in the two previous chapters this ideal is noble and stands for acting in a certain manner, and is not based on appearance. Sara uses historical figures such as the Princesse de Lamballe and Marie Antoinette as proof that it is possible to maintain one's "grace" even through trials and tough times. Although historical references and allusions may have been added to the story of Sara Crewe for dramatic effect, their political connotations are interesting. Although Burnett might not have had a political agenda when making these references and allusions, they nonetheless are part of making up the ideological message of

the texts. I suggest that the adding of Carlyle's *The French Revolution* is added intentionally, and Burnett is known to have been acquainted with people heavily influenced by it. [7]

Since the political debate these works partake in is no longer raging it is unlikely that the readership today, or at least a juvenile readership, pick up on the ambiguities that such references entail. These references would have been more familiar to a contemporary audience because of the ongoing political debate, and perhaps seen as a way of rousing the reader's interest in the political debate, without making her agenda clear. Thwaite at least seems to think that Burnett's forte was writing, not politics (46). The socio-historical references may also have alienated some of the readership.

The "Presence" of Empire

Ideologically, all three versions of the story of Sara Crewe are influenced by the ongoing imperialism, and it is especially England's "crown jewel" India that is alluded to. As this is where Sara is born, and where her father and Mr. Carrisford resided, the influence is clear. The subject of empire, "otherness" and exoticism is covered at length by McGillis.

The empire is throughout all three versions presented as exotic and exciting, and this in turn adds to the way Sara stands out in the school. She is presented as different and exciting for the other students, and her wealth more substantial. After her demise this seems to change, and the diamond mines can be interpreted as a symbol of a fallen empire. For Captain Crewe it is not necessary to invest in the diamond business, but the expected profit is too alluring. In the conversation between Captain Crewe's lawyer and Miss Minchin it becomes clear what the lawyer thinks of Sara's father's business in the colonies: "Died of jungle fever and business troubles combined. The jungle fever might not have killed him if he had not been driven mad by the business troubles, and the business troubles might not have put an end to him if the jungle fever had not assisted. Captain Crewe is dead" (*Little* 81). After Sara is

[7] Mark Twain amongst others, a known acquaintance of Burnett (see e.g. Thwaite 72, 82; V. Burnett 109, 347), was known to have cherished the book so much so that it was mentioned in his obituary in *The New York Times.*

orphaned the diamond mines are sometimes brought up as a way of taunting her, which indicates that the relationship with the empire is ambiguous and not only positive (*Little* 101, 152). At the end of the story when the wealth of the diamond mines is restored to Sara, they once again become a source of envy, making it clear that business in the empire, although risky, is very profitable. The changing attitudes towards the mines and India in general, are part of the story's contrasting views concerning the empire, and sometimes there is conflicting messages within the text. Smith for instance argues that the books of Burnett champion bringing up girls in England as favourable opposed to in the colonies (see e.g. 108, 130). I would argue that this is not the case with Sara Crewe. Instead there are several references to how dangerous the school in London could have been for her:

> If Sara had been a different kind of child, the life she led at Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for the next ten years would not have been at all good for her. She was treated more as if she were a distinguished guest at the establishment than as if she were a mere little girl. If she had been a self-opinionated, domineering child, she might have become disagreeable enough to be unbearable through being so much indulged and flattered. If she had been an indolent child, she would have learned nothing. (Burnett, *Little* 34)

Of course, later on the upbringing she receives at Miss Minchin becomes more like servitude, with tedious work more adapted to the working classes, which is not presented as positive environment for a child either. Rather than pointing at the beneficial elements of British education, the story of Sara Crewe highlights the good nature that Sara brings with her from India. Her move to England is presented as a necessity because of the effects of the "bad" climate on children (Little 5), and not from a need of removing unfortunate characteristics acquired in the colonies.

It is possible to see a link between words chosen to describe acts of incivility and despair to words used in conjunction with the empire. Tatar makes the claim that,

> Many of the so-called classics of children's literature emerged during the Victorian era and its Edwardian afterlife, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the heroes and heroines of those classics become intrepid explorers of exotic regions whose adventures become accounts of encounters with monsters in the form of savages and primitives. (*Enchanted* 137)

These adventures involving "savages and primitives" are not only found in the colonies, but also in Burnett's story of Sara Crewe, illustrated through references to creatures such as the "foreign" monkey, Sara's "savage" hand when kicking Emily off the chair, and the "ravenous" beggar girl Anne. The use of words such as these shows that rhetoric used in accordance with the colonies permeated English society and was used perhaps unconsciously by Burnett. The associations to such words are mostly negative. Ram Dass who is the only "real" foreigner of the tale is presented in a favourable fashion, as a nice person who shows compassion for Sara. Colonial enterprise is not always presented as a bad thing, although the rhetoric inspired by it brings with it negative connotations. Sometimes influences from the colonies are presented in a positive manner, but this portrayal is not necessarily ideologically unbiased. The superiority complex that the empire incited in the British people shines through, and as a result colours the characterisation of Ram Dass. As with the lower classes his race marks him as unequal to Sara. According to Sean Purchase "the idea of race in the Victorian period is complex because it came to signify everyone and everything considered to be devoid of strictly Anglo-Saxon, or rather English, 'characteristics' and 'colour'" (115). Ram Dass both looks and acts foreign, with his salaams and "dark face" (*Little* 143). This supports Reimer's observations that Ram Dass becomes more like the ideal servant in *A Little Princess,* as opposed to in the novella where he is only referred to as "the Lascar" (117). Ram Dass, the name he is given in the play and the novel, is probably based on the Guru Ram Das, and the name ironically means servant of God. He is a servant to Mr. Carrisford, and a happy one at that. Mc Gillis points to a passage where the similarities between Ram Dass and Sara

are addressed (*Little* 144-45): "This passage holds no irony. The narrator does not comment on the fact that the position Sara is in relative to Miss Minchin and even the cook is not entirely dissimilar to the position Ram Dass and his compatriots are in relative to Sara" (20). Ram Dass' situation, as in the case of Becky, is that it is taken for granted that some people are meant to serve, whilst others are not.

The use of corporal punishment and the mention of violence are present in all versions of Sara Crewe, and here the moral seems to be conflicting. Partly violence seems to be linked with empire and foreignness, through the use of the word "savage." In one instance of violence, when Sara has been turned into a drudge, it is her doll Emily who has to take the blow. In all three versions of the story Emily is knocked, although the play contains a modified version of the violence. In the novella and the novel Sara "lifted her little savage hand and knocked Emily off the chair, bursting into a passion of sobbing" (*Sara* 23, *Little* 133), the stage directions changes the event into one of "violent" disregard: "*throws Emily on stool and cries" (The Little* 33). McGillis has linked this event in *A Little Princess* to his main focus of study, the implicit imperial ideologies that are present in the text, by focusing on the use of language associated with empire (67). His thought is that some language brings connotations to empire and, in some instance, people of a different race. When Sara knocks down Emily it is the use of the word "savage" that he claims creates these connotations. Of particular importance is perhaps that the word savage evokes negative associations in the setting in which it is used. The act of knocking the doll off the chair is violent and signals loss of control. Using a word that is associated with empire in such a setting might have a dual effect. Firstly, any associations that the reader has with empire will taint the reading of this section unconsciously. Secondly, the negative context the word is used in will taint ideas concerning savages and empire in the reader.

Another use of violence is the act of corporal punishment, and because parents are absent from the seminary it is done by authorities other than parents; Sara and Becky are subjected to punishment by Miss Minchin. Corporal punishment was a tool of discipline condoned in the Victorian era, but Horn points to the fact that corporal punishment was also linked with class, and she states that in the middle class it gradually, throughout the Victorian era, became less accepted as a penalty for bad behaviour (21). Corporal punishment, to the extent it is still practiced today, is considered a private matter not often addressed in the public sphere. Violence if prominent in present-day children's literature is usually perpetrated by "the bad," or takes place in an unrealistic setting. Sara Crewe is placed in a realistic setting and punishment targets "the good," thereby separating the story from most contemporary literature for children. With regard to influences from fairy tales, they often contained "lurid portrayals of child abuse, starvation, and exposure, like fastidious descriptions of cruel punishments" (Tatar, "Sex and Violence" 370). So it would seem as though the portrayal of violence stems both from contemporary culture and from the fairytale. Examples of corporal punishment being inflicted on Becky and Sara in the novel and the novella can be seen in passages such as these:

> Once when such thoughts were passing through her mind the look in her eyes so enraged Miss Minchin that she flew at Sara and boxed her ears. (*Sara* 33; an extended version can be found in *Little* 148)
>
> Miss Minchin was infuriated just as she had been before, and her anger expressed itself, as before, in an intemperate fashion. She flew at her [Sara] and shook her. (*Little* 206)
>
> It became apparent that she boxed Becky's ears. 'Don't tell falsehoods,' she said. 'Go to your room this instant.' (*Little* 193)
>
> Miss Minchin strode over to Becky and boxed her ears for a second time. (*Little* 204)

One can see from these excerpts that the examples of physical punishment increase from the novella to the novel, and that both versions portray provoked violence. In both instances Miss Minchin uses force to punish what she considers breaking the rules of her seminary. It is noteworthy that violence is only resorted to in the case of "inferior" people: the parlour borders of the school are never subjected to physical punishment. Children are naturally inferior to adults, and in the Victorian era the term "noble savage" was sometimes employed to foreigners, because they were thought to be "uncivilized" like children (Purchase 17). Smith also draws attention to the fact that "Race and class were frequently conflated, most obviously in the middle-class desire to 'raise' each group from a 'primitive' state" (9). In the case of Miss Minchin, the punishment she subjects Sara and Becky to resembles what Tatar claims could be found in earlier childrearing manuals: "What seems to drive these teachers and preachers of bodily punishment is less a real concern for the welfare of the child than a hardened pedophobia that makes them deeply resent the child as a representative and reminder of everything that is unruly, untamed, and uncivilized" (*Off* 53). Miss Minchin does not seem to like children, and when the children in question do not serve to maintain her reputation, she reacts with ill-treatment.

Sara is no stranger to violence throughout the story, although she does not often resort to using it. In one instance she is provoked by Lavinia while reading, and she feels a deep urge to slap her: "'Well,' she said, with some fire, 'I should like to slap you,—but I don't want to slap you!' restraining herself. 'At least I both want to slap you—and I should like to slap you,—but I won't slap you. We are not little gutter children. We are both old enough to know better'" (*Little* 63). Once more the use of violence is seen in light of class politics. As Lavinia and Sara are members of the higher classes they are not expected to resort to violence in order to settle conflicts, as "little gutter children" do; they are supposed to act as "little ladies."

The play presents no direct violence or physical punishment involving any of the characters. One way of interpreting this is that reading about violence is easier to fathom for the young and adult reader than seeing it acted out on stage. Bettelheim talks about how fairy tales, even when depicting situations that could be scary in real life, are not real and therefore do not "hit too close to home for comfort" (62). When keeping in mind that things appear scarier if they are realistic, it is possible to say that children might be able to distance themselves from violence in writing, whereas witnessing a performance might make it to visual. By avoiding acts of violence Burnett may have conformed to a social norm by which physical punishment existed, but was not visible in the public sphere and not condoned by the higher classes.

Essential Difference: The Dark Side of "Charity"

In all three versions of the story of Sara Crewe it is possible to discern two ways in which the moral principle of being universally kind is promoted. One is more covert, and could be considered part of a passive ideology. Through Sara's misfortune the text promotes the lesson that one can never know the reason for someone's misfortune, which may enable the reader to see that even drudges deserve sympathy. Hence the text provides an example of Martha C. Nussbaum's claim that, "Narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual tourist's interest – with involvement and sympathetic understanding, with anger at our society's refusals of visibility" (88). Children might, as a result of being coaxed to understand Sara's situation, become more aware of the lives of others in real life.

The other way the didactic impetus of being kind is prompted is through Sara's actions, which are integral in forming the didactic message of the texts and the closely related overt ideological content. Sara represents the literary ideal of an "exemplary child" from the novel of sentiment. As discussed in chapter one, the "exemplary child" was meant to set an example. Specifically, Sara prides herself on seeing and being kind to the less fortunate in

society, such as Becky and Anne, thereby acting as a role model for children reading the text. In *A Little Princess* we learn that Sara's father used to say: "If Sara had been a boy and lived a few centuries ago, … she would have gone about the country with her sword drawn, rescuing and defending every one in distress. She always wants to fight when she sees people in trouble" (25). Sara's behaviour in a number of episodes serves as a moral lesson for children reading the stories: not only does she help Becky despite their difference in position, but she also reaches out to the even more unfortunate Anne who is a homeless beggar girl. However, the ideological backdrop of these events in the texts shows some limitations to the moral message.

Economic and social standing separates the characters of the story. Class is a social construct, and class position influences the way people see themselves and others within a community. The way Burnett grew up separated from the lower classes without falling into poverty is reflected in the passive ideologies that colour the relationships between characters. The relationship between Sara and the other girls is never equal, and though Sara bestows charity on Becky and Anne there is nothing that indicates that she believes that they deserve the same life as her. Thereby, the story perpetuates divides between people of different classes. Nussbaum states that, "Compassion requires demarcations: which creatures am I to count as my fellow creatures, sharing possibilities with me?" (92) Sara is compassionate and can even relate to the situation of these girls, but she does not consider people of lower social standing as sharing the same possibilities as she does.

One aspect of this inequality is shown through the instances of charity in the story, both the charity Sara bestows upon others and the charity she experiences after her downfall. According to Brian Harrison, charity in the Victorian era needs more critical attention. He claims that the acts of kindness did nothing to change the structures in society itself, which ensured a lopsided division of income and wealth (363). In other words the philanthropy in

the story of Sara Crewe, such as giving away one's buns or sixpences, is not utilitarian. It does nothing to permanently ensure the most positive outcome for a maximum amount of people. Instead charity in the Victorian era "validate[d] existing social institutions by highlighting the generosity of the rich and the inadequacies of the poor" (Harrison 368). Therefore, while Sara's generosity is noble and serves as a good example, it also perpetuates power structures in society and enables her, even after her situation has deteriorated, to feel superior. This also explains why her "cheeks burned" when accepting alms received by "Guy Clarence" (128).

Throughout the play and the novel Becky and Sara are made out to be accomplices. Becky's presence shows that Sara is charitable not only to the poorest in society, but also to members of the working class, which implies a moral attitude not included in *Sara Crewe.* Their companionship is a natural result of the similarity of their situations in the seminary after Sara's demise. However, the fundamental difference between the two girls is discernible even if Sara claims they are equal:

> 'Why,' she said, 'we are just the same—I am only a little girl like you. It's just an accident that I am not you, and you are not me! 'Becky did not understand in the least. Her mind could not grasp such amazing thoughts, and 'an accident' meant to her a calamity in which some one was run over or fell off a ladder and was carried to 'the 'orspital.' (*Little* 54)

The way the novel presents Becky as unable to fathom what Sara is saying indicates that as a member of the working classes, Becky is not educated as Sara. People who are wealthier and educated are presented as talking Standard English, as opposed to vernacular English, such as in this scene, which contains striking accent and bad grammar:

> She opened it quite tenderly. It was a square pincushion, made of not quite clean red flannel, and black pins had been stuck carefully into it to form the words, "Menny hapy returns". (…) "It ain't nothin' but flannin, an' the flannin ain't new; but I wanted to give yer somethin' an' I made it of nights. I knew yer could *pretend* it was satin

> with diamond pins in. *I* tried to when I was makin' it. The card, miss," rather doubtfully; "'t warn't wrong of me to pick it up out o' the dust-bin, was it? Miss 'Meliar had throwed it away. I hadn't no card o' my own, an' I knowed it wouldn't be a proper presink if I didn't pin a card on—so I pinned Miss 'Meliar's." (*Little* 70)

The disproportionate relationship between Becky and Sara seems to be fuelled by a desire to illuminate Sara's good qualities, and therefore highlights her "charity."

The striking accent and poor grammar, which are noticeably similar to how Burnett describes the "street kids" of Manchester, are not the only noticeable difference between the girls. Becky quite readily adopts a subservient attitude that Sara never assumes. Nussbaum refers to this kind of discrepancy: "Differences of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin all shape people's possibilities, and their psychology with them" (95). Sara retains her recalcitrant attitude gained whilst still living in wealth, which surprises the rest of the seminary:

> "I was thinking," she said.
> "Beg my pardon immediately," said Miss Minchin.
> "I will beg your pardon for laughing, if it was rude," said Sara; "but I won't beg your pardon for thinking." (*Sara* 34)

Sara already has the markings of wealth and the middle class, and in the three versions of her story this cannot be taken away. Purchase makes the claim that "Victorian literature is full of references to the British working class as a sort of 'second' or foreign 'nation' within a nation, in a country increasingly dominated by middle-class conceptions of Englishness" (23). As a result of the differences between Sara and Becky, it is made clear to the reader that Becky will never be of equal standing as Sara, and the text therefore perpetuates an ideology of class difference.

The difference becomes even clearer in the penultimate chapter of the novel, when the future of both characters is revealed. Sara regains her wealth and finds herself with a new,

kind father figure, whilst Becky is informed that she is to be Sara's attendant. What is perhaps most striking about this incident is the way the news is related to Becky by Ram Dass:

> "Missee sahib [Sara] remembered," he said. "She told the sahib all. She wished you to know the good fortune which has befallen her. Behold a letter on the tray. She has written. She did not wish that you should go to sleep unhappy. The sahib commands you to come to him to-morrow. You are to be the attendant of missee sahib." (*Little* 257)

Becky is not released from working, but is simply given a new workplace. Although the way in which the news is told to Becky indicates that it is presented as a good solution, it is not ideal. The new situation is supposed to prevent Becky from going to sleep "unhappy," which indicates that the move to a better place of work is considered a great solution for a girl who belongs to a lower social strata. Another aspect of this solution that seems to show ambiguity in the kindness which it shows is Becky's lack of choice in the matter, which is presented through the use of phrases such as: "The sahib commands" and "You are to be." Reimer suggests that, "Because narratives typically stage contradictions in order to produce resolutions to which characters and readers can accede," it is useful to look "for the hidden or silenced features of a text" in order to discover hidden ideologies (112). Becky and other characters are continuously used as a contrast to Sara, without the reader being given insight into their perspective, which gives the reader little insight into a more realistic portrayal of different classes. Although her new situation is also a charity of some sort, bestowed upon her by Sara, the novel gives no consideration for any shame Becky might feel when having to accept alms as it does to Sara.

In the novel Becky is described as assuming the role of a "delighted attendant" for Sara, who "always accompanied her young mistress to her carriage, carrying wraps and belongings" (*Little* 263). As if the description of her as a delighted attendant was not enough, Burnett has added the comment: "Already Becky had a pink, round face," in order to assure

the reader that her new situation is treating her better (*Little* 263). Although conditions have improved greatly for Becky, she remains a servant with little impact on her own life. The fact that Becky's ending is presented as a happy one, reveals the ideological belief that people are fundamentally different based on upbringing and possibilities, which is not included in the more explicit moral message of the story, such as when Sara says that she and Becky are the same (*Little* 54). The inequality of the relationship between Becky and Sara is also apparent in the movie adaptations, especially in the 1995 version where the difference between the two girls is further accentuated through a difference in skin colour. In a sense the moviemakers have transposed the inequality from class to the more prominent political issue of race.[8]

Becky serves as a good example of how people from different social strata of life were thought to be predestined for different lives, but serving as another example is the beggar girl Anne. Even if, at this point of the story, Sara is hungry herself, she is charitable and gives her buns to Anne. Anne is included in the novella and the novel, and the scenes in which she is featured are virtually unchanged. Once more the message of the texts is noble: to always be kind to people. In Anne's acceptance of the buns the rhetoric is revealing in terms of what implicit ideologies the story contains: "The little ravening London savage was still snatching and devouring when she turned away. She was too ravenous to give any thanks, even if she had ever been taught politeness—which she had not. She was only a poor little wild animal" (*Little* 170). Anne is not presented as a full human being; neither the reader, nor the characters of the novel, are expected to notice the "London savage." As noted previously Nussbaum states that people are capable of feeling compassion only through recognition and identification, and Anne is described as being unrecognisable and unidentifiable for a middle-class readership with a background similar to that of the main character Sara. Anne is presented as a ravenous animal, and is therefore not an expected recipient of benevolence.

[8] The movie is American, where racial integration was and remains an important issue. The way Becky is featured as an African American servant of the white middle class schoolgirls could probably serve as an entire chapter on its own, but must be left out as this thesis focuses on the main works written by Burnett herself.

The way in which it is presented in the text makes it clear that Sara does something unusual by noticing her, enforcing the fact that it is unexpected. Therefore the text creates an opposition between Sara, Becky and Anne, where only Sara "deserves" compassion from the reader.

Stability in Class, or Class Mobility?

Becky is not able to transcend her position of servitude, and I will make the argument that this is because the class structure of the time was rigid and difficult to change. This is similar to the image of class structures that the texts portray; although they present Sara and Becky as equal and focuses upon charity towards less fortunate characters, the texts support a social order where some work as servants and others live in affluence, which reflects power structures in contemporary society. The structure of society that is presented might now seem problematic, but in some ways perhaps scarily familiar. In fairy tales it is possible to transcend poverty or hardship and live "happily ever after," because of luck or outwards appearance (Tatar, *"*Preface" xxi), whereas there are some restrictions as to the possible "success" in the Victorian novel. Some critics make the claim that the story of Sara Crewe is a rags-to-riches story (e.g. McGillis, Wall). Others point out that the story is rather a riches-to-rags-to-riches story (e.g. Bixler). Sara is able to live "happily ever after," but only because she originally was part of the higher classes. For others, such as Becky and Anne, luck cannot give them the same happy ending because they do not have the same background.

Sara transcends none of the rigid class demarcations of the time; rather, she experiences a brief period of time where her social standing experiences a fall. In this period her character does not change in order to be more compatible with a life that is less prosperous than the one she is accustomed to living, one example being her refusal to adopt a subservient attitude that one would expect of someone who functions as a servant. This is rendered in language that is laden with class ideology: "'If I do not remind myself of the

things I have learned, perhaps I may forget them,' she said to herself. 'I am almost a scullery-maid, and if I am a scullery-maid who knows nothing, I shall be like poor Becky. I wonder if I could quite forget and begin to drop my h's and not remember that Henry the Eighth had six wives'" (*Little* 100). Her refusal to be coloured by her social degradation makes it possible to make the argument that Sara experience little or no change in her social status in the texts, and that at least her mindset and behaviour remain within the upper middle class throughout. In some ways this signals that there are some things that having been brought up in affluence brings with it that marks superiority regardless of circumstances.

Becky does not experience any class mobility, although her circumstances change greatly. The young reader might not question the reason why Becky does not deserve to belong to the same social and economic class as Sara, because children's interest and capacity for interpreting more complex emotions is developed through age and the reading of narrative art. Nussbaum claims that:

> "narrative imagination is an essential preparation for moral interaction. … because of the way in which literary imagining both inspires intense concern with the fate of characters and defines those characters as containing a rich inner life, not all of which is open to view; in the process, the reader learns to have respect for the hidden contents of that inner world, seeing its importance in defining a creature as fully human. (90)

Literature makes it possible for the reader to get a clearer picture of people and situations that they might not otherwise have been exposed to in real life. However, the picture painted by a book might not necessarily be the full picture, or even a representative one. Although Becky's social status remains virtually unchanged, the life of servants is given attention. Sara's role as the exemplary child is to enlighten the other characters about servants and people of the lower classes which are taken for granted, sometimes even to the point of them being perceived as lesser beings.

There is, however, one instance of real class mobility in the novel and the novella; Anne the beggar girl is removed from a life on the streets and adopted by Mrs. Brown into the working class:

> "You see," said the woman, "I told her to come here when she was hungry, and when she'd come I'd give her odd jobs to do, an' I found she was willing, an' somehow I got to like her; an' the end of it was I've given her a place an' a home, an' she helps me, an' behaves as well, an' is as thankful as a girl can be. Her name's Anne - she has no other." (*Sara* 82)

Mrs. Brown needs Sara's act of kindness to understand that Anne is a fellow human being. Later, by interacting with her as a result of this incident, she finds that she "got to like her" (82). The way the story of Sara Crewe enters into a debate about the lower classes to some degree perpetuates the very same issues it brings focus too and wants to change. It portrays the class system and wealth as a defining feature, shaping both the way characters are seen and the way they behave. It does not open for the possibility that Anne and Becky could aspire for something better, or that the lower classes might be a desirable way of life.

Anne the beggar girl is one of the homeless children wandering the foggy streets of London. The girls who are parlour boarders at "Miss Minchin's Select Seminary" are at the other end of the social scale, isolated in a boarding school which is presented as a separate sphere far away from the urban poor. The only interaction between the parlour borders of the story and the lower classes is limited to servants, and the occasional drudge on their afternoon walks. Because poverty is removed from their normal everyday life, the poor people do not seem to make an impact on people of the upper classes, as Sara experiences after her demise in *A Little Princess*: "Shabby, poorly dressed children are not rare enough and pretty enough to make people turn around and look at them and smile" (124-25). There seems to be a border between the affluent and the not so lucky, that are preserved by the rich. Language, clothes and demeanour are in the story a marker of this border. Fraternising with people of a lower

social status was not appreciated (Purchase 23), which is highlighted in both the novel and the play. Sara is, for instance, scolded by Lavinia for letting the "girl" listen to her stories: "I do not know whether your mamma would like you to tell stories to servant girls, but I know my mamma wouldn't like me to do it" (*Little* 48). Although Lavinia in many ways serves as the antagonist of the story, the way she treats servants is replicated in other characters, such as Miss Amelia, Miss Minchin and the cook, and the only time Becky is noticed by anyone it is because of Sara. Later, when Sara is treated as a servant, this is true for her as well:

> Nobody took any notice of her except when they ordered her about. She was often kept busy all day and then sent into the deserted school-room with a pile of books to learn her lessons or practise at night. She had never been intimate with the other pupils, and soon she became so shabby that, taking her queer clothes together with her queer little ways, they began to look upon her as a being of another world than their own. (*Sara* 19)

Sara is also the reason why Anne is noticed by Mrs. Brown. Her compassion is fuelled by the realisation that the poor of the London streets are not as different as she first would have thought. Anne changes towards the end, and when she and Sara reunite she is described as being "no longer a savage, and the wild look had gone from her eyes" (*Little* 265). Anne is accordingly "civilised" by the help of Mrs. Brown who takes her in. Smith discusses the link between poor people and savagery, and notes that savagery was often associated with native wildness, and she points out that "even English citizens can be 'reduced' to a primitive level if society allows them to remain uneducated and without the necessities of survival" (129). This proves that circumstances were seen as having an effect on character; if circumstances changes, such as a seemingly impossible rise in class, the character also changes, in this case into something more human.

Despite the examples of character development and class transcendence in Burnett's story it seems as though the higher classes are more stable and difficult to permeate. Purchase confirms that class rigidity existed, but adds that "there does seem to have been a limited

degree of flexibility and class movement, upwards and downwards" (23). Around the turn of the century family size decreased, the empire was at its peak, mystery and imagination became apparent in literature for children, education was in the process of becoming free, and it is possible to see a slight shift in the position of women (Hunt, *Introduction* 60). Although all of these changes accompanied a raise in stature for children, it does not mean a lessening of social rigidity, nor that people's mindset about the poor changed. This social rigidity and mindset regarding the poor are, as we have seen through examining the underlying ideologies concerning Becky and Anne, apparent in all the three versions of the story of Sara Crewe. It is also possible to detect the same want of isolation between the different classes as in Sara Crewe in contemporary society: children of the lower classes did not have access to the same books as their wealthier peers, and often they read what is referred to as the "penny dreadful." The effect of such literature also on the higher classes concerned some, as it became apparent that it flourished amongst a wide readership (Hunt, *Introduction* 64).

Gender Roles and the Ideal of Domesticity

McGillis makes the claim that Burnett used *A Little Princess* to counter the male experience of the empire. However, although the texts play on the imperial experience, and even to some degree supports it, I would make the claim that Burnett instead draws on the traditional female role in relation to the empire. In the following paragraphs I will show how the different versions of the story of Sara Crewe are infused with gender ideologies, and how some of these are compatible with what is considered the traditional gender roles in the empire.

The play and novel which depicts the story of Sara Crewe have a substantial increase in characters from the novella. Simply adding characters does not change the underlying moral or didacticism. The change is rather a result of the way the other characters affect Sara, which leads to quite substantial alterations in the story's moral and didactic message. As

mentioned in the previous chapter Sara goes from being an isolated character, not dissimilar from Cinderella, to becoming more sociable. The characters and situations that are added (or removed) change the story greatly. For instance, the added characters and the changed scenes between Sara and Miss Minchin are filled with actions that portray Sara as kind and caring. This domestication of the main character confirms Hunt's observation that books for girls lost much of their religious constraints in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, whilst there was an increased focus on stressing the domestic role of women (*Introduction* 52). This is also compatible with stereotypical gender roles during the empire (McGillis 12); women were the domestic, sometimes sickly, figures who remained in the motherland. Although the change is slight, Sara's character becomes more and more consistent with the Victorian woman, which in turn conforms to the traditional role of women during empire.

The dream that Sara hopes to able to fulfil in the future is: "To keep the house for her father; to ride with him, and sit at the head of his table when he had dinner-parties; to talk to him and read his books" (*Little* 6). This dream is later transferred to Mr. Carrisford. Knoepflmacher has claimed, rather untraditionally, that Mr. Carrisford is "subservient to Sara" (30), but this observation is countered, for instance, by her desire to keep his home. Her assertion that her place is within the home of a man suggests that she accepts the Victorian gender ideology. Women's rights were being discussed in the time period, and Burnett herself has been linked with the feminist movement (Thwaite 149,152). She certainly did not lead a life resembling the one Sara dreams of; she lived away from her husband for long periods of time and later divorced him, only to marry someone far younger. Although the story of Sara Crewe in many instances supports the traditional gender divide of the time period, it also in some instances questions and rejects the same gender divides. [9]

[9] In fact it is tempting to see similarities between the writings of early feminist philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and the story of Sara Crewe, with the notion of being good "companions" for one's men and the emphasis on well educated women as a way of creating more gender equality.

In the different versions of Sara Crewe males are distant breadwinners of families, thereby assuming the typical male role under empire and Victorian England. Women present a more irregular picture of the gender ideology. Some women, such as the mother of the large family and the woman in the bakery are presented as maternal figures, who naturally assume such a role. Others such as Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia counter this ideal by being both un-married and poor caretakers. As established in the previous chapter Miss Minchin is based on the evil step-mother of fairytales. Sara conforms to several of the stereotypes, at the same time that she in some ways seems to oppose the nurturing ideal, as she craves knowledge and adventure:

> Sara curled herself up in the window-seat, opened a book, and began to read. It was a book about the French Revolution, and she was soon lost in a harrowing picture of the prisoners in the Bastille …
>
> She was so far away from the school-room that it was not agreeable to be dragged back suddenly by a howl from Lottie. (*Little* 61)

Sara reads about "harrowing" events which do not seem to be ideal literature for little girls, and while doing so forgets her self-proclaimed maternal duties towards Lottie. This indicates a yearning for another role than the traditional "mother in training" young girls assumed at the time (e.g. Smith 57). Knoepflmacher supports the notion that Sara in some ways resist the "Victorian feminine virtues of self sacrifice, cheerful obedience, and quiet beauty" (Gruner 166-67) by stating that, "It is her patrician imagination, therefore, rather than an actual female mentoria, that allows her to maintain, throughout adversity and degradation, her self-chosen identity as 'princess'" (30).

The domestic role of "mother in training" is one way of conforming to contemporary gender ideologies, and Sara's interaction with the other characters shapes this image of her. The rest of the parlour borders can be identified as a group, because they are less important to the reader; they are young girls similar to Sara, but not equals; they are stock characters who

make the school seem authentic. Sara becomes friendly with other characters in the play and the novel, and they form bonds of friendship across and along lines of social standing. One pattern that seems to emerge is that Sara becomes the superior and maternal character at the seminary: "She was a motherly young person" (*Little* 37).

Ermengarde is one of the characters who have been present from the first version of the story, although the relationship between Sara and her develops. In the novella Ermengarde is not really Sara's friend; she only sees her as a way to access books. In the play and the novel this has changed, and they are now unlikely friends from the very beginning. However, their relationship is not one of equals; Sara takes the role of a superior, who takes it upon herself to educate the less fortunate character. This is aptly narrated in *A Little Princess:*

> The two had always been friends, but Sara had felt as if she were years the older. It could not be contested that Ermengarde was as dull as she was affectionate. She clung to Sara in a simple, helpless way; she brought her lessons to her that she might be helped; she listened to her every word and besieged her with requests for stories. But she had nothing interesting to say herself, and she loathed books of every description. (103)

As it is possible to deduct from the passage, Sara and Ermengarde *are* unlikely friends: in fact they are presented as complete opposites. The relationship seems to not be based upon equality. Ermengarde is dependent upon Sara. In the play the situation is more nuanced, and the character Ermengarde shows some appreciation for the depravity of Sara's situation, pondering upon her lodgings in the garret: "What a horrible little bed. She must nearly freeze to death on these cold nights. Oh, it is a shame. She's treated worse than poor little Becky, the scullery-maid" (*The Little* 36). Ermengarde's caring side is absent in the novel, where the narrator makes the claim that "Ermengarde did not know anything of the sometimes almost unbearable side of life in the attic, and she had not a sufficiently vivid imagination to depict it for herself" (*Little* 189). The result is that the relationship imitates that of a parent-child

relationship. Ideologically, this and the relationship with Lottie, signal to young girls that they are supposed to be nurturers and good caregivers.

Lottie, the seminary's youngest parlour border, looks up to Sara, and relies on her to be the mother she never experienced: "'I haven't any mamma,' she proclaimed. 'I haven't—a bit—of mamma.' 'Yes, you have,' said Sara, cheerfully. 'Have you forgotten? Don't you know that Sara is your mamma? Don't you want Sara for your mamma?' Lottie cuddled up to her with a consoled sniff" (*Little* 62). In this instance the maternal trait of their relationship is highlighted even further through the use of the pet name "mamma." Sara excels more at the task of surrogate caretaker than Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia who are hired to be Lottie's caretakers (*Little* 42). Although Sara acts as a caretaker in both the play and the novel, the relationship seems once more to be more uneven in the latest version. In the play Lottie assumes a more central role in the instance of Sara's demise:

> LOTTIE (*outside).* Sara. (*Enters)* Sara! (*Embraces Sara who is on her knees)* The big girls say your papa is dead, like my mamma; they say you haven't any papa. Haven't you any papa?
> SARA. No, I haven't, Lottie; no, I haven't.
> LOTTIE. You said you'd be my mamma. I'll be your papa, Sara. Let Lottie be your papa.
> SARA. Oh, Lottie, love me; please, Lottie, love me – love me – (*The Little* 30)

Lottie's compassion for Sara makes her seem less maternal and more child-like, which Burnett apparently felt the need to revise in the latest version of the story, which reinstates the image of Sara as the domestic Victorian female.

In addition to the modification in the maternal relationship between Lottie and Sara there are other less prominent examples that serve to highlight discrepancies in how maternal and caring the protagonist is. Sara is not only kind to other people; she also shows great care for animals such as Melchisedec and his family and the monkey. Melchisedec is the rat who lives in the wall of the garret. Even in the care of a rat Sara's character develops. In the first

version she is afraid and disgusted by the rats, but in the third version her character has changed. Sara shares her food not only with the pretty birds, but also with the rat family in the wall. She has learnt to know them, and communicates with Melchisedec (*Little 119-20)*.

Sara's maternal qualities are also brought out in her treatment of the doll Emily, which is frequently discussed by critics. McGillis, for instance, makes the claim that Emily is both a symbol of Sara's maternal ability, as well as her yearning for "a companion and her mother" (65). This is a reasonable interpretation of the relationship, although the textual evidence does not indicate that Sara babies the doll; rather, as she professes herself, "I'm her mother, though I am going to make a companion of her" (*Little* 13). Sara does not act as a caretaker such as with Lottie, or a tutor as with Ermengarde. Instead she treats the doll as a friend: "She had had a long talk with Emily about her papa that morning. 'He is on the sea now, Emily,' she had said. 'We must be very great friends to each other and tell each other things. Emily, look at me. You have the nicest eyes I ever saw,—but I wish you could speak'" (*Little* 17). The relationship between the doll and Sara is what most closely resembles a true friendship in the story of Sara Crewe.

The Ideological and Didactic Message: Reception over Time

The story ends on a seemingly happy note, where Sara's wealth is restored and with a new, loving father-figure. The explicit ideology, moral and didacticism convey messages about being kind to everyone, to never lose faith and of equality, and greatly resembles Eliza Boond Hodgson's creed addressed to her daughter: "Be kind, my dear. Try not to be thoughtless of other people. Be very respectful to people who are old, and be polite to servants and good to people who are poor. Never be rude or vulgar. Remember to be always a little lady" (V. Burnett 15; Burnett, *One* 182). However, as we have seen, this is just what is overtly promoted. The moral is overshadowed by underlying ideological structures that counter the message that is being imposed. Implicit, covert and passive ideologies convey a message on

their own, often by using contrasting rhetoric, where some underlying assumptions of gender, class and race shine through. These assumptions are perhaps more influential as they are taken for granted by the reader, and are often reproduced in the criticism concerning the story. The contrasting messages in the different versions of the story could be explained by a desire to adhere to the expectations of the dominant readership, or it could be explained by unconscious transfer of the author's own social standing and historical background. Together all these things create a powerful story which will influence the reader in some way or another, as Reimer states: "In fact, there was 'real power' in the story of Sara Crewe, as the enthusiastic reception of Burnett's story demonstrate" (114).

As opposed to literature for adults it would seem as though the explicit ideology, moral and didacticism are clear in this story. Stephens makes the claim that children's literature is unique in this manner:

> Here, the desire for *closure*, both in the specific sense of an achieved satisfying ending and in the more general sense of a final order and coherent significance, is characteristically a desire for fixed meanings, and is apparent in the socializing, didactic purposes of much children's literature. There is an idea that young children require (that is, both 'demand' and 'need') certainties about life rather than indeterminacies or uncertainties or unfixed boundaries. (41)

Accordingly, it would seem that texts such as the story of Sara Crewe avoid moral ambiguities so as to satisfy the child reader's need for closure, in other words, to give child readers the "why" and "how" of a story.

All three versions of the story of Sara Crewe teach the moral of being kind to people regardless of their social standing, but it is most prominent in the novella. It looks as though the increased length and change of medium brought about a change in the didacticism of the text, and with it more divergence between the didactic message of the text and the ideological sub-text. From having a more clearly stated didactic message, the development from the novella to the novel is to rather use Sara as way of showing ideal behaviour and she becomes

more idealised. Her behaviour, which might have seemed progressive to the contemporary audience, now serves to highlight some ideological limitations to the moral of the text, however. As these limitations are not mentioned by any contemporary critics, it is probable that the story did not go against the moral and ideology that the readership desired and was part of, serving to highlight how ideologies, moral and didacticism are not set entities.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered the way Frances Hodgson Burnett's story of Sara Crewe relates to developments in children's literature around the middle of the nineteenth century by examining the literary and socio-historical influences apparent in the three versions, as well as their ideological and didactic connotations. As we have seen, the three different versions of the story reflect some of the general developments in children's literature and literature in general during the time now referred to as the "golden age," where children's literature became more child-oriented following a change in family dynamics (Hunt, *Introduction* 31).

In his *Introduction to Children's Literature* which appeared in 1994, Hunt addresses one of the major dilemmas of studying children's literature, stating that critics might be afraid of breaking the spell of childhood, that they tend to "downgrade the imagination" or they think literature for children too trivial to study (*Introduction* 2). Traditionally, criticism of children's literature has been sparse, and what has been done can be said to have been "pulled and influenced in many different directions" (*Introduction* 18). Hunt goes as far as to argue that, "rather than seeing the 'epicentre' of children's literature as about 1850, the point at which books began to move from the didactic to the recreational, we should move it on about a hundred years. By 1950 children's literature was established as a distinctive area, with hundreds of distinguished titles: since then it has developed and expanded considerably" (9). It is today recognised as a separate critical field, even though the lack of a critical tradition is still considered a problem.

The theoretical framework used for analysing the story of Sara Crewe has drawn upon the critical tradition that has been established in children's literature, which is mostly borrowed and adapted from the body of theory employed on literature intended for adults. Stephens' definition of, and use of the term intertextuality, for instance, is one of the ways in which this is done. Operating in a borderline between "substantialist text theory" and

"pragmatic text theory," the thesis has accounted for authorial presence while also employing the more conventional focus of reception theory.

The overarching focus of this thesis has been on the didactic aspects, and this has served an overarching focus also when examining the intertextuality and ideologies of the texts. As we have seen, the story of Sara Crewe partakes in already established literary discourses, and draws upon literary and socio-historical influences throughout the three different versions of the story. The way in which such intertextual references are utilised, either consciously or unconsciously within the texts, contribute to creating the didactic content. This means that societal structures, as well as the didactic and ideological message of the texts, are reconstructed and discussed in terms of what learning possibilities they present to the intended reader. All three versions of the story convey a set of moral values, such as being kind, without being overtly didactic. The three versions display the positive character traits of the main character, rather than punish bad behaviour, thereby inviting reader identification. As Stephens states:

> If a function of children's literature is to socialize its readers, identification with focalizers is one of its chief methods, since by this means, at least for the duration of the reading time, the reader's own selfhood is effaced and the reader internalizes the perceptions and attitudes of the focalizer and is thus reconstituted as a subject within the text. (Stephens 68)

What is important, and perhaps increasingly so throughout the three versions, is the way Sara relates to other characters and is a positive ideal of the self in relation to others. Thus she is given the role of responsible citizen, which is one of the main components in Klafki's "categorical Bildung," a contemporary view of education where teaching is considered a dynamic process between the individual and culture (Ulvik and Sæverot 35-36), or Nussbaum's "world citizenship" (85-86). Sara's project of acting as a "princess" has a dual

focus, upon both self-improvement and helping others, which some contemporary children's books have replaced with a sole focus on self-improvement.

Although the different versions of the story of Sara Crewe are written in a period of major literary developments in literature for children, these new impulses are not always traceable in the revisions made. What becomes clear when looking at the texts, both separately and taken together, is that the reversions of the story of Sara Crewe at times seem to reflect these developments, and sometimes break with them, and perhaps most interestingly, sometimes seemingly adhere, whilst ideologically going against the general trends, which creates tensions within the texts. In tune with contemporary changes, the didactics is less overtly spelled out in the last version of the story if one compares it with the novella, and it becomes easier for the child reader to identify with the main character Sara.

Burnett was charitable towards the lowest classes and despised misery, something she addressed on her deathbed: "There is enough of that in all our lives that we cannot get away from. What we all want is more of the other things – life, love, hope – and an assurance that they are true. With the best that was in me I have tried to write more happiness into the world" (V. Burnett 409-10). The story of Sara Crewe might seem to comply with this agenda, as the different versions contain "life, love, hope," and to some extent give expression to progressive ideas at the time of publication, promoting ideals such as charity to the poor and equality. However, the texts also display limitations to these ideals which reflect the time period in which the three versions of the story were written, as they give expression to ideologies that justify class rigidity, limitations with regard to who are considered worthy of charity, as well as gender and race demarcations.

The story of Sara Crewe is a product of its time, and as stated in chapter one, it is possible to regard each version of the story as a melting pot of influences, where it is not always possible to discern the elements that constitute the whole. Besides being influenced by

newer trends in children's literature, it is also possible to find the influence of prominent genres of literature for adults. One of the genres that can be found in the story of Sara Crewe is the novel of sentiment, and it illustrates that children's literature was still undergoing the process of becoming a distinctive literary field.

The story of Sara Crewe can be said to have a "multivalency" of its content which makes it appeal to readers over a long period of time. As Thompson puts it: "the meanings of texts and their critical assessment vary with time, with place, and the specific characteristics of readers" (252). When looking at the didactic and ideological implications of the story of Sara Crewe it is clear that some of the underlying ideological assumptions limit the story's current appeal, whilst the didactic content can still be considered relevant. The story of Sara Crewe still appeals to a wide readership throughout the world despite its ideological limitations, and it is therefore clear that the story has appeal beyond the target readership at the time of publication.

After Burnett's death the story of Sara Crewe has been further rewritten into new forms, for instance into two movie adaptations, of which the most recent one was released in 1995. With the widespread reach of the internet, several fan pages, devoted to either the movie adaptations or the books, have also been created, for instance "A Little Princess FanFiction Archive", which features many related works by written by fans from all over the world. Some simplified abridged versions of the story are used for foreign language learning and for young English language readers, and in these cases the story is adapted to a more contemporary audience. However, the unabridged version of the novel *A Little Princess* is still in print and widely read.

What I consider the most salient aspect serving to preserve the story's readership is its intertextuality. The book draws upon genres within children's literature that were established during its very infancy, such as the fairy tale and the allegory, which are still being

successfully incorporated into children's literature today. The perhaps most striking genre that can be detected in the story of Sara Crewe, the fairy tale, is still subject to continuous adaptations and mediums of presentations: its lasting influence can be seen in current literature for children, which is reflected in articles such as the *New York Times'* "Notable Children's Books of 2014" and other media such as the full-length Disney movie *Cinderella* released 13 March 2015. The new Disney movie does not stray far away from the traditional "Cinderella" story, and has roused criticism on grounds of its stereotypical gender roles and the consumerism that Disney encourages (e.g. Sørensen). Other more positive critics such as Erlend Loe refer to the fact that the "Cinderella" story is still current, a fact that even Britt Sørensen has to admit. What is perhaps most striking about the movie is that many of the same issues addressed in this thesis are still relevant today. Even imperialism, which is the perhaps most "dated" issue of Burnett's re-version of the fairy tale, is present in the movie, as the prince is expected to marry Princess Chelina of Zaragoza in order to expand the kingdom and better international relations (*Cinderella*). The mixed critical reception and the commercial success of this most recent "Cinderella" story shows that there is still reason to discuss gender roles, stereotypes and didacticism in fairy tales and the literary tradition, as they are still recurring in modern-day culture.

One area that is still in need of more research when it comes Burnett's authorship, which could shed more light on what has been addressed in this thesis, is an examination of the relationship between her early and later works, as well as between her adult fiction and children's literature. To the best of my knowledge Bixler's brief discussion of Burnett's major works is the most comprehensive attempt to do this to date. Examining how Burnett's authorship relates to literary trends in general, not only concerning children's literature, might be more illuminating, because, as Thwaite puts it, children's literature was not fully developed as its own distinctive literary field (95). Burnett's productivity and the way in

which her literary output does not restrict itself to one field add to the relevance of a broader comparison.

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