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LIT 6855  
Spring 2000  
T E1-3

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Hours: T 6&8; R 6  
& by appointment

## Children's Culture

**Texts** (available at Goering's)

Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*  
Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories*  
Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: An Essay in Style*  
Carl Hiaasen, *Team Rodent*  
Henry Jenkins, ed., *The Children's Culture Reader*  
Chris Jenks, *Childhood*  
Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*  
Russ Rymer, *Genie*  
Benjamin Spock, *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*  
Maria Tatar, *Classic Fairy Tales*  
D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*

And a coursepacket from Xerographic (available through Goering's)

### Overview

Within the last five years or so, cultural studies has taken up in earnest the question of children's culture, building upon (but significantly revising) sociological research on youth culture and "deviance," as well as work in anthropology, pedagogical theory, psychology and psychoanalysis, literary criticism, women's studies, lesbian/gay studies, media studies, and other disciplines. In 1998, NYU Press published two useful anthologies, *The Children's Culture Reader*, which we'll use in class, and *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America*, which I encourage you to examine. Articles in these collections address the theory and history of childhood, child-rearing practices, issues of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity, and such aspects of children's culture as: food and nutrition; art; literature of various genres; film and video; interactive technology and cyberspace; music; dolls, toys, and games; sports and athleticism; fan clubs; beauty pageants; and clothing and fashion. We cannot read all of these essays, but I strongly encourage you to read around in both collections, particularly the one we're using in class.

I've designed this course with two goals in mind. First, in our collective readings and class discussions, as well as through our short presentations, I want us to survey some of this fascinating material, and to evaluate classic and contemporary formulations of "children's culture," and of the "culture" concept more generally, as it has migrated from anthropology into literary and cultural studies. Second, I want each of you to develop a major research project that will culminate in a seminar paper, hopefully one that you can eventually revise and submit for publication. The only requirement is that it be concerned with some aspect of children's culture or children's studies.

I've organized the readings and assignments into general units, which are by no means mutually exclusive. We may need to revise the schedule slightly, or to add readings, but I'll let you know in advance of any changes. Obviously the course will be conducted as a seminar, and while I'll probably have some opening questions or comments, I do look forward to hearing from you, so please come to class prepared. I invite you to bring additional readings or other materials (websites, bibliographies, illustrations, and so forth) into the class.

### Assignments

Your grade will be based exclusively on writing and participation; there are no exams. You will write three papers, two of them short reports of 5 double-spaced pages each, and then a final seminar paper of around 25 pages.

Reports: 30%  
Seminar Essay: 60%  
Active participation: 10%

The two short reports will be presented in class. You'll need to make enough copies for everyone (at this point, we'd need around twelve, I think). We'll read them out loud first and then discuss them.

### Genre Report

For the first short paper, each of you will write about a particular genre of children's literature past and/or present. You may choose any genre, and you may also invent one, arguing your case. In 5 easy pages, your job is first to provide a little history of the genre's emergence, consolidation, dissemination, and so forth, in whatever cultural, national, or theoretical contexts you think are important for thinking critically about that genre. You may then want to identify key themes and tropes, perhaps even major authors or styles. If possible, try to address the genre as a specific cultural formation, and try to explain how that genre benefitted from and/or contributed to the emergence of children's literary culture more generally. Finally, please include a bibliography of works you consulted and cited. This assignment is, admittedly, a little weird, but what we are trying to do is develop a sense of how literary genre is a form/expression of the culture idea, and why particular forms developed when they did. Once I know what you have chosen, I'll decide the order of the presentations, but we'll plan them for February 1 and 8, and we'll try to arrange them chronologically, unless there's a better scheme. If you like, you may work with materials in the Baldwin Collection, such as series books and children's magazines (of which we have complete sets), but you may also write about very contemporary genres, such as teen horror fiction, romance novels, and so forth. Other genres that come to mind are animal fantasy, historical fiction, toy books, survival and wilderness stories, science fiction, biography, wordless picture books, Latino/a young adult novels, Judy Blume books for teens, science information books, and so on. Someone should consider doing a report on the Little Golden Books, as we apparently have most or all of them in the Baldwin.

### Profile Report

Your second short paper, also around 5 pages, should focus on a particular figure important in children's studies (again, something you can make a case for), providing a brief overview of that person's life (if relevant) and work, and situating that work in the appropriate context (e.g. cognitive psychology, anthroposophy, Marxist theory, and so forth). Explain how this figure's theories are useful for thinking about childhood and children's culture. If possible, connect your figure to the readings assigned for that week. The figure could be historical or contemporary, well-known or more obscure. Those of you in history or education or German might want to choose someone more particular to your field; that's fine. I've listed some possibilities on the reading schedule below, but here are a few that occur to me, in absolutely no rational order: Philippe Ariès, Lloyd de Mause, Jack Zipes, Erik Erikson, Henry Giroux, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, F. W. A. Froebel, G. Stanley Hall, Nancy Chodorow, Judith Rich Harris, Jacqueline Rose, Carolyn Steedman, Jane Addams, Angela McRobbie, Frederick Thrasher, Hayden White, Bruno Bettelheim, Maria Montessori, James Kincaid, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Arnold Gesell. Once again, please provide a bibliography.

You may also alter this assignment by profiling several key books devoted to a single topic -- I'm thinking particularly of the spate of books on Disney (in which case "Disney" could be your organizing rubric). If you like, you may also address theorists we're reading in class, particularly if we're only reading snippets; Jacqueline Rose and Carolyn Steedman, for instance, have both written important and complex books that are worthy of close attention, as have James Kincaid

and Anne Higonnet. I am open to other suggestions, but I would like this report to give us some pretty specific information about important figures in the field.

I'd like to have these reports arranged by our second meeting, if possible, so please give it some thought so that we can agree on individual due dates.

### Seminar Paper

You know the drill. 25 pages, on the children's culture topic of your choice, related to and guided by our general concerns. You'll need to use some of our readings and/or other theory and criticism, even if you're doing archival work. The paper needs to be thorough, well-written, and engaging, so choose something that really interests you. Please meet with me mid-way through the term, if not earlier, to discuss your plans, and please let me know if I can help by reading outlines or drafts, etc. Due 4/25.

## Schedule

### January

T 11 Introductions.

T 18 **Theorizing Children's Culture.** Jenks, *Childhood*; Richardson, "Ch. 3: Children's Literature and the Work of Culture." And the Introduction and Section 1 in Jenkins, *The Children's Culture Reader*, esp. Ariès, Rose, Calvert, and Kline.

T 25 **Folklore and Folkloristics.** Tatar, *Classic Fairy Tales* (if you also skim the essays) and "Ch. 2: Fact and Fantasy: The Art of Tales." Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*. Recommended *White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Reports on revisions, etc.)? can, Reading Fairy viewing: Disney's *Snow* folklore criticism (Propp, feminist)

### February

T 1 **The Children's Literature Canon.** Rita Smith, Curator of the Baldwin Collection. Genre reports.

T 8 Continued. Genre reports.

T 15 **Child Study and Psychoanalysis.** Kliebard, "Ch. 3: Keeping Out of Nature's Way: The Rise and Fall of Child Study . . ."; Stoler, "Ch. 5: Domestic Subversions and Children's Sexuality"; Freud, "Rat Man" and "Wolf Man" cases (in *Three Case Histories*).

T 22 *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*; Jenkins, "The Sensuous Child"; reports on Klein, Lacan? Read as much of Part II in Jenkins as you can bear.

T 29 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*; reports on Chodorow and Harris?

### March

T 7 No class (Spring Break March 6-10).

T 14 In-class screening: *The Secret of the Wild Child*; Rymer, *Genie*.

T 21 **In the Field: Anthropology.** Mead, *Coming of Age in Somoa*. Anthro reports on Boas, Benedict, Geertz, Clifford?

T 28 **Kidz in the Hood.** Hebdige, *Subculture: An Essay in Style*. Reports on McRobbie, Giroux, and others?

### April

T 4 **Contemporary Media and Popular/Material Culture.** Toys. Seiter, "Ch. 7: Toys "R" Us . . ." -- we will visit Toys-R-Us in

Gainesville, details TBA. In Jenkins, read as much of Part III as you can, but particularly the essays by Miriam Formanek-Brunell and Erica Rand.

T 11 Film. Wojcik-Andrews, "The Politics of Children's Films"; Hiaasen, *Rodent*; reports on *Disney Discourse*, etc?

*Team*

T 18 In-class screening: *Ma Vie en Rose*. Report on Hausmann or other transgender theorists?

T 25 Last class night. Project presentations. **Seminar essays due.**