

Kenneth Kidd  
LIT 6856; W E1-3  
Fall 2005

392-6650, ext. 302  
kkidd@english.ufl.edu  
Office Hours: M & R, 6-8  
and by appointment

## **Psychoanalysis and Children's Culture**

### **Texts**

Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*  
Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*  
Beverly Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*  
Karen Coats, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands*  
Frederick Crews, *The Pooh Perplex*  
Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*  
Sigmund Freud, *The Wolf Man and Other Cases*  
Sonya Hartnett, *Thursday's Child*  
Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation*  
Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*  
Stephen Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond*  
D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*

Books have been ordered at Goering's, except for Winnicott -- that, you'll need to buy used online or get out of the library. (There's a new Routledge paperback edition that will become available at the end of September.) You'll need to track down the fairy tales of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, which are widely available in translation. You'll also need to read *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which I have not ordered.

Additional required readings are available on e-reserves, under LIT 6856/Kidd. You should be able to access these materials on and off campus, and you'll need Adobe Reader (preferably version 7). These are scans and the quality's not great on screen, but printouts look fine.

### **Overview**

Both psychoanalysis and children's culture are preoccupied with origins, growth and development, family dynamics, language acquisition, socialization/acclulturation, mortality, and other dimensions of the human experience. Here's Freud writing in 1925, on the centrality of children to psychoanalysis: "Children have become the main subject of psycho-analytic research and have thus replaced in importance the neurotics on which its studies began" (introduction to Aichhorn's *Wayward Youth*). Even in his famous case histories, Freud concentrates on the residual child who makes life difficult for the struggling adult. Subsequent analysts and theorists have taken Freud's focus on childhood in different directions. Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Margaret Mahler and other

analysts (usually women) developed “child analysis” as a therapeutic discipline in its own right. Ego psychology and humanist psychology in particular have been concerned with childhood. Folklorists were the earliest humanities scholars to develop psychoanalytic interpretations of children’s (or “childish”) texts, even if Bettelheim’s *The Uses of Enchantment* is now the most famous. Post-Lacanian and feminist revisions of psychoanalysis have produced some exciting readings. In children’s literature studies, Jacqueline Rose’s *The Case of Peter Pan* has been particularly influential. Rose declares that children’s literature is an impossible fiction; at issue in narrative “for” children is not “what the child wants, but ... what the adult desires – desires in the very act of construing the child as the object of its speech” (2). More recent developments in the field, however, underscore the mutuality of children’s literature and psychoanalysis.

This course is designed to explore that mutuality through a series of reading clusters that are at once thematic, theoretical, and chronological. We’ll begin with Sigmund Freud, reading some of his foundational writing with a particular eye toward children’s studies. We’ll situate Freud’s work in the context of European, American, and colonial culture, to better appreciate the range and limitations of psychoanalysis. Then we’ll look at the rise of child analysis and the study of “children’s forms,” moving from play to narratives such as fairy tales and nursery rhymes and comics. Fairy tales are often considered the narrative foundation for “children’s literature,” and they are also quite important to both classical and revisionist psychoanalysis. Next we’ll give our attention to the historical and contemporary circulation of Anglo-American “golden age” children’s texts, such as *Alice*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, and *Winnie-the-Pooh*. After fairy tales, these texts are probably the most canonical children’s stories, and once again, they’ve also been important to the illustration and dissemination of psychoanalysis, especially in the United States. From there we’ll encounter Jacques Lacan, Karen Coats’ recent and substantial Lacanian study of children’s literature. The next section will focus on theoretical and literary work on adolescence, abjection, and trauma, and on the final day we’ll consider queer theory’s investments in both childhood and psychoanalysis.

This course is necessarily selective, and I encourage you to read outside its confines when time and energy permit. I’m interested in the larger picture, and in what I call, after Michele LeDoeuff’s study of philosophy, the “psychoanalytic imaginary” -- that is, the theoretical and imaginative repertoire of psychoanalysis, from stated principles to implicit paradigms to particular tropes, images, and rhetorical strategies, especially as they pertain to children’s literature studies. The reading is demanding, and I ask that you come to class as prepared as possible. I don’t expect you to understand all material immediately -- in fact, I’d be a little alarmed if anyone does -- but I do expect you to do all the assigned reading on time. While I find psychoanalysis a fascinating and often persuasive subject, I’m not invested in defending its truth(s) or persuading you of such. I ask only that you give the readings a chance and think carefully about your own critical investments and practices.

### **Assignments and Grading**

Précis. Write one 1-2 s-s pp. précis of a critical article or book chapter addressing some aspect of psychoanalysis and children’s literature, perhaps a close reading of a

literary text or a theoretical piece. This is outside reading; you may not use any of the materials we're reading for class. Here's the format I'd like to see you try:

1) First summarize the article or book chapter in 5-8 sentences. Explain the author's overall focus and the main claims of the argument.

2) Describe that author's critical methodology and perspective(s): Is this piece a think piece, or a more traditional "close reading," or both? Often writers rely on a variety of critical methodologies: if so, what approach seems dominant, and does that primary approach effectively organize secondary ones? If the writer's method doesn't seem easy to categorize, just describe that method -- how does s/he approach the topic?

3) Offer an analysis of the essay's rhetorical strategy (the way it's designed to affect the audience): why is it organized the way it is? What makes it effective (or not)? What sorts of logic patterns does the writer rely on? Are there appeals to emotion, and if so, are they appropriate and successful? What makes it (or keeps it from being) effective and convincing? What is the writer's ethos?

4) Speculate about the implications of the information, both for our understanding of the text and beyond. What's useful about the essay? How could you expand it? What questions does it raise about the story, author, reader, etc.? What, in other words, is the piece good for?

You may also want to comment on what's ignored or devalued in the analysis: is the writer overlooking something that complicates (or even undermines) her argument? Does his or her commitment to a particular critical methodology rule out other interpretations?

Short Essay. You have several options here, and I'm open to other suggestions as well. One possibility is to write an "applied" analysis of a literary text using whatever psychoanalytic methodology or methodologies you like. The trick here is keeping it manageable. Another option is to do a theorist profile of someone whose work we're not reading collectively. Possible candidates include: Alfred Adler, August Aichhorn, Jessica Benjamin, John Bowlby, Norman Brown, Nancy Chodorow, Erik Erikson, W. R. D. Fairbairn, Sándor Ferenczi, Carol Gilligan, Karen Horney, Luce Irigaray, Ernest Jones, C. C. Jung, Heinz Kohut, Jean Laplanche, Rosine Lefort, Hans Loewald, Margaret Mahler, Alice Miller, Adam Phillips, Jean Piaget, Otto Rank, Kaja Silverman, Harry Stack Sullivan, Klaus Theweleit, Slavoj Zizek. Still another option -- perhaps the most strategic -- is to start working on the longer paper; you could use the short essay to try out ideas, as a sort of mini-seminar paper or prospectus. 5-8 d-s pp.

Seminar Paper. Develop a more sustained treatment of any course-related topic. I do expect some treatment of both psychoanalysis and children's literature/culture, preferably in relation to one another, but the details are negotiable. The paper may develop from any and all (or none) of the prior assignments. Any approach is fine, provided that the essay is well developed, thorough, and sufficiently researched. Let me know if you'd like some help. 20-25 d-s pp.

A final requirement is that you serve as discussion leader one day. I do not expect you to direct discussion for the entire three hours, but you must do the following: 1) give

an oral response to and analysis of the assigned reading for at least ten minutes -- this time may include questions and you may also bring in related material; and 2) take an active role in the subsequent discussion.

Précis: 10%  
 Short Essay: 25%  
 Seminar Paper: 50%  
 Leading discussion and participation: 15%

## Reading Schedule

### August

- 24 Introduction(s).  
 31 ***Histories and Contexts***. Steedman; Winters; Khanna; Cushman; Hale (e-reserves). Optional: Eagleton (e-reserves).

### September

- 7 S. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*; Mitchell and Black, Ch. 1.  
 14 Freud, "Little Hans" case. Blum; Bosmajian (e-reserves).  
 21 ***Child Analysis and Children's Forms***. Hug-Hellmuth; Anna Freud; Balsam; Kidd, "Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature..."; Rollin (e-reserves); Mitchell & Black, Ch. 2.  
 28 Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation* (selections TBA); Daniels (e-reserves); Mitchell & Black, Ch. 4. Précis assignment due.

### October

- 5 ***PSA and the Lowbrow: Feral Tales, Fairy Tales, and Comics***. S. Freud, *The Wolf Man and Other Cases* ("Rat Man" and "Wolf Man").  
 12 Perrault and Grimm tales (on your own); Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*. Legman; Kidd, "Bruno Bettelheim..." (e-reserves). Bring your own comics?  
 19 ***PSA and the Golden Age of Children's Literature***. Beckwith; Gilman (e-reserves); screening of *Dreamchild* (1985).  
 26 Crews, *The Pooh Perplex*; Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*; Rose (e-reserves). Short essay due.

### November

- 2 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (all selections); Payne (e-reserves); Mitchell & Black, Ch. 5.; Gorey, *The Object Lesson* (I will circulate).

- 9 ***The Notorious Jacques.*** Lacan, *Écrits* (Chs. 1-5 especially; all selections if possible); Barzilai (e-reserves); Mitchell & Black, Ch. 7.
- 16 Coats, all chapters; Cleary, *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.
- 23 Thanksgiving eve; no class.
- 30 ***Adolescence, Abjection, Trauma.*** Westwater; Gubar; Kristeva; Kidd, “”A” is for Auschwitz...”; Hartnett, *Thursday’s Child*.

## December

- 7 ***Queer Theory’s Child.*** Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Introduction, Chs. 3 & 5 especially; all selections if possible); Sedgwick; Lesnik-Oberstein (e-reserves).

Seminar Paper due December 12. No extensions.