

# THE CHANGING ROLE AND REPRESENTATION OF THE FATHER IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FROM THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ONWARD

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	v
CREATIVE THESIS: THE PLACE WITH NO NAME .....	1
EXEGESIS: INTRODUCTION.....	214
CHAPTER ONE: FATHERS IN ALL FORMS.....	218
1.1 “THE OL’ DEAD DAD SYNDROME”: THE POPULARITY OF THE DEAD FATHER.....	219
1.2 THE TRADITIONAL FATHER.....	227
1.3 THE PASSIVE FATHER AND THE DEGRADATION OF AUTHORITY....	236
1.4 ABSENT FATHERS AND ANGRY CHILDREN.....	243
1.5 THE DIVERGING FATHERS IN MY CREATIVE THESIS.....	252
1.6 CONCLUSION.....	254
CHAPTER TWO: THE FATHER IN THE GAME.....	255
2.1 THE FATHER IN THE GAME IN MY WORK.....	273
2.2 CONCLUSION.....	275
CHAPTER THREE: THE FATHER AND PORTAL FANTASY IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE.....	278
3.1 FANTASY.....	280
3.2 PORTAL FANTASY.....	284

3.3 CHILDREN’S LITERATURE, PORTAL FANTASY AND MY CREATIVE THESIS.....	289
CHAPTER FOUR: HOMES, WEIRD HOUSES, AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE FATHER.....	299
4.1 THE HOME IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE.....	300
4.2 THE FATHER OF THE GOOD HOME.....	305
4.3 THE “NOT HOME”.....	307
4.4 THE FATHER OF THE “NOT HOME”.....	310
4.5 DIVERGING FROM THE METAPLOT.....	312
4.6 WEIRD HOUSES.....	319
4.7 CONCLUSION.....	326
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	329
WORKS CITED.....	332

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## ABSTRACT

The father is a significant figure in life, which is frequently underrepresented in children's literature. For convenience, the father is traditionally sidelined from the story so that the children may have the freedom and independence to adventure. Perhaps this explains the dearth of research on the role of the father in children's literature, with most of the existing research pertaining to the presence of the father in children's picture books. In my thesis I focus on the father in children's literature and explore how the different forms of father influence the genre, including the use and subversion of previously identified metaplots, setting of the text, including the house and home, and the manner in which we view the concept of childhood. Gathering information from a diverse array of secondary sources and using a wide range of popular children's books from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the USA, for children aged 8-12, my thesis examines how the role and form of the father has changed over time and identifies five different forms of father from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. This is presented through both my examination of pre-existing theories and the creation of my own theories in my exegesis, my experimental use of the different forms of father in my creative thesis, and my reflection upon this experimentation within my exegesis. As I demonstrate, the role of the father has greater depth and influence in children's literature than has been commonly acknowledged, and my examination of this role reveals the shifting perception of the father, the family, the child and the home in western culture.