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*Leeds Studies in English*  
School of English  
University of Leeds  
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## Other Times and Our Own Places in Children's Literature

Roger Ellis

This paper is by way of a small thanks to a teacher whose wide-ranging researches have provided both stimulus and example to a large number of students and colleagues. Some students encountered Peter, though I did not, in the context of children's literature, where he mainly taught nineteenth-century material. This paper is offered in recognition of those interests, and that context. It considers a selection of children's books, and proposes to focus on ways in which writers have introduced the past to their child readers so as to develop that feeling and appetite for the past which teachers of medieval cultures, and Peter more than most, also attempt to generate. I should have liked to find texts that connected directly with the places where he has taught. I failed in that attempt, though I have at least got Sydney into my narrative, as a reminder of his time with us in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

A writer has at least three ways of making the past accessible to the child reader, which can, without greatly straining the evidence, be readily accommodated to two different schools of critical thought. The first is the most traditional.<sup>2</sup> It involves giving the child reader a window onto a past – clear glass rather than stained, for preference – and inviting imaginative participation in the story of a hero or heroine, which itself usually occurs within a larger historical frame: the fall of Constantinople, for example, in Jill Paton Walsh's *The Emperor's Winding Sheet*; the Roman invasions and settlement of Britain, in Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Eagle of the Ninth*. Medieval and other pasts thus presented to the child reader, characteristically, have to provide the child with information about an alien culture – or perhaps one might better call it, as Medcalf does, a 'half-alien culture'<sup>3</sup> – which will explain the different priorities accorded to narrative events at that time, since, as Chaucer puts it in the Proem to Book II of *Troilus*, 'in sondry ages/ In sondry londes, sondry ben usages' (II. 27-28).

Probably none but the most determined writer of realist fiction would attempt to represent an alien culture entirely in its own terms, though Golding's *The Inheritors*

– not, admittedly, a work for children – comes as close as any to doing so.<sup>4</sup> Parallels do occur in children's books: we might recall the sustained attempt to impersonate seventeenth-century idiom in Paton Walsh's *A Parcel of Patterns*, about the Plague village of Eyam, a technique with good precedent in Robert Graves's *Wife to Mr. Milton*. The further a writer pushes in the direction of realism, of course, the more apparent the stylization and the strangeness become, and the more the text runs the risk of deconstructing itself, as happens with the pastiche tones, Dickens and Thackeray out of Defoe and Fielding, favoured by Leon Garfield for his reconstructions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social history.

In these realistic recreations of the past, the spade-work of historical research is taken absolutely for granted: Paton Walsh, for example, taught herself Greek so as to read the relevant chronicles before writing *The Emperor's Winding Sheet*. But the seamless web which results must never be allowed to draw attention to its own historical imperatives: the child must be left with the sense that, however difficult it may be for the protagonist of the fiction to gain a comprehensive sense of his or her own present until the end of the adventure, that present, our past, is ultimately coherent, intelligible, available. The past, then, provides a sustained and sustaining backdrop to the present of the child reader. Such writing also presupposes a submerged pedagogic intent. Here, too, the hand must be light on the tiller if the narrative interest is not to be submerged. (The use of fiction to teach history is not, however, unprecedented: I have known a colleague introduce medieval studies to students by way of the Cadfael novels, and I could readily enough see Eco's *Name of the Rose* being similarly used.)

Now, it is obvious, as Jill Paton Walsh and Leon Garfield have regularly noted about their own historical fiction, that any recourse to the past is ideologically driven, as was the use of myth, in the run-up to World War Two, in the works of Tolkien and T. H. White, for example. Garfield's setting of most of his fiction in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England acquired a special resonance in the Thatcher years, when it could be seen as a thinly-veiled critique of Thatcherite invocations of a Great British past with distinctive Victorian values. As Paton Walsh notes of her most recent adult work, *A Knowledge of Angels*, 'a fiction is always, however obliquely, about the time and place in which it was written'.<sup>5</sup> Yet in so using the past to throw light on the present and to offer a covert criticism of it, a use for which there is excellent medieval precedent in versions of the Troy story and legends of King Arthur, the writer of these realist recreations of the past is also at pains to efface his or her own historical givenness.<sup>6</sup>

A simple way of deconstructing this approach to the past – the second of my

three approaches – appeared at the very start of the century, in a work which may have appeared on the courses taught by Peter: *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) by Rudyard Kipling. Here, though the past is again presented as a field of potentially unified consciousness, available to the author and to Puck, the book's main character, it is revealed to the child protagonists, Una and Dan, only in fragments, and only while they are in the trance-induced state that allows them to make contact with the fairy world. In their fragmentary and dreamlike perceptions of the past, Una and Dan thus parallel the characters who inhabit the different times they get to visit. Readers of this time-slip narrative are in a superior position to the characters of either the framing or the framed narratives of the book: by the time they have reached the end of the book, they have learned a great deal about their own place in history, more than any of the characters in the fiction did. The time-slip narrative denies us the uncomplicated entry into the past that realist fiction appeared to guarantee. History is no longer the study of individuals in simple isolation from, or simple relation to, their wider social context; rather, it considers the complex interaction of person and place, and explores how the places where people have lived have shaped their histories.

Such an emphasis on place as the organizing field of a narrative has a clear parallel in the major achievements of the modernists (Eliot's *Waste Land*, the novels of Joyce and Woolf). Applied to a historical narrative, it challenges any simple humanist view of history as straightforward or inevitable human progress. Kipling's backward-looking evocation of an 'England that shall bide till Judgment Tide'<sup>17</sup> thus functions, in part, as a critique of the Victorian imperialism which its examples of past history seem to legitimize. As the Victorians, so in sequence the Romans, the Vikings and the Normans. In the face of such a depressingly modern view of history, in which new developments merely repeat the failures of the past, Kipling, like many other writers, invokes the land as a symbol of permanence. Such a view raises as many questions as it seeks to answer, though, not least because the very symbol of permanence to which such writings appeal has almost never existed free of human interference. Paton Walsh's major venture into the world of the time-slip narrative, *A Chance Child*, boldly refuses the comforting myth of a past when everything was better: the present-day industrial waste land which frames the story certainly yields to a rural idyll on a canal barge, but only en route to the mines and factories of the Industrial Revolution. At the same time, the time-slip narrative witnesses to the fact that history is still an active presence in the counsels of the present: we can't control its comings and goings, we cannot finally understand its workings, but it is undeniably *there*, in us. We might call this view of history interventionist: or, to change the metaphor, we might see history as the eruption of the past into, its

irruption upon, the present. (I am thinking here of the way in which the sixteenth century, in the shape of a disagreeable ghost, visits the child protagonist, in the country cottage he has just moved into with his parents, in Penelope Lively's *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe*: this is a history with the biases of its protagonists still intact, where we know only as much about the past as the revenant chooses or is able to tell us.<sup>8</sup>)

A deservedly famous example of the form, which in certain important respects strains against its underlying assumptions, is Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*, though the sustained psychological realism of Pearce's other writing, allied with her predilection for tales of the supernatural (*Who's Afraid?*), suggests that, for her, time slip is not a way of inserting the past into the present so much as a symbolic expression of the meeting-point of conscious and unconscious: hence her acknowledged dependence in *Tom's Midnight Garden* on the oddly influential *Experiment with Time* of T. W. Dunne.<sup>9</sup> *Tom's Midnight Garden* does, of course, presuppose, when Tom finally meets up with the Victorian Hatty of his midnight adventures, in the person of the old lady who owns the house where he is staying, that past and present are, finally, accessible and intelligible to each other. This romantic premiss underlies most of Pearce's fiction – for example, in *The Way to Sattin Shore*, where the heroine's exercise of imagination solves a long-standing mystery, the presumed death of her father, who had in fact fled to Australia (shades of *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*!). Here, as in *Tom's Midnight Garden*, the fiction is built upon the belief that the experience of loss, and the pain accompanying that loss, which Pearce never shortchanges in her writing, provide a prelude to new growth and restoration.<sup>10</sup> So the time-slip form used in *Tom's Midnight Garden* in effect extends, rather than challenges, the premises of realist fiction. Our identification with the protagonists of other time-slip narratives means that we too share their experience of loss and quest for meaning.

But there is a third way of giving the child reader access to the past, which also focuses on place as a tangible link between present and past, and corresponds more directly to a reader's *experience* of encountering the past. In a certain sense one could even see it as combining the two approaches thus far considered.

Jill Paton Walsh's *Lost and Found* (1984), something between a short story and a picture book, with illustrations by Mary Rayner, beautifully exemplifies this third way, which I am inclined to call hyper-realism, and which shares with recent developments in critical theory the sense that the humanist project of the nineteenth century is unsustainable in practice. Step by step and frame by frame, her narrative moves us through a series of times, always keeping the same landscape as its

backdrop and its unifying principle, though letting us see it now from one perspective, now from another, until it reaches our own day: its defining features are a river with a Stone Age barrow on one side, on the slope of the flood plain, and a settlement on the hill opposite. Between barrow and settlement runs a path, which in our own time has become a main road. In each time-frame a child is sent by a parent on an errand across the river to the settlement with an item – an arrowhead, a jug, a sixpence, a pair of scissors – needed there by a grandparent. The child loses the object, but, in looking for it, finds the object lost in the previous frame by the previous child. On reaching the safety of the settlement the child is comforted by the grandparent who, with a longer view of the gains and losses that time brings, can better appreciate the value of the find. 'All things in their time, child', the last words of the modern granny to her little granddaughter, could almost stand as a comment on all modernist and post-modernist projects.<sup>11</sup>

That is, we have no unmediated access to a time not our own: we need both a historical imagination, and tangible remains from the past for that imagination to work on. The reader understands more by the end of the story than any one of its characters could have done: but the reader's understanding is *more*, not *other*, than that of the protagonists of the story: and in some vital respects, possibly *less* as well. Consider, for example, the different names given to the Stone Age Barrow. In the Stone Age narrative it is 'the Great King's tomb'; in the medieval, and still more in the eighteenth-century, narratives, though the children have less and less sense of its original function, they know enough to identify it with a person and a living being: 'Old Henga's Tump', 'Henny's Hump'. By the twentieth century, the Barrow has ceased to function even as an item of folk memory and serves only as another item, correctly labelled, in the huge open-air museum and theme park that is twentieth-century Britain, with a car-park handily adjacent: 'the stone age barrow'. Hence, in the last frame of *Lost and Found*, the landscape has almost completely disappeared, lost in the developments of the twentieth-century country town: only a soccer pitch bordering a series of allotments still witnesses to the earlier rolling downs. The church remains, of course, perched on the hill, as it has done since the second, medieval, frame, but it is now forced to compete with modern buildings and almost lost in the urban sprawl: a fitting figure for those who seek a trans- and supra-historical point of reference in life, as in their studies.

Another version of this theme is presented in Charles Keeping's picture book *River*, where the author exploits the turning of each double-page spread so as to show the transformations that have overtaken the same landscape with the passing of time, starting at some point before the Industrial Revolution and ending in the present day.<sup>12</sup>

Like Paton Walsh's landscape, *Keeping's* consists of a wide river running across the double spread and dividing the foreground from a middle distance of rolling hills. There is also, on the farther river bank, what I take to be a huge pollarded willow. This landscape, amazingly, survives intact throughout the book, though regularly obliterated by the urban developments that take place this side of the river, and, in the end, visible only through the glass walls of the huge office blocks that fill the whole spread or, when a huge brick wall has blotted it out, in simple murals painted on the bricks and depicting farm animals, the hills, the pollarded willow.

By contrast with *Lost and Found*, this narrative grants readers no privileged access to the human agents and instruments of the historical processes to which it glancingly refers – industrialization and commercialization; wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (a statue of a soldier on horseback, its title, 'O glorious brave', carved on the plinth); the advent of the leisure culture (hoardings advertising flights on Concorde with British Airways, and 'a holiday for two in the sun', 'a set of glasses with every gallon'); England post-War and post-Empire, with hoardings advertising Chinese and Indian takeaways. Whether building up or tearing down or perched precariously in a cat's cradle cleaning the windows of the high-rise offices, the human agents are simply dwarfed by the scale of their endeavours. As in *Lost and Found*, there is no beginning and no end to these historical processes, merely places where the book starts and finishes: in between, we have a repetition without progress other than technological. The book, then, seems to speak of the huge forces that not only carve out the landscape but may undermine the individual's precarious sense of identity. Monuments survive scarcely longer than the society which produced them; an earlier commemoration of a 'Lady on Horse' is replaced by the soldier on horseback, and then, completing the circle, by a 'Man on Horse'. By then, though, the memorial is having to compete with posters and neon signs which indicate both the newly cosmopolitan nature of post-industrial Britain and its very brief duration (between the penultimate double spread and the final page, Joe's Bar has gone from selling fish and chips to fish, hamburgers and chips, and an Indian takeaway has displaced an advert for petrol). In this narrative the humans are landlocked in their own time and place, with practically no unmediated access to their own past or, indeed, the natural order of the countryside.

Paton Walsh's figure of the Barrow, to return briefly to that, has uncanny echoes of an item of the landscape in a most distinguished contribution to the genre, Alan Garner's *Stone Book Quartet*, in the last book of which, *Tom Fobble's Day*, the young protagonist William goes sledging down one field and into another. This is a dangerous pastime because:

at the only patch in the whole field where it [the sledge] could be turned, there was a hump that made the sledge take off. And the chances for the sledge then were to land against a tree, or in barbed wire, or the gatepost, or to go through to the bottom field.<sup>13</sup>

For William the hump is merely an obstacle to be negotiated: for the reader, as for William's grandfather, who has lived all his life in the same place – the place where his mother and her father also lived, in the first book of the quartet – 'the dangerous hump . . . is all that is left of the cottage' which neighbours have been forced to leave, at the start of the second book, *Granny Reardun*, because they cannot keep up with the rent.<sup>14</sup> The quartet is one of two sorties by Garner into this territory of hyper-realism: the other is *Red Shift*. The difference between the two, and between the quartet and Keeping's *River*, is that the temporal dislocations of the quartet are grafted onto the more comforting forward narrative progressions of a family saga like that of the Tillermans in the novels of Cynthia Voigt. Unlike the grandparents in *Lost and Found*, consequently, William's grandfather can show William how some of the latter's finds provide a tangible link to their common past. The clay pipe, for example, that William finds amongst the stored potatoes was, his grandfather surmises, probably used by his own grandfather. He judges correctly, since we saw the pipe dropped by the latter in the first book of the quartet, *The Stone Book*, and buried in the earth, where it fell unbroken, as a way of 'giv[ing] a bit back'.<sup>15</sup>

In this book, therefore, technology is not simply a destructive force, as it very nearly is in *River*, but wears a human face. The war which provides the children with their new finds, pieces of shrapnel, which may themselves in time need explaining to the child reader of the book, like the dialect Garner uses to mark his characters' speech, is the obvious negative of technology. An unquestioned positive is the sledge which William and his grandfather make by dismantling the loom on which William's grandfather's great-uncle worked sixty years before in *The Stone Book*. So against the deeper sense of loss which *Tom Fobble's Day* records, when at its end the one figure dies who has been present almost throughout – so that, as well as celebrating a place, the book also celebrates a person – we have the sense of a new beginning, a rite of passage successfully negotiated, and a line which holds 'through hand and eye, block, forge and loom to the hill and all that he [William] owned [as] he sledged sledged sledged' (p. 72).

*Red Shift* is quite without such comforting resolutions, and its fractured triple narrative shows characters much closer to ourselves in their almost total ignorance of



a past which continues to impact on their present in the remains it leaves for them to puzzle about when they stumble over them. This fractured narrative not only dramatizes a sense of the past as fragments needing painstaking reconstruction: it also shows the characters' presents as similarly disintegrating under the stress of civil and personal strife. *Red Shift* is at least as ambitious, and every bit as difficult, as *The Inheritors*, though with one major difference. The latter's idealization of the Neanderthals who will be displaced at the end of the story by our own ancestors, Cromagnon men, offers a simple and comforting view of a past which we have lost, like that offered by the Garner quartet: that same, say, that Bruce Chatwin espoused, in *The Song Lines*, when he identified Eden with the nomadic state, aboriginal or Arab, and located our loss of Eden in the impulse to fence off land for cultivation.

Chatwin allows me to end with an Australian example of this third way of recovering the past for children: a picture book by Nadia Wheatley and her illustrator Donna Rawlins, *My Place* (1988).<sup>16</sup> The place of the title is an inner-city suburb of Sydney. This book touched a nerve in bicentennial Australia, where, in Frantzen's words, the 'desire for origins', as strong in Australia as ever it was in Anglo-Norman circles of the early twelfth century or newly-Protestant England of the sixteenth, has been a thriving industry for some years, and it was reprinted three times within a year.<sup>17</sup> It reads history backwards, as we all do, each double-page spread devoted to a ten-year chunk so as to end with the otherwise absent aborigines. Unlike the examples previously considered, the story is told by children. As with *Lost and Found* and *River*, the landscape, represented in each centre-spread by a map drawn by the narrator of that section, contains two elements which remain unaffected by the march of time. Central to the children's representation and imagining of their place is a huge (Moreton Bay) fig tree, nearly cut down in road widening in 1928, and a canal, which at the start of the story is a creek with stepping stones: part-built by 1898, the canal has been completed by 1938, so that the original creek now flows within concrete walls. The physical location which all the narrators call home (the 'my place' of the title), a piece of ground built on by the first settlers and regularly developed in the early years, remains the same, in the centre of each map, though the house proper is rebuilt in 1888, and sports from then on the lacey first-floor balcony characteristic of Australian late-Victorian terraced houses. For the rest, almost nothing remains the same. The first settlers build themselves a grander, bigger house, and have moved into it by 1838. A posh school by 1898, this has been taken over as a hospital for the troops in World War One, and turned into flats by 1928; demolished by 1948, it finally ends up (1988) as a McDonalds. A church, newly built in 1838, is still standing in 1988, but has moved significantly from the centre of the early maps to the

top left of the picture. Even the pubs, which one might have thought a more important symbol of stability (six-o'clock swill, at least in Adelaide, until the 1960s notwithstanding!), have not survived unchanged, though the Bay View Hotel, built in 1848, survives to 1988 with two changes of title (Centennial Hotel in 1888, Bicentennial Hotel in 1988).

The previous comments have barely scratched the surface of this wonderfully densely layered work. Significantly, it will be observed, I have read Wheatley's narrative against its own grain, which only shows how deeply ingrained is the habit of reading narratives forwards from their point of origin to their point of closure, notwithstanding the predilection of writers like Patrick White for flashback, and the exceptional and calculated challenges to our preferred narrative constructions represented by works like Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*. Reading backwards, though, has a similar unsettling effect to the one you get when you find England relegated in a joke Australian map of the world to the bottom, with Australia at the top, or to the bottom margins of medieval maps like the Mappa Mundi in Hereford Cathedral. (For some time now writers have been stressing the links between post-modern and medieval literature, as indeed between post-modernity and Australian literature: I think of the view of history revealed in Peter Carey's writing, especially by contrast with the romantic isolationism favoured by White and Malouf). This reading backwards allows you, for example, to roll back wave upon wave of Australian immigration – post-World War II Greek, pre-War Irish, nineteenth-century English and German – and see in them not a curse, the term used by Henry of Huntingdon, in the twelfth century, to describe the movements of colonizers and colonized that made up the England of his own day, but an opportunity.<sup>18</sup> It is easier to read this evidence positively because the child narrators always see these and other major developments, the rise of political parties, for instance, in terms of family groupings, so that the individual narratives, and the book as a whole, have something of the feel of a family saga (six families between them take up almost the whole time span of the book).

There are, of course, clear negatives to set against these positives. As with Garner's *Stone Book* quartet, we get the depressing sense that every war – Vietnam, World War II, World War I (the Boer War is passed over, though Australians did fight in it) – is always going to be the last (*la dernière guerre* rather than *la guerre dernière*). As with Keeping's *River*, we learn that technology has created more problems than it solves: the tannery and the brickworks pollute the atmosphere from 1848 on and make the creek a dangerous place to swim (1938-48, 1988); a boy is knocked down on the main road by a car (1948).

The most important bonus of reading backwards, though, is the way we return to an origin not our own, and find a way of relating to our own place emphatically not our own. All this is symbolized by the aboriginal child sitting at the top of the Moreton Bay fig tree (never called in the book by its English or Latin name, since fortunately children don't care about such things), looking one way over the endless land, the other over the endless sea and the sky, and listening to the grandmother saying, 'We've always belonged to this place . . . for ever and ever'.<sup>19</sup> This ending invites us properly to regain contact with the child within ourselves: to revisit our own past more often and with more appreciation and understanding. To see how much we have lost in travelling away from our past – any past: our medieval past, for instance – and how much work remains to do if we wish to recuperate any of it, we need only turn to the first double spread of the book. Here the newcomers have put up a flag in the downstairs window to show their well-meaning identification with the aboriginals in the Bicentennial year. The very terms, though, in which they articulate that relation to themselves – 'we're on Aboriginal land' – show them still operating imperialist frames of ownership and failing to grasp the point of the grandmother's final words. *Terra nullius*, indeed: there is a moral here for all of us.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Hanrahan's *The Scent of Eucalyptus* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1973), on growing up in Adelaide, would have served my purposes much better (information kindly supplied by Wendy Parsons, who teaches Children's Literature in Adelaide).

<sup>2</sup> For further comment on this kind of historical writing, see J. R. Townsend, *Written for Children*, 2nd edn (Aylesbury: Kestrel Books, 1983), pp. 219-34, esp. Paton Walsh's distinction between historical novel and 'costume novel', quoted p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> From the title of one of his contributions to *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. by S. Medcalf (London: Methuen, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Using a term coined by Venuti, in L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), we may see Golding attempting to 'foreignize' his version of the past, rather as Tony Harrison did his version of the *Oresteia*, and William Morris his of *Beowulf*.

<sup>5</sup> Jill Paton Walsh, *Knowledge of Angels* (Cambridge: Green Bay Publications/Colt Books, 1994), p. [ix]. Paton Walsh describes the book, somewhat disingenuously, as 'set on an island somewhat like Mallorca but not Mallorca, at a time somewhat like 1450 but not 1450', and the resulting fiction does not, for my money, equal the achievement of her historical writing for children.

<sup>6</sup> For recent comment on both the Troy story and (glancingly) Arthurian myth in later medieval England, see L. Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London: Routledge, 1991), ch. 2.

<sup>7</sup> R. Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, pocket edition (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> For general comment on 'travelling in time' in children's fiction, see M. Landsberg, *The World of Children's Books: A Guide to Choosing the Best* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1988), ch. 8. Instances of time-slip narrative could be multiplied considerably: a single Australian example, Ruth Park's *Playing Beatie Bow* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Puffin Books, 1982), must stand for all of them.

<sup>9</sup> Informal conversation with the author. Dunne also influenced Graham Greene, as witness the preface to his *The End of the Affair*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M. and M. Rustin, *Narratives of Love and Loss: Studies in Modern Children's Fiction* (London and New York: Verso, 1987), pp. 27-39.

<sup>11</sup> Jill Paton Walsh, *Lost and Found*, illus. by Mary Rayner (London: André Deutsch, 1984), unpaginated.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Keeping, *River* (Oxford, London and Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), unpaginated.

<sup>13</sup> A. Garner, *Tom Fobble's Day* (London: Collins, 1977), pp. 11-12.

<sup>14</sup> For the quotation, see N. Philip, *A Fine Anger: A Critical Introduction to the Work of Alan Garner* (London: Collins, 1981), p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Garner, *The Stone Book* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins, *My Place* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1988), unpaginated.

<sup>17</sup> For comment on the Anglo-Norman quest for Anglo-Saxon origins, see J. Gillingham, 'Henry of Huntingdon and the Twelfth-Century Revival of the English Nation', *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by S. Forde, L. Johnson and A.V. Murray, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 14 (Leeds: School of English, University of

Leeds, 1995), pp. 75-102; for the similar quest after the Reformation, A. J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990). For other foundation myths, see the relevant pages of Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*; A. Gransden, *English Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

<sup>18</sup> On Henry of Huntingdon, see Patterson pp. 87-88.

<sup>19</sup> This figure, of course, parallels those in *Lost and Found* (four grandparents) and *The Stone Book* quartet (two grandfathers). Possibly the kinship relations thus suggested are too comfortingly Western to represent adequately the networks of social relations in aboriginal culture. For that matter, the view of the aboriginal child, positioned at the meeting-point of sea, land and sky, though accurate within the terms of the fiction, seems to me to owe its symbolic charge more to the alienated white consciousness whose developments the book has charted so suggestively.