



Children's Literature and Capitalism: Fictions of Social Mobility in Britain, 1850-1914 (Critical Approaches to Children's Literature)

Christopher Parkes

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Children's Literature and Capitalism: Fictions of Social Mobility in Britain, 1850-1914 explores the changing relationship between the child and capitalist society in the works of some of the most important writers of children's and young-adult texts in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. After the first phase of industrialization in Britain, the child emerged as both a victim of and a threat to capitalism. The exploitation of children in the nation's dark, satanic mills revealed the unsentimental nature of the economic marketplace and threatened to render capitalist society as that which can only destroy the innocent child. Examining the works of authors including Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, E. Nesbit, Frances Hodgson Burnett and L. M. Montgomery, *Children's Literature and Capitalism* explores how a new rhetorical strategy emerged in the nineteenth century which equated the spirit of capitalism with the spirit of childhood.

Children were re-configured as subjects defined by their innate ingenuity and invention and, in the process, they were transformed into ideal participants in capitalist society. This is the first study to focus not on what capitalism has done to the child but what the child has done to capitalism.

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