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The Feast of the Fishes: Satire, Slavery and Romantic-Period Children's Literature

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Abstract

The pseudonymously authored *The Feast of the Fishes* (1808) is one of several 'papillonades' published for children in the early nineteenth century. Like other papillonades, this short poem depicts anthropomorphic animals in order to offer a satirical perspective on the conventions of polite society. The poem's playful mock-heroic tone is, however, undermined by its depiction of a shark in pursuit of a slave ship. The image of sharks following slave ships was a potent symbol in abolitionist discourse, but its appearance within this comedic context makes its intended impact difficult to discern. In what spirit is this disturbing image offered? How are readers to make sense of the scarcely veiled horror of what is being depicted both verbally and visually? Addressing these questions, this article reassesses the generic identity of children's literature and its relationship to the satirical and political discourse of the Romantic period.

Keywords

children's literature; papillonades; satire; slavery; laughter; John Ruskin

The Feast of the Fishes: Satire, Slavery and Romantic-Period Children's Literature

In *The Hidden Adult*, Perry Nodelman addresses the complex question of how to identify children's literature: the children referred to within the phrase, he suggests, 'are most usefully understood as the child readers that writers, responding to the assumptions of adult purchasers, imagine and imply in their works'.¹ Yet, as Nodelman and others have observed, the implied child itself is a culturally and historically contingent concept. Consequently, as Peter Hunt notes, '[t]he literature defined by it [...] cannot be expected to be a stable entity'.² There is no universal child to whom children's literature appeals and, although we may try to identify culturally dominant modes of childhood at different points of history, some texts imply a child reader that seems to disrupt those attempts. The text on which I focus in this essay seems to encapsulate the instability to which Hunt refers. Published by John Harris in 1808 and attributed to an author who signs herself – or possibly himself – Theresa Tyro, *The Feast of the Fishes* is a short, illustrated poem for children.³ Very few copies of this text appear to be in existence: in the UK, the British Library holds a copy as does the Hockcliffe Collection at the University of Bedfordshire.⁴

I do not want to make the claim that this little known, barely discussed poem is in any way a lost masterpiece, unfairly obscured by the passing of time. I do, however, want to propose that its radically unstable and ambiguous humour has much to reveal about the status of children's literature and childhood in the Romantic period. Focusing on this short text's allusions to the transatlantic slave trade, this article argues that the satirical, and sometimes distasteful, brand of humour it contains offers a valuable modification to dominant ideas about childhood and canonicity in Romantic-period writing.

As Donelle Ruwe notes, the kind of social satire that features in *The Feast of the Fishes* is difficult to reconcile with the ‘Romantic ideology of the child’ which imagines children as ‘nostalgic figure[s] [...] characterized by innocence, imagination, and nature’.⁵ While acknowledging that various critics, including Ruwe herself, have done much to contest the dominance of any single image of the child in the Romantic period, the notion of innocence remains a powerful and persistent element in the stories we tell ourselves about childhood.⁶ As Jacqueline Rose reminds us, the very notion of children’s literature emerges from ‘what it is that adults [...] want or demand of the child’.⁷ In its production and reception, children’s literature frequently reflects adult fantasies of a return to a lost innocence, accessible to us through the figure of the child. Satirical humour, which typically depends upon shared cultural reference points and often draws its power from exposing discomfiting and only dimly acknowledged truths, appears antithetical to the expectation that children are somehow ‘morally naive’.⁸

As my subsequent argument will suggest, texts that refuse to acknowledge these expectations are an incongruous presence within the categories that we use to identify and demarcate children’s literature. The satirical humour of *The Feast of the Fishes* implies a child reader whose field of knowledge seems distinctly adult in its range and objects. Indeed, if satire is considered ‘a conscious mode of alienation’, its efficacy rests upon the assumption of a knowing, rather than an innocent, reader: one who possesses sufficient knowledge and familiarity with a subject to have their preconceptions challenged.⁹ Rather than the Romantic child who is imagined as ‘separate from the adult world’ (Plotz, 3), the child reader of texts like *The Feast of the Fishes* is assumed to be familiar with the fashionable world of balls, routs and assemblies. But what sets *The Feast of the Fishes* apart, and makes it worthy of further discussion, is its allusion to the transatlantic slave trade. Images alluding to the horrors of slavery are deployed within the poem as a source of humour – as a punchline that seems intended to amuse rather than excite the

sympathy or indignation of the reader. As unpalatable as a contemporary reader might find this, it exemplifies the awkward and discomfiting morality of writing for children that does not subscribe to, or cater for, the dominant ‘notion of childhood innocence’ that ‘has become culturally axiomatic since its codification in the eighteenth century’ (Richardson, *Literature*, 151).

Locating *The Feast of the Fishes*: The Papillonade Genre

The *Feast of the Fishes* is an example of what Mary Jackson calls a ‘papillonade’: a sub-genre of writing that takes its name from William Roscoe’s illustrated poem *The Butterfly’s Ball and the Grasshopper’s Feast* (1805).¹⁰ In Roscoe’s poem, the child reader is invited into a fantastical world of anthropomorphic insects who are holding an evening assembly: the ‘ball’ and ‘feast’ of the poem’s title. Roscoe’s poem proved phenomenally popular, selling 20,000 copies in 1807 alone. It was followed by Catherine Ann Dorset’s equally successful *The Peacock ‘at Home’* (1807), in which the titular peacock hears of the triumph of the butterfly’s ball and, struck with jealousy, decides to hold his own ball. Both works were published by the bookseller John Harris who, seeking to capitalise on this burgeoning trend, flooded the market with a range of imitations that identified their origins by alluding explicitly to both Roscoe’s and Dorset’s poems.¹¹ Other publishers followed suit, issuing their own, similar titles that sought to capture their reader’s attention with luxurious scenes populated by a cast of preening non-human characters.

Although Roscoe’s text provided the genesis of the papillonade format, it is Dorset’s *The Peacock ‘At Home’* that established the basic template to which subsequent works adhered. The narrative structure of these texts can be summarised simply: after hearing of the butterfly’s ball, an animal or a certain species (lions, elephants, horses, or flowers, for instance) decide to host their own gathering. Invitations are sent, responses are received. The poem provides a description of the gathering, detailing any significant

incidents, before concluding with a speech or moral. The format draws upon the mock epic tradition of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, often replacing the sharpness of Pope's wit with a gentler touch. Jackson singles out Dorset's *The Peacock 'At Home'* for particular praise, highlighting its 'delicious yoking of the high and low' and 'lighthearted mockery at the very human foibles her characters display' (Jackson, 210). Similarly, Tess Cosslett observes that the humour of such works derives from 'a carnivalesque inversion of proper order'.¹² However, according to Donelle Ruwe in *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era*, the genre's satirical tendencies ultimately conspired against it, contributing to its erasure from the canon of children's literature. Ruwe suggests that Roscoe's poem alone has enjoyed a prominent place in literary history, owing to its compatibility with the emerging codification of childhood as a time of innocence, imaginative delight and wonder. By contrast, subsequent papillonades, with their rootedness in the social and, occasionally, political world, clash with the increasing emphasis upon children's literature as consisting of 'the pleasurable, imaginative, and playful' (Ruwe, 168). Rather than fluttering with the lightness of a butterfly's wings, these texts remain grounded in the social world. As a consequence, they sit awkwardly within, and have often been excluded from, histories of children's literature that chart a movement from didacticism to escapist pleasure.

Ruwe attributes too much power and coherence to what she terms the 'Romantic ideology of the child', but there is no doubt that it can be difficult to recognise papillonades as examples of children's literature. Their tone is often uneven and their morality uncertain; their tendency to lurch from playful frivolity to very specific and pointed satire can be perplexing. This is evident in the copy of *The Feast of the Fishes* held in the Hockliffe Collection. There, it is bound in a single volume with eleven other papillonades, including Dorset's *The Peacock 'At Home'* and Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball*.¹³ Many of these seemingly simple and whimsical stories contain explicitly political

references. Often, these references are sufficiently general as to be unobtrusive and unremarkable. For instance, several papillonades feature nationalistic and patriotic toasts to England, Horatio Nelson and the King. Elsewhere, however, the reader finds highly specific and pointed allusions to contemporary political individuals and events, including the imposition of new forms of taxation, appeals for religious tolerance, and the flight of the Portuguese Prince Regent to Brazil following Napoleon's invasion of the country in 1807.¹⁴ Perhaps the most troubling of these allusions is the reference to slavery in *The Feast of the Fishes*, which appears all the more incongruous alongside the light humour that characterises much of the poem's content.

Like many papillonades, *The Feast of the Fishes* begins with an acknowledgement of its poetic progenitors, alluding to both Dorset and Roscoe in its mock-heroic opening lines:

LONG live the *Peacock!* and, with new delight,
May tribes of birds attend his *public night*,
[...]
Long live the *Butterfly*, who routs began,
To whom in crouds the insect people ran.
I sing the FEAST OF FISHES, or the Treat
Where the huge *Whale* invited all to meet. (1-2; 9-12)

In keeping with the pattern established by *The Peacock 'At Home'*, the poem next charts the sending of invitations. In this case, the whale charges a flying fish with the task of delivering them:

The *Flying-fish* he order'd to make known
A general invitation thro' the seas,
That all may come, or not, just as they please; (14-16)

The portrait is of a frivolous world of little consequence: invitees may attend or they may not, 'just as they please'. As the guests arrive at the feast, the whimsical nature of this society is treated with the kind of light satirical approach found in Dorset's *The Peacock 'at Home'*. Describing the entrance of various anthropomorphic fish, the poem notes how each of them, 'like human beings', crave admiration and 'esteem[s] himself the finest fish' (85-86). These comments on the vanity and pride of humans are accompanied by observations on the more antagonistic elements of sociability as, in a spirit of raillery, some of the guests are 'quizz'd, and call'd *cold fish* and queer', while others 'puff their gills, and cry, "What raffs are here?"' (87-88). The discriminating niceties of social rank are exemplified in the characterisation of the turbot, who rails against the heterogeneous mix present at the feast:

The *Turbot* said, 'How could the *Whale* invite
Barbles [sic] and *Dog-fishes* with fish polite!
Next time he sends me word that he's *at home*,
I'll find among my friends, *who mean to come*. (89-92)

Celebrated by Marie-Antoine Carême – chef to Napoleon and the Prince Regent – as 'the Prince of the Sea', the turbot's status as a delicacy on the dinner-plate is translated by the author of the poem into a sense of social superiority. As a fish of the 'first rank', the turbot expresses disdain for bottom-feeding creatures such as the barbel and dog-fish who naturally occupy a lower place in the oceanic ecosystem.¹⁵ The tone here is one of gentle mockery: one could imagine a similarly self-important utterance in the mouth of a pompous nobleman in the novels of Frances Burney or Maria Edgeworth, where it would serve to puncture the pretensions of polite society. Nevertheless, while the poem's satire at this point contains nothing too biting or discordant, the turbot's interjection alerts the reader to the more serious implications of the hierarchical ordering of living beings.

Slavery, Sharks and Abolitionist Discourse

The poem does, indeed, possess the ability to challenge its readers. The most disconcerting moment occurs when the flying fish is delivering invitations. After being unable to find the kraken and having been snubbed by the porpoise, the flying fish addresses a shark. The encounter is summarised in two couplets:

He ask'd the *Shark* (for mere good breeding's sake,
But he was following in a slave ship's wake,
Said, he was much oblig'd, but could not stay,
And hop'd t'attend the *Whale* another day; (23-26)

In counterpoint to the jovial 'feast' of the poem's title, this moment hints at a much darker, morally repugnant act of consumption. The poem dispatches with the moment with chilling economy; the grotesque implication of the shark feeding upon the bodies of slaves who have either been thrown, or who have leapt, overboard is glossed over by the language of politeness. This is reflected in the accompanying illustration, which depicts the flying fish in mid-flight, offering an invitation to the shark whose head and jagged jaws emerge from the waves. In the background, the slave ship looms on the horizon.

[Figure 1 close to here]. These textual and visual allusions to the well-known and recurrent barbarity of the slave trade – and to the practice of throwing slaves overboard – are presented so flippantly that it is difficult to see them as anything other than a crass attempt to find comic capital in an act of atrocity.¹⁶

An alternative interpretation is to view the lines and accompanying image as a deliberate provocation, one intended to expose the brutality that lurks beneath the veneer of polite society, and that is designed to prick the conscience of its readers. Although *The Feast of the Fishes* was published the year after the abolition of the slave trade, the image of sharks following slave ships had been a potent element of abolitionist

discourse from the 1780s onwards. As Marcus Rediker notes, Thomas Clarkson and others ‘seized upon the image of the ferocious marine predator devouring the bodies of dead Africans thrown over the side of the slave ship; they used it in their poetry, prose, and propaganda of all kinds, to make vivid the horrors of the trade’.¹⁷ A notable example is provided in Clarkson’s *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, which includes an eye-witness account of a dead slave being thrown overboard to the ‘inhuman sharks’ that were ‘supposed to have followed the vessels from the coast of Africa’.¹⁸

Is it possible that what might appear to be a dismissive allusion to atrocity is intended to resonate with readers familiar with such abolitionist discourse? Certainly, much children’s literature of this period aligns itself with the abolitionist cause. Amelia Opie’s anti-slavery poem *The Black Man’s Lament* (1826) vividly depicts the brutal treatment of African slaves as they are forcibly taken from their native land, ‘pack’d close’ onboard ‘a darken’d ship’, sold into slavery before being set to work on a sugar plantation.¹⁹ **[Figure 2 close to here]** In the accompanying plates, the spectre of the slave ship once again sits on the horizon. But unlike in *The Feast of the Fishes*, Opie’s ship is almost obscured by a group of newly landed slaves in the foreground, their heads downcast as the slavers drive them forward with sticks. Here, and within each of the plates, the suffering endured by enslaved people is visceral, reflecting a broader tendency of sentimental abolitionist literature to focus on ‘the sufferings of the body’.²⁰ By contrast, *The Feast of Fishes* is conspicuous for the omission of such sympathy-provoking detail. In its illustration, the slave ship lingers on the horizon in isolation: it is a discomfiting presence but a distant one which conceals, as much as it reveals, the brutality of the trade in human lives.

The rendering of the shark, too, contributes to the ambiguity of the image in *The Feast of the Fishes*: its small, almost timid, face scarcely resembles any actual species of shark. Its cartoonish features contrast with the flying fish, which is depicted with a far

greater care for detail and accuracy. Similarly, the depiction of the shark does little to evoke the ‘inhuman’, ‘voracious fish’ described by Clarkson (134, 135). This underwhelming specimen evokes the disjunction between text and image in William Blake’s ‘The Tyger’, where the ‘oddly inoffensive creature’ depicted in the engraving provides a bathetic contrast with the sublime animal described in the verse.²¹ Zachary Leader reads this juxtaposition as an ironic ‘joke’ by Blake, intended to ‘undercut’ the poem (Leader, 48). If one assumes a similarly comedic irony at work within *The Feast of the Fishes*, the poem appears even more at odds with abolitionist texts like Opie’s. While *The Black Man’s Lament* invites an affective, compassionate response from its reader, *The Feast of the Fishes* prompts the kind of laughter that, as Matthew Ward notes, is ‘antithetical to the ethical demands of sympathy’.²²

Ironic laughter of this kind would seem to exclude *The Feast of the Fishes* from the more earnest and emotional appeals to be found in abolitionist children’s literature. Such writing more typically pictured its readers, and depicted child characters, as figures of sympathy and compassion. This is true of both British Romantic-period writing and later American abolitionist works, in which the ‘natural innocence of childhood’ is seen as morally redemptive.²³ As Holly Keller observes, such literature evokes the figure of the ‘sentimental and idealized child’ (Keller, 88) as an agent of social regeneration. Once again, Amelia Opie’s work provides an illustration of this strategy. Later editions of her poem *The Negro Boy’s Tale* (originally published in 1802) include a preface in which Opie addresses her young readers directly. She informs them that she writes about slavery in the hope that they ‘will make the world what we of the present generation wish it to be, but are not able to make it ourselves’.²⁴ Such authorial intervention is entirely absent from *The Feast of the Fishes*, where the horror of the consumption of human flesh is implied, but unspoken. The poem does not pause to reflect on the broader implications of these lines; nor does it offer any explanatory apparatus for interpreting the

accompanying illustration. Its ambivalence leaves the reader to be amused or appalled according to their ability to make sense of the image before them.

The absence of such didactic aspirations helps us to perceive both this text's generic awkwardness and the deficiency of literary-historical frameworks that identify children's literature as either rational and reformist or imaginative and escapist. While the poem draws upon abolitionist imagery, it strips it of the moral clarity exhibited in the work of Opie and her contemporaries. But, as I have been suggesting, this refusal of didacticism does not arise from an adherence to emerging ideas of childhood innocence. The child reader implied by *The Feast of the Fishes* is far from an innocent who must be shielded from acts of injustice and brutality; instead, they are invited to participate in the almost gleeful flippancy with which the poem seems to allude to the barbarism of the slave trade.

'Are children like that'? Ruskin's Anxiety

To conclude, I offer one further means of contextualising *The Feast of the Fishes*. The comparison I am making may at first seem improbable and perhaps untenable. Nevertheless, a consideration of J. M. W. Turner's great painting *The Slave Ship* provides a further insight into why *The Feast of the Fishes*' darkly ironic and wildly inappropriate humour is so offensive to ideas of childhood innocence in the Romantic period and beyond. **[Figure 3 close to here]**

First exhibited in 1840, *The Slave Ship* has been labelled 'the only indisputably great work of Western art ever made to commemorate the Atlantic slave trade'.²⁵

Turner's painting is often understood to be inspired by the Zong massacre of 1781, in which 132 Africans were thrown overboard from the Liverpool-registered slave ship on its journey from Africa to Jamaica (Walvin, 4-5). Turner depicts a slave ship that has jettisoned its human cargo; the slaves are visible in the foreground, the chains still

adorning their limbs. They are surrounded by fish and sharks, bringing a ghastly clarity to the image that abolitionists had popularised half a century earlier.

Of course, the image from *The Feast of the Fishes* cannot compare to the aesthetic and ethical power of Turner's painting. And while there are compositional similarities, such as the position of the slave ship on the horizon while the sharks emerge from the waves in the foreground of the opposite corner, I am not claiming that Turner was in any way influenced by, or even aware of, *The Feast of the Fishes*. But an anecdote about Turner's painting may help to clarify what is so disturbing about the ambivalence of *The Feast of the Fishes*.

For twenty-eight years, Turner's painting was owned by John Ruskin, who would show it to visitors, including children such as Violet Hunt, the daughter of the painter Alfred Hunt. In later life, Violet Hunt recalled a childhood trip to Ruskin's home at Denmark Hill, where she was accompanied by her mother and her sister. She focused in detail on their response to Ruskin showing them Turner's painting:

Once, when he was showing his Turner, 'The Slave Ship', we asked him cheerfully what all those people were doing in the water. 'Drowning!' he said; 'they have been thrown overboard to lighten the ship.' But the legs of the slaves were thick and unlike legs, and so altogether comic, that the more my mother and Mr. Ruskin explained to us that these unfortunates were in mortal anguish and fear of death, the more we giggled. I remember his awestruck face as he leaned across towards my mother, saying, 'Are children like that?'²⁶

The legs that so amused the Hunt sisters were also mocked by contemporary critics. Marcus Wood describes the most prominent of these limbs as 'badly drawn, bloated, [and] colossally thick', and notes that it became the object of 'facetious humour' that possessed 'a sardonic racial edge' (Wood, 48, 47).

Such pointed racism is absent from Hunt's reminiscence. Yet the children's ready laughter might trouble us, just as it troubled Ruskin. His incredulous response to the sisters' giggles stems from their inability to respond appropriately to the injustice conveyed by Turner's painting. The depiction of the incongruously disproportionate legs obscures the ethical urgency of the work; the children focus on this single detail to the detriment of the whole, failing to perceive the sublime suffering that the painting depicts. Their lack of sympathy provides a vivid contrast with the idealised images of sentimental childhood detailed in abolitionist literature. Rather than sympathetic connection, this short anecdote provides a stark example of the 'violently divisive potential of laughter', illustrating what Kobena Mercer refers to as its '[ambivalence] as a phenomenon of social bonding'.²⁷ Not only does the Hunt sisters' laughter confirm a failure to identify with the individuals depicted in the painting, it also signals the children's separation from the adults in the room.

It is this gulf – between the 'explain[ing]' adults and the laughing children – that leads to Ruskin's final question: 'Are children like that?' The question demands attention. Are children like *what*? Lacking in empathy? Predisposed to ridicule? Irreverent – even to the point of cruelty – in their laughter? As many commentators have observed, and as Ruskin seemed to discover, children's laughter is often considered to be indecipherable: a phenomenon that is 'without a legible meaning' and which 'refuses interpretation'.²⁸ Ruskin's apparent inability to comprehend the girls' laughter can be related to his broader views on childhood. As Catherine Robson puts it, he understood childhood, and girlhood in particular, as being 'connected to the unsullied and vital purity of long-lost origins, and placed in opposition to the defiled world of the present day'.²⁹ Indeed, in *The Elements of Drawing*, Ruskin cited the necessity of recovering 'the *innocence of the eye*': what he referred to as 'a sort of childish perception'.³⁰ But in this instance, childish perception is something alien, inexplicable and unrecoverable for Ruskin. As Violent Hunt noted, he

‘was puzzled by the absolutely natural child’ (*Works of Ruskin*, xxv); where he sought an idealized state of innocence and instinctive sympathy, he found instead children whose laughter confounded his preconceptions of what children are ‘like’.

Ruskin’s dumbfounded response underscores the inadequacy of Romantic ideas about the fundamental wisdom and innocence of childhood. The sisters’ laughter raises the possibility of a satirical child: one who is attuned to the ridiculous, and receptive to humour, however inappropriate. It is this understanding of childhood that informs texts like *The Feast of the Fishes*, which seek to amuse by dispensing with preconceived ideas of what children are ‘like’, even if the results can appear distasteful, and even callous, in their apparent amorality.

Conclusion

In her influential book *The Case of Peter Pan*, Jacqueline Rose critiques the widespread assumption that ‘childhood is something which exists outside the culture in which it is produced’ (44). Rose locates the origin of this idea in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and it is not difficult to see Rousseau’s thought as the catalyst for subsequent Romantic conceptions of childhood innocence. But, as I have suggested, such trajectories are interrupted when texts like *The Feast of the Fishes* are acknowledged. This small book has few sensitivities about preserving the perceived innocence of children and seems perfectly at ease with combining playful anthropomorphism with flippant allusions to political controversies. Like the flying fish who has the ability to traverse, and potentially connect, the subaqueous world of talking fish and the human world above the waves, *The Feast of the Fishes* itself departs from material that implies an innocent child reader to allude to the concerns of the social and political world.

While I have placed a considerable amount of pressure on a brief moment in a brief book, it is not isolated. As I have already noted, other papillonades feature allusions

to the Napoleonic wars, religious discrimination and British imperialism among other contemporary political affairs. Yet, despite this topicality, they provide little interpretative guidance and none of the overt didacticism found in the work of contemporary writers like Opie who pursued a clear moral agenda for their young readers.

The difficulty of placing works like *The Feast of the Fishes* helps to explain their marginalisation; the question that follows is what to do with them when we find them. Peter Hunt has suggested that ‘concepts of childhood change so rapidly that there is a sense in which books no longer applicable to childhood must fall into a limbo’ (Hunt, 61). Naming Romantic-period authors such as Anna Letitia Barbauld and Maria Edgeworth, Hunt writes that though their books ‘were once children’s literature’, they ‘have now ceased to be so’ (Hunt, 22). In terms of the papillonade genre, this may be true; like the butterflies from which this mode of writing took its name, the allure of these texts was captivating yet short-lived. But allowing these works to linger in ‘limbo’ risks erasing the complex ways in which childhood has been conceptualised in the past. By exploring the political resonance, awkward humour and ambivalent morality of texts like the *Feast of the Fishes*, we can unravel that complexity and challenge the persistent legacy of Romantic myths of childhood innocence.

¹ Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (Baltimore, 2008), 5.

² Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children’s Literature* (Oxford, 1991), 60.

³ Theresa Tyro, *The Feast of the Fishes; or, the Whale’s Invitation to his Brethren of the Deep* (London, 1808). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

⁴ My work in this article is based on the copy held by the Hockliffe Collection. The image from the text is used by kind permission of the Hockliffe Collection at the University of Bedfordshire.

⁵ Donelle Ruwe, *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era: Verse, Riddle, and Rhyme* (Basingstoke, 2014), 9.

⁶ As Alan Richardson notes, 'There was, however, no one dominant "Romantic" image of the child'. See Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994), 9. See also M. O. Grenby's work on actual readers in *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge, 2011), and Lissa Paul on the 'enlightenment child' in *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2011). Finally, see Judith Plotz, who notes there was no 'single Romantic type of child' in *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (Basingstoke, 2001), 4.

⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Philadelphia, 1984 [1992]), 137, 44.

⁸ Alan Richardson, 'Nineteenth-Century Children's Satire and the Ambivalent Reader', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 15.3 (Fall 1990), 122-126, 123.

⁹ J. D. Stahl, 'Satire and the Evolution of Perspective in Children's Literature: Mark Twain, E. B. White, and Louise Fitzhugh', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 15.3 (Fall 1990), 119-122, 120.

¹⁰ Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from its Beginnings to 1839* (Lincoln, NE, 1989), 209.

¹¹ Among the works that Harris published following *The Butterfly's Ball* and *The Peacock 'at Home'* (1807) are: *The Elephant's Ball, and Grand Fete Champetre* (1807); *The Lion's Masquerade: A Sequel to the Peacock 'At Home'* (1807); *The Council of Dogs* (1808); *The Feast of the Fishes; or, The Whale's Invitation* (1808); *Flora's Gala* (1808); *Grand-Mamma, or, The Christening not 'At Home'* (1808); *The Horse's Levee, Or the Court of Pegasus* (1808); *The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils* (1808); *The Rose's Breakfast* (1808). For more details – and for an overview of Harris's phenomenal publishing output – see Marjorie Moon, *John Harris's Books For Youth, 1801-1843*, revised and enlarged edn (Folkestone, 1992).

¹² Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914* (Aldershot, 2006), 51.

¹³ The other papillonades bound together with Roscoe's and Dorset's texts include all of those mentioned in note 10, above, plus one work not published by Harris: *The Lion's Parliament, or, The Beasts in Debate* (1808).

¹⁴ On taxation, see Ruwe's reading of *The Council of Dogs* in *British Children's Poetry*; on religious tolerance, see Cosslett's discussion of *The Water-king's Levee* (Cosslett, 56). The allusions to the Portuguese Regent occur in *The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils*.

¹⁵ M. A. Carême, *French Cookery: Comprising L'art de la cuisine française, Le pâtissier royal, Le cuisinier parisien*, trans. William Hall (London, 1836), 77.

¹⁶ Although the poem was published in 1808, a year after the abolition of the slave trade, illicit trading continued after 1807, with captains often deciding to jettison their cargo when under threat from naval ships policing the waters. See James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law, and the End of Slavery* (New Haven and London, 2011), 200.

¹⁷ Marcus Rediker, 'History From Below the Water Line: Sharks and the Atlantic Slave Trade', *Atlantic Studies*, 5.2 (August 2008), 285-297, 286. As Rediker notes, this was more than a propaganda image: 'The historical record provides abundant evidence that sharks actually swarmed around the slave ships' (286).

¹⁸ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly The African, translated from a Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge for the Year 1785, with Additions* (London, 1786), 135.

¹⁹ Amelia Opie, *The Black Man's Lament; or, How to Make Sugar* (London, 1826), 5.

²⁰ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke, 2005), 20.

²¹ Zachary Leader, *Reading Blake's Songs* (London, 1981), 47.

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- ²² Matthew Ward, 'Laughter, Ridicule, and Sympathetic Humor in the Early Nineteenth Century', *SEL*, 57.4 (2017), 725-749, 726.
- ²³ Holly Keller, 'Juvenile Antislavery Narrative and Notions of Childhood', *Children's Literature*, 24 (1996), 86-100, 87.
- ²⁴ Amelia Opie, *The Negro Boy's Tale, A Poem Addressed to Children* (London, 1824), iii.
- ²⁵ Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester, 2000), 44.
- ²⁶ Cited in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (39 vols, London, 1906), xxiii. xxv.
- ²⁷ Kobena Mercer, 'Carnavalesque and Grotesque: What Bakhtin's Laughter Tells Us About Art and Culture', in *No Laughing Matter: Visual Humour in Ideas of Race, Nationality, and Ethnicity*, ed. Angela Rosenthal, David Bindman and Adrian W. B. Randolph (Hanover, NH, 2016), 1-22, 1.
- ²⁸ Patrick Kindig, 'The Laughing Child: Sex, Interpretation, and Laughter in Sigmund Freud's "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy" and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*', *Textual Practice*, 32.8 (2018), 1365-1381, 1367.
- ²⁹ Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton, 2001), 13.
- ³⁰ John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing; in Three Letters to Beginners* (London, 1857), 6, n. 1.