

# *Modernising and moralising: Hachette's fiction series for children, 1950s-1960s*

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# Modernising and moralising: Hachette's mass-market fiction series for children, 1950s-1960s

'Until recently, publishing was an industry on a human scale'.<sup>1</sup> So reflected Maurice Fleurent, head of production, illustrations and picturebooks in the children's department at Hachette in 1963. Technological advances in printing now allowed for much higher print runs to be produced for much lower prices. The modern editor, in his experience, was increasingly akin to an administrator or an accountant, and therefore much less inclined to take creative risks. 'In short', Fleurent concluded, 'an editor is no longer a genius who discovers texts and shapes tastes; instead he is an inventor of a formula. He has become an industrialist who must meet and anticipate demand.'<sup>2</sup> Using the extensive archives of Hachette's children's department, this essay asks how editors like Fleurent responded to the unprecedented growth and important structural changes that historians concur were taking place in the children's publishing industry across the West in the post-war period.<sup>3</sup> What can the editors' perspective teach us about this key period in children's publishing history? What was their role in these processes of change?

This essay focuses on France, because the shift was particularly marked there for two main reasons. First of all, the French publishing sector had been historically speaking one of the most concentrated in the world.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, as Sirinelli notes, *le baby-boom*, reversed over a century of stagnant birth rates, and brought about a dramatic expansion of the children's market.<sup>5</sup> The editors at Hachette were at the centre of these changes. By the early 1960s, after another wave of mergers and acquisitions, the industry was dominated by two large publishing groups: Hachette and Presses de la Cité, Hachette

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<sup>1</sup> « L'édition était donc, jusqu'à ces dernières années, à la taille d'un homme ». S14C121B1, Hachette Jeunesse archives, preserved at the Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine [IMEC], fonds Hachette. All subsequent archive references refer to this fonds, unless specified otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> « En résumé, l'éditeur n'est plus le génie découvreur d'un texte imposant ce qu'il aime, mais l'inventeur d'une formule. Il devient un industriel s'efforçant de satisfaire un besoin, soit diffus soit exprimé. »

<sup>3</sup> Kimberly Reynolds and Nicholas Tucker, (eds) *Children's book publishing in Britain since 1945*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998; Michèle Piquard, *L'édition pour la jeunesse en France de 1945 à 1980*, ensib, Paris, 2004; Leonard S. Marcus, *Minders of make-believe: idealists, entrepreneurs, and the shaping of American children's literature*, Boston, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2008; Lucy Pearson, *The making of modern children's literature in Britain: publishing and criticism in the 1960s and 70s*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Frédéric Barbier, *Histoire du livre en occident*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2012, p. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-François Sirinelli, 'Le coup de jeune des sixties', Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli (eds), *La culture de masse en France de la belle époque à aujourd'hui*, Paris, Fayard, 2002, pp. 116-154, p. 120.

being the larger of the two.<sup>6</sup> According to *L’Imprimerie Nouvelle* the children’s book market had experienced an impressive expansion in a short period: sales had doubled in five years from fifty-five million francs in 1957 to 111 million francs in 1961 (while prices had only increased by thirty per cent). It now represented fifteen per cent of overall book sales.<sup>7</sup> Over eighty per cent of the children’s market in the post-war period was divided between three presses, Hachette, Flammarion-Deux Coqs d’Or and Nathan, with Hachette comfortably in the lead.<sup>8</sup> As Maurice Fleurent observed, the rapid growth of the children’s publishing sector had a dramatic impact on both the industry and the product. In the latter half of the 1950s, just a few years after adults had their Livre de Poche (the main French paperback imprint), children’s books were finally priced within their reach. The book was now in a position to compete with the comic as a mass consumption product for children.<sup>9</sup>

Hachette’s cheap and luridly coloured cardboard-covered books for children that flooded the French market in this period formed an important and yet overlooked component of what Sirinelli calls the ‘rejuvenation’ of French mass culture in the long sixties, when the young became an important new market.<sup>10</sup> The publisher’s hundred-year-old Bibliothèque Rose series [Pink Library] was associated in the public’s mind with the classic nineteenth-century author Madame de Ségur, one of the most famous children’s writers in France.<sup>11</sup> Beside the Rose series was its younger sibling, the Bibliothèque Verte [Green Library], launched in 1923 to exploit the newly acquired rights to the works of Jules Verne.<sup>12</sup> The two series became Hachette’s flagship imprint for the post-war period, specialising in fiction for young and adolescent children respectively, and with a completely renovated ‘modern’ content. As the longest-running series for children in France, the Bibliothèque

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<sup>6</sup> On publishing in post-war France, see Pascal Fouché (ed) *L’édition française depuis 1945*, Paris, Éditions du cercle de la librairie, 1998; Jean-Yves Mollier, *Édition, presse et pouvoir en France au XXe siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2008, esp. p.257 on Hachette’s predominance.

<sup>7</sup> ‘De nouveau en France dans le livre d’enfants’, 15 January 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Soriano, ‘Les thèmes de la littérature de jeunesse en France depuis la 2<sup>e</sup> guerre mondiale’, *BBF*, 1: 1965, pp. 1-10, <http://bbf.enssib.fr/> Consulted 22 March 2011; S14C156B3 Market study ‘Situation du marché “littérature” et “albums jeunesse” en 1967’, 18 December 1967.

<sup>9</sup> On earlier formats of mass children’s books, see Matthieu Letourneux, ‘Supports, réseaux, définitions – logiques sérielles et cohérences discursives dans les collections populaires pour la jeunesse de l’entre-deux guerres’, *Strenæ*, 6 (2013), <http://strenae.revues.org/1065> Consulted 16 May 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Sirinelli, ‘Le coup de jeune des sixties’, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Marcoin, *La comtesse de Ségur ou le bonheur immobile*, Arras, Artois Presses Université, 1999; Sophie Heywood, *Catholicism and Children’s literature in France: the comtesse de Ségur (1799-1874)* Studies in French History Series, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Bénédicte Gornouvel and Isabelle Nières-Chevrel (eds) *Les 150 ans de la Bibliothèque Rose*, Rennes, Bibliothèque de Rennes, 2006; Armelle Leroy, *La saga de la Bibliothèque Rose*, Paris, Hachette, 2006; Marc Bauland’s *La Bibliothèque Verte (1923-1959): l’esprit d’une collection de littérature pour la jeunesse*, Mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Sorbonne Paris IV, 1996 and his D.E.A., *Les collections de romans pour la jeunesse de la Librairie Hachette (1945-1980)*, Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 1997, are both highly informative.

Rose is unique in the history of the children's publishing sector. As Jean-Yves Mollier has noted, often the very first encounter most French readers have had with the notion of a 'series' of books is with these distinctive coloured volumes.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, this essay focuses on the Rose and the Verte in particular. They are central to the history of the publisher's series in France, but also these two series spearheaded the development of mass-market publishing for French children in the 1950s and '60s. This was their heyday in terms of sales, if not content.<sup>14</sup>

As Piquard writes, the changes of the post-war period led to a much greater emphasis on the publisher's series; it allowed publishers to reduce production costs whilst at the same time encouraging customer loyalty. This was crucial at a time when the children's sector was not taken seriously, and there was little in the way of literary reviewing systems. Like Fleurent, Piquard concludes this era of expansion stifled innovation and prevented editors from taking risks.<sup>15</sup> For these reasons, it is crucial to go behind the scenes to gain insights into how those working in the publishing sector viewed their roles. All too often in children's literary analysis the editorial process is simply an abstract concept, obscuring the many different hands and decision-making processes through which a book will pass before it makes it onto the shelves. Studies of the publishing industry have fruitfully applied Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach to analysing publishers' decisions. These decisions are seen as determined by the literary field, or, as John Thompson puts it, 'the rules of the game', which vary across different fields within the industry.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, while the 'rules' place constraints on publishers, an understanding of how the individuals involved operated within these frameworks is crucial. As Bourdieu writes, we must also analyse how individuals worked within these constraints, and ask what they saw as 'their room for manoeuvre, their "chances"'.<sup>17</sup> In particular, I am interested in reading their deliberations in light of Gisèle Sapiro's revisiting of Bourdieu's field theory. She shifts the emphasis onto the material conditions of

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Yves Mollier, Foreword, Rivalan-Guégó (ed), *Collection*, p. 7

<sup>14</sup> On the publisher's series see Isabelle Olivero's pathbreaking study *L'invention de la collection. De la diffusion de la littérature et des savoirs à la formation du citoyen au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Éditions IMEC/MSH, 1999, which has recently been followed by John Spiers (ed), *The Culture of the Publisher's Series*, Houndsmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 2 vols; and Christine Rivalan-Guégó (ed), *La collection, essor et affirmation d'un objet éditorial*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Michèle Piquard, 'Robert Delpire, un précurseur dans l'édition pour la jeunesse des années 1950-1970', *Strenæ*, 1 (2010), consulted 6 February 2012, <http://strenae.revues.org/75>.

<sup>16</sup> For the sociological field theory applied to publishing, see Pierre Bourdieu, 'A conservative revolution in publishing', *Translation Studies*, 1 (2008), pp. 123-153; John Thompson, *Merchants of culture: the publishing business in the twenty-first century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012. On Bourdieu's influence on book history, see David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *Introduction to Book History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Abingdon, Routledge, 2012, pp. 22-3.

<sup>17</sup> 'Conservative revolution in publishing', p. 137.

production, in order to explore how socio-economic constraints are mediated indirectly through the functioning of each particular cultural field.<sup>18</sup>

Following this line of reasoning, I interpret the publisher's series as a key instrument in the mediations between producers, the external socio-economic pressures that regulate and shape the market, and the consumers. Keeping their historical contingency in mind, I also take into account the factors influencing production that make the children's sector distinctive: the status of children's literature, the predominance of different moral authorities in the reviewing system (be they religious, pedagogical, political or medical), as well as the level of education of parents. By extension, because the sector is defined by its young readership, editorial strategies and norms are directly affected by shifts in discourses on children's reading and notions of age appropriateness, as well as by education reforms and other policies concerning children.<sup>19</sup>

To determine how these external factors shaped the rules of the game in the children's sector, and provided the framework for editorial staff at all levels to understand their work within the publication process, this essay uses the Hachette juvenile department archives. This is a vast and, to date, underused resource for understanding children's book production in the post-war period.<sup>20</sup> The modernisation programme of the Rose and the Verte generated a cumbersome new chain of production, traceable in the archives through the bureaucratic form-filling it generated. They provide a great wealth of material for the late 1950s and '60s, shedding light on the role played by the 'back-room' men and women in the history of children's literature: the editorial staff, from the series editors right down to the anonymous pieceworkers (translators, adaptors, illustrators, correctors and members of the reading committees) who worked on Hachette's intellectual production line. This archive material will be supplemented using interviews carried out with former employees, combined with analysis of publishing catalogues, publicity material, and bibliographical research using copyright declarations. The first section of the article will examine the modernisation process of this department systematically, from the transformation of strategy and the new men and machines this required, to the methods used in identifying and defining its readership. The criteria for determining a book's suitability for inclusion, and the new products and interventions to make the content fit the publisher's series that were developed will then be explored. The final section analyses the new norms the editors created, and how texts were transformed,

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<sup>18</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, 'Autonomy revisited: the question of mediations and its methodological implications', *Paragraph* 35 (2012) pp. 30-48, especially pp. 30-2.

<sup>19</sup> On notions of 'appropriateness' and debates around children's media consumption, see Helle Strandgaard-Jensen, *From Superman to social realism: why something is always wrong with children's media*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, forthcoming.

<sup>20</sup> The Hachette archive material relating to children's books has been used extensively for the 19<sup>th</sup> century and interwar period, however the material covering the '50s-'70s has been overlooked.

cut, and rewritten to fit the moral imperatives of the period. At all stages in the process the traces of editorial interventions will be used to analyse the mechanics of the construction of the series, and to examine how ideas were changing in this pivotal period in the history of children's publishing.

### **New men, new machines: the mass-market formula**

Following the penury and paper shortages of the immediate post-war years, the children's sector recovered quickly. Hachette's annual report of 1950 noted that sales of their children's book series were excellent, in particular for the Verte.<sup>21</sup> With demographic expansion, the increasing spending power of families, and the likelihood of reforms to extend obligatory schooling to sixteen and abolish entrance exams to secondary schools, all indicators pointed to this being a sector with excellent potential. The poles of the children's field were being shifted considerably by the growth of the mass youth market and globalisation. Many publishers across the West invested in their juvenile departments and in printing technology. Hachette's senior management board decided to follow suit. The problem was no longer surviving the war. Henceforth their aim was to keep up with and overtake the competition.<sup>22</sup> This section examines the men Hachette recruited to manage the modernisation programme: their backgrounds, their ideas, their ambitions and how they understood the possibilities of the field in which they were working.

Piquard points out that the great publishing houses of France were still family-run businesses in this period.<sup>23</sup> The new head of the children's department, appointed in 1954, was the young Didier Fouret (1927-1992). He was the grandson of Edmond Fouret, the former president of Hachette, and great-grandson of Emile Templier, the original editor of the Bibliothèque Rose. However, underneath the familial nature of the senior management boards, it is clear that the face of the children's department was changing. In the interwar period Madeleine Arrigon, a successful children's author in the mould of the comtesse de Ségur, had overseen the children's imprints. In the '50s it went from being a relatively small, feminised concern, to a larger-scale operation with two senior editorial staff and four associate editors, as well as a team of part-time pieceworkers. The new team that oversaw Hachette's post-war modernisation programme was young, male, distinctly transatlantic in its outlook, and committed to a modern, market-driven 'technocratic' approach to children's publishing.

The new director of the main children's series was Louis Mirman (1916-1999). With his deep love of English culture, and background in journalism and

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<sup>21</sup> S12 C08 B2, *Rapport du conseil d'administration* 27 juillet 1950.

<sup>22</sup> S12 C08 B2, *Rapport du conseil d'administration*, 11 juin 1957; Jeanne Archambault, 'Département des éditions pour la jeunesse', *Hachette Bulletin*, 3 (1969) p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Piquard, *Edition pour la jeunesse*, chapter 1.

teaching English, his outlook was typical of the new department. He joined Hachette in 1947 as a translator, before being appointed to his editorial role in 1953.<sup>24</sup> He was joined by two associate editors, André Deslandes and Pierre Bonvallet, who oversaw the French texts and translations respectively. Between 1955 and the late 1960s Mirman's editorial assistant was Xénia Schiray, a friend of his wife, who had worked in a managerial role at a steelworks, and as an occasional freelance English translator for both radio and Hachette. The second important unit within the children's department was the production and illustrations section, which was directed by Maurice Fleurent, whom we have already encountered. Fleurent also edited the picturebooks series, at this point relatively small compared to the children's fiction series. Fleurent (1918-2010) was of lower-class origins; according to Schiray he was 'the archetypal autodidact'.<sup>25</sup> He had a small staff whose function it was to oversee the increasingly complex production process, to co-ordinate the work of the illustrators with Mirman's team preparing the texts, and to ensure deadlines were met. This was a distinctly masculine team, which was a sign of the greater responsibility and status the increased print runs brought to the department. Although she had managerial status, Xénia Schiray recalled that it was unthinkable under the modernised department that as a woman she could ever have directed a series. However, the 'modern' face of the new department should not be overstated. As Schiray points out, the department's managerial staff were teachers and translators, not administrators, thus reflecting the continuing close relationship between children's reading books and the education sector. Crucially they had been English language teachers, not literature teachers, and many of the new members had come to work in the department through working as translators. It was Schiray, with her experience in industry, who helped to set up planning systems for coping with the demands of production. The renovated department was a hybrid of the old and the new, but with a clear indicator of the different direction editorial strategy would take.

The task these men were recruited to carry out was the long-planned rationalisation and standardisation of production. This modernisation programme was designed by the company director Ithier de Roquemaurel, an engineer. In his history of the press, the writer and director of the literary imprint at Hachette, Jean Mistler, explained the rationale: 'the development of series with large print runs, such as the Bibliothèque Rose and the Bibliothèque Verte, and the arrival of new book formats like the Livre de Poche completely transformed the scale of the production process. [...] For the costs to be acceptable, and ensure that supplies were regular, a much greater level of standardisation became necessary.' Hachette invested in expanding the capacity of their main printers Brodard and Taupin, making

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<sup>24</sup> Nic Diamant, *Dictionnaire des écrivains français pour la jeunesse 1914-1991*, Paris, L'école des loisirs, 1993, p. 470.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Xénia Schiray, former editorial assistant at Hachette, c.1955-1967, 1 May 2014.



them 'the best equipped book press in Europe'.<sup>26</sup> The acquisition of rotary presses was the first crucial ingredient of the children's series formula. The new machines required at least 30,000 copies per run in order to achieve their brightly coloured covers and illustrations at the right price. In the 1930s, the average print run for the big authors in the Rose and the Verte had been 44,000 copies. By the end of the 1950s it was 130,000 copies. By the middle of the next decade, the department was producing approximately one million volumes per month in the Bibliothèque Rose and the Verte, and out of twelve million produced per year, sales could reach between seven and nine million. This pattern was reflected across the sector, with the average print run in 1960 calculated to be 23,000, compared to 15,000 for the industry as a whole.<sup>27</sup> Hachette was clearly leading the field: as Piquard notes, only Hachette, with its famous *messageries* [newspaper distribution network] could manage this level of mass production thanks to its extensive distribution capacity.<sup>28</sup>

The second crucial ingredient in the formula was the ratio of colour illustrations to price. The new books were brightly coloured, filled with colour illustrations, and cheap. This was inspired in part by the success of Hachette's principal competitor in the children's fictions sector, the GP (Générale de Publicité) and their Rouge et Or imprint. A memo from Fouret to Mirman and Fleurent in 1955 noted that the Rouge et Or books were far more richly and colourfully illustrated than Hachette's, and asked them to look into this.<sup>29</sup> An earlier attempt to rival the Rouge et Or imprint had led to the launch of Hachette's Idéal Bibliothèque in 1950, designed to be an illustrated gift book series for the masses. This series enjoyed only moderate sales, which was blamed on its relatively high price. This time investment was focused on the Rose and the Verte.<sup>30</sup> The new format dressed the books in bright glossy cardboard covers, onto which their colourful illustrations could be printed directly, identical for both series, but with pink spines for the Rose and green for the Verte. Inside, the text was accompanied by new colour illustrations. One volume cost 250 francs, the price of a packet of cigarettes. Their spines were glued, instead of stitched, and volumes in both series were printed in 12x17cm format, either 92 or 256 pages long. Henceforth, the Rose was aimed at boys and girls aged six to eleven years, and the Verte was for boys and girls between ten and fourteen. To maximise the number of readers each series focused on age, rather than gender.

The decision to concentrate on both the Rose and the Verte was indicative of the new ways in which the editors understood consumer behaviour and

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<sup>26</sup> Jean Mistler, *La librairie Hachette de 1826 à nos jours* (Paris, Hachette, 1964), pp. 375-6.

<sup>27</sup> Piquard, 'Robert Delpire', paragraph 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, paragraph 7; see also Mollier, *Edition, presse et pouvoir*, pp. 190-200 on Hachette's *messageries*.

<sup>29</sup> S14C143B3, Memo, Service des éditions pour la jeunesse, 14 September 1955.

<sup>30</sup> Data for these two paragraphs is drawn principally from: Mistler, *Hachette*, chapter 10; Bauland, *Collections*; Archambault, 'Editions pour la jeunesse'.

sought to shape it. In the interwar period Hachette's new series had been designed principally as vehicles for increasing significantly the print runs of classic authors such as the comtesse de Ségur and Jules Verne. By the early 1950s the number of new titles in the Rose series had dwindled to between two and five per year.<sup>31</sup> However, the health of the Verte, a large series that could act as an umbrella for new titles, and could sustain large print runs and economies of scale, pointed the way forward. Speaking in 1956, Louis Mirman explained that in the absence of any real understanding of children's books or decent book reviewing system in the press, parents looked to the series for a brand they could trust. Books on their own did not sell. Series generated loyalty, and so a book that appeared within them had a ready-made readership and a much higher chance of selling. Editors at other publishing houses agreed: Alsatia admitted that even a mediocre book could sell within a popular series, while at Gauthier-Langureau the editor explained that once parents began to trust a series, success was guaranteed.<sup>32</sup> With their heritage status, the Rose and the Verte were excellent and reassuring brands.

Although the covers were cardboard, the paperback formula was the model for the new Rose and Verte series: cheap, accessible and democratic.<sup>33</sup> Fleurent was a passionate believer in the transformative power of mass culture. For him the book was a crucial tool in modern society, providing the technology for aspiration and intellectual development.<sup>34</sup> In later correspondence he spoke of how as an editor he had been frustrated by parents and book reviewers who were only interested in children's books at Christmas time, viewing them on a par with toys and roller-skates. For him, reading was crucial to children's development, and should be part of their everyday consumption.<sup>35</sup> Indicative of this desire to change readers' understanding of the book was Hachette's children's department catalogue. The 1960 edition was the last to appear under the title 'Catalogue des étrennes' [gift book catalogue], subsequent catalogues appeared as 'Hachette jeunesse'.<sup>36</sup> This was a sector-wide change: the new section dedicated to children's book publishers within the Syndicat National de l'Edition [National Publisher's Union] was set up in 1958, replacing its former designation as the 'prize and gift books' section. It was a clear signal of the ambitions of French publishers to expand children's book consumption beyond Christmas presents and school prize-giving ceremonies.<sup>37</sup> The marketing of Hachette's

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<sup>31</sup> According to an analysis of declarations made to the Dépôt Legal, 1944-1960, preserved at the Archives Nationales.

<sup>32</sup> Marc Soriano and Françoise Guérard, 'Le point de vue des éditeurs', interviews with major French publishers, *Enfance*, 9 (1956), pp. 10-51, especially pp. 12 and 34

<sup>33</sup> For example S14C40B4, Letter from Jean-François Cornier to Mrs Judith Howarth, Oxford University Press, 24 December 1974.

<sup>34</sup> See his notes on children's publishing in S14C121B1.

<sup>35</sup> S14B4C144, Letter from Fleurent to Jacques Monod, 23 December 1970.

<sup>36</sup> This, and subsequent references are to the catalogues for the Rose and Verte, 1945-present, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Q10 series.

<sup>37</sup> « Livres d'étrennes et de prix ». Piquard, *Edition pour la jeunesse*, p. 26.

two series changed accordingly. The 1952 catalogue for the Rose, had used the subtitle 'Yesterday's classics, beautiful books for today,' underscoring its heritage appeal. In 1960 the catalogue described the Rose and the Verte as prestigious series, but placed the accent on their 'modern', 'colourful' presentation that had been 'renewed using the latest printing techniques', and pointed to their contemporary titles.<sup>38</sup> The 1961 catalogue playfully made the point that these were books intended for mass consumption. Large colour photographs featured children playing with piles of books, leaning on them, even using them as a windbreak on beaches.

The success was instant, and took the department by surprise. Mirman surmised that the new formula seemed to have answered a real consumer need.<sup>39</sup> The annual report to the management board in 1958 noted with satisfaction that the new Bibliothèque Rose was now the cheapest series of its kind on the market, and was enjoying such impressive sales that the department was struggling to keep up with consumer demand.<sup>40</sup>

### **New readers, new content: the Blyton effect**

In order to reach out to a much wider, democratised readership, the editors looked for new content. The selection of books to include in the series catalogue lies at the heart of the editor's role. Fleurent's quote at the beginning of this essay shows how he felt that the shift towards the commercial end of the field had transformed his role from a romanticised 'genius' who 'discovers texts' to an 'industrialist' whose job was to anticipate demand. Similarly, Mirman spoke of feeling constrained by the expense of the technology and the drive to keep prices down. As he put it 'our large print runs have a drawback - they restrict us to safe choices, and make us prudent when choosing new authors.'<sup>41</sup> Certainly for Michèle Piquard, Hachette's mass distribution programme 'determined the product'.<sup>42</sup> However, as Bourdieu reminds us, individual agents still had room for manoeuvre, and they could still shape the space within which they worked.<sup>43</sup> This section will therefore look at which media products the editorial staff looked to for the 'safe choices' Mirman describes. It will ask how the staff working on the production line understood the criteria for selecting content, and how their choices within the range of possibilities available to them shaped the new Hachette books.

For the Atlanticist editorial team of the 1950s, the inspiration for 'safe choices' came from beyond the French sector. Across the channel, in 1949, when the

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<sup>38</sup> « Chefs d'œuvre d'autrefois, beaux livres d'aujourd'hui ».

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Mirman to Marc Soriano, 14 November 1958, S14 C82B1.

<sup>40</sup> *Rapport du conseil d'administration 27 juin 1958*, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> « Nos gros tirages ont un revers, ils nous limitent à des valeurs sûres et rendent prudentes nos expériences ». Soriano and Guérard, 'Le point de vue des éditeurs', pp. 39-40.

<sup>42</sup> 'Robert Delpire', paragraph 7.

<sup>43</sup> 'Conservative revolution in publishing', p. 137.

English publisher Purnell acquired one of the largest printing presses in Europe, he looked for a 'Disney-style' product to 'fuel' it. Thus Enid Blyton's *Noddy* was born, an English response to Disney's Pinocchio.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Blyton's books were the main driver of Hachette's expansion. Hachette acquired the French translation rights to Enid Blyton in 1954. The deals were handled by the French literary agent, Helena Strassova, acting on behalf of Blyton's English agent, Rosica Collins. The first print run of the *Famous Five* in France sold all 20,000 copies in a matter of weeks. In just over a decade Blyton sales in France would nearly equal those of Hachette's famous bestseller, the comtesse de Ségur.<sup>45</sup> As Jacqueline Jude, who worked for the department as a translator, put it: 'she was *the* writer, because of the big print runs. Everything Blyton wrote, sold.'<sup>46</sup> Fouret wrote in 1965 that her book sales had been the most striking phenomenon of the modern department.<sup>47</sup> This success and subsequent reliance on Blyton seems to have further eroded the weak sense of autonomy amongst staff. Schiray's response when asked about Blyton was telling: when Strassova's agency sent new Blyton books over to the department, 'we didn't even read them', she recalled, 'they were accepted automatically.'<sup>48</sup>

In this way, the definition of what constituted 'safe choices' at Hachette was being radically changed. No longer would the Rose commission new French writing, nor would the Verte rely on children's classics, which had been the immediate post-war policy of all the large publishers.<sup>49</sup> Instead the percentage of modern, imported titles was greatly increased, with the focus on popular Anglo-American series literature, notably works by Enid Blyton for the Rose and the *Nancy Drew* series from the Stratemeyer syndicate for the Verte. The proportion of foreign titles in the Bibliothèque Rose in the 1940s had been only ten per cent, and mostly classics. By the late 1950s the list was almost fifty per cent modern translations. This 'Anglo-Saxon' turn in Hachette's editorial policy was in marked contrast to the very Gallic composition of their main competitor, the Bibliothèque Rouge et Or, whose two flagship authors were a French husband and wife team, Paul Berna and Jany Saint-Marcoux.<sup>50</sup> According to Piquard's calculations, the Rouge et Or list in the 1960s was composed of approximately thirty to forty per cent translations, but these were generally longstanding children's classics, such as Mark Twain's oeuvre.

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<sup>44</sup> David Rudd, *Enid Blyton and the mystery of children's literature*, (Houndsmills, Macmillan, 2000) p. 64.

<sup>45</sup> Archambault, 'Editions pour la jeunesse', p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Jacqueline Jude, translator for Hachette's children's department, c. 1960s-90s, 1 October, 2013, Paris.

<sup>47</sup> S14C137B6 Report to the Conseil d'administration, 17 May 1965.

<sup>48</sup> Interview 1 May 2014.

<sup>49</sup> On the Rose in the 1920s and '30s, see Annie Renonciat, *Les livres d'enfance et de jeunesse en France dans les années vingt (1919-1931). Années charnières, années pionnières*, unpublished thesis, Université de Paris 7, 1997, p. 321; on the postwar reliance on classics, see Piquard, *Edition pour la jeunesse*, p. 248.

<sup>50</sup> On this series, see the special issue 'La Bibliothèque Rouge et Or', *Cahiers Robinson*, 21 (2007).

She notes this imprint was allowed to prioritise literary concerns.<sup>51</sup> Hachette's juvenile department adopted a completely different ethos, with the emphasis on modern, imported commercial fictions.

Mirman recruited pieceworkers whom he felt could enact this new policy. In contrast to his own background, Louis Mirman was very clear that he did not want teachers [agrégés] or intellectuals for the more menial editorial work (reading committee work, translation, correcting manuscripts). Teachers chose 'didactic books', he said, and only wanted to appeal to the most talented pupils in the class, whereas at Hachette 'essentially we target the masses; we're interested in the sweet but stupid kids'.<sup>52</sup> His tone here was deliberately provocative. Although most of the regular reading team were mothers, many male authors and translators also produced such reports. Hachette administrative staff regularly earned extra money this way using assumed names. Xénia Schiray clearly agreed with Mirman's sentiment. She supplemented her salary with this type of piecework, and she emphasised her suitability for the role by the fact she had two children of reading age. Schiray recalled how she had once debated with one of the other readers whether to recommend the memoirs of a ballet dancer. Her colleague had wanted to reject the manuscript, deriding it as 'better suited to *France Dimanche*' [a popular gossip magazine], 'but I knew that if the books were to sell, then we had to produce quality versions of *France Dimanche* [...] In other words, well-written, with a well thought out storyline, but a little trivial, so that... [pause] because my principal was that the reader must be able to identify with one or two of the heroes, otherwise he would not be interested.'<sup>53</sup> Schiray noted pointedly that this particular reader subsequently left to work for the more literary Gallimard. The terms of reference of their debate suggest that the readers clearly compared the new books with products from mass-market popular culture, echoing Mirman's notion that these books were for children who did not enjoy reading.

The reading reports show that the readers rejected any manuscript that was too 'literary', as unsuitable for 'large print run' commercial series. 'Literary' was defined as the opposite of stories where the accent was placed on adventure and fast-paced plots. The readers' reports referring to older books from the series reveal the extent to which they felt children's books had changed, and indeed, how they saw themselves as part of a changing environment. In the early 1950s, for the Rose, there was a general sense of a movement away from the nineteenth-century style of the comtesse de Ségur and her interwar emulators. As early as 1947, one reader's report, examining

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<sup>51</sup> Michèle Piquard, 'La Bibliothèque Rouge & Or, 1961 - 2006', *Cahiers Robinson*, 21 (2007), pp. 27-40, p. 29.

<sup>52</sup> Soriano and Guérard, 'Le point de vue des éditeurs', pp. 39-40.

<sup>53</sup> « Moi, je savais que pour les ventes il fallait faire du *France Dimanche* de qualité [...] c'est à dire bien écrit, histoire bien construite mais qui soit un peu triviale, pour que les... [pause] parce que mon principe à moi c'est qu'il faut que le lecteur s'identifie, à un ou deux des héros sinon il est pas intéressé. » Interview 1 May 2014.

a series of books from the Bibliothèque Rose that had been popular in the 1930s, suggested that children were no longer interested in them, they were 'too young' for the Rose now.<sup>54</sup> The same author's books were reviewed again in 1956, and the reader opened her report with relief: 'it is comforting to think that these books date from 1933 and 1938, and that children's literature has developed in a completely different direction in the past decade'. The reader explained that these interwar books described a society that had gone forever, and were written for children who 'had governesses instead of going to school, whose lives had no wider horizons than their back garden. Modern children live very different lives from these awful characters from the 1930s, whose insipid chatter prefigured their destinies as ladies of leisure'.<sup>55</sup> In later reports a clear distinction was drawn between children's books written before the Blyton and Nancy Drew era, and those produced afterwards. For example, a report from 1963 said of a manuscript that was rejected: 'to children that have become accustomed to the exciting adventures of the famous five, and the even more thrilling tales of Nancy Drew, this adventure will seem dull.'<sup>56</sup>

The immense popularity of the *Famous Five* and *Nancy Drew* series further shaped the editorial formula. From the early 1960s, Mirman and his team began to conceptualise the content in terms of sub-series, by author or character, within the large and growing lists of the Rose and the Verte. Series literature is distinguished by the repetitive nature of the stories, in which the same characters reappear, and never grow old. The plots follow similar lines, and while from one book to another there may be a small amount of progression, they do not need to be read in a particular order.<sup>57</sup> Mirman commissioned French authors to produce French series along the Blyton and Stratemeyer formulae, which were virtually all variants on the child detective story. The most popular of these home-grown series included: Georges Bayard's boy detective *Michel* (1958, Bibliothèque Verte), Paul-Jacques Bonzon's *Six Compagnons* (1961, Bibliothèque Verte) which featured working-class children, set against a backdrop of the rapid urbanisation of the 1950s and '60s, and Georges Chaulet's female superhero, *Fantômette* (1961, Bibliothèque Rose). An internal memo from 1966 entitled 'series: past, present, future'<sup>58</sup> set out the trends in these sub-series after their respective launches. In 1961, the Rose and the Verte contained seventeen sub-series, with 74 titles

<sup>54</sup> S14C22B4, report 25 February 1947.

<sup>55</sup> « Il est réconfortant de penser que ces deux ouvrages datent de 1933 et 1938, et que la littérature pour jeunes a, depuis dix ans, suivi d'autres sentiers. [...] Nos lecteurs actuels n'ont pas de gouvernante, vont à l'école communale, cessent de bêtafier aux alentours de leur entrée au jardin d'enfants, et utilisent leurs loisirs à des fins plus intéressantes que ces bavardages insipides qui font tristement présager un âge adulte salonnard. » S14C22B4.

<sup>56</sup> « Aux enfants habitués maintenant aux aventures palpitantes du club des cinq, à celles, plus trépidantes encore, d'Alice, cette aventure paraîtra fade. » S14C22B4.

<sup>57</sup> On series literature, see Anne Besson, *D'Asimov à Tolkien, cycles et séries dans la littérature de genre*, Paris, CNRS Éditions « Littérature », 2004; Special issue 'Livres en séries', *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 256 (2010).

<sup>58</sup> S14 C121 B01 D01. This folder is not in place: see transcription in Bauland, *Collections*, pp. 129-31.

between them. This number had tripled by 1966, with 204 titles. The most popular, according to the memo, were the ones with the most titles, which, at this point included Blyton's *Famous Five* and Chaulet's *Fantômette* for the Rose, and Bonzon's *Six compagnons* and *Nancy Drew* for the Verte. In the context of the huge surge in sales this policy had generated, the memo decided that the intention was not to dispense with stand-alone works entirely, but that lone titles would henceforth be reserved for older 'prestige' books, or for trying out new authors. By the end of the 1960s, the Hachette children's catalogue was making this new structure of the Rose and the Verte a feature of their marketing. The 1968 catalogue gave its readers 'a word of advice: there are lots of series in the Rose (*The Famous Five*, *The Secret Seven*, *Fantômette*, etc). Look out for them to find your favourite heroes.'

This is not to say that long-standing classics were considered unsuitable for the mass market. The texts that had formed the core of the lists, notably the works of home-grown favourites such as the comtesse de Ségur, Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, and also well-respected English-language authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London, remained on the lists of the Rose and the Verte. Still, as many critics pointed out, while the titles and authors were recognisable, the content within was often drastically changed. Classic titles were systematically subjected to extensive 'modernisation' processes, to make them fit the editors' perceptions of what this new, wider market wanted, and the requirements of the publisher's series. Here again the process was conceptualised with reference to popular culture, summed up in typical laconic style by Maurice Fleurent, in a memo to Louis Mirman regarding a 1939 edition of an old favourite: 'if we are going to produce a *Roman de Renard* [*Reynard the fox*] for one of the series, then it will be your job to spruce up the text and mine to make its illustrations a little more rock and roll [yé-yé].'<sup>59</sup> Mirman's response was 'absolutely'.

Marc Soriano, the leading children's literature critic and author, acted as consultant on the updating of Verne's oeuvre for the Verte, and through his writings we gain an insight into the principals that guided the adaptation process. The rationale, he explained, was that Verne's books now had to compete with cinema, radio, comics, detective novels, and, after 1945, the slow spread of television. These new forms of culture had conditioned young readers to expect easy emotions and suspense; books had to be immediately gratifying and easy to consume.<sup>60</sup> The emphasis was therefore on pace and length. Considerations of cost meant long complex texts had to be drastically shortened. In Verne's case, this meant that the old-fashioned three-volume sets of the interwar period were reduced to slim one and two volume editions, abridged by hundreds of pages. Dialogues were removed, repetitions

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<sup>59</sup> S14 146B2, Memo 30 Dec 1963: « si nous devons faire un *Roman de Renard* dans quelque collection que ce soit vous serez amené, vous, à le retaper et moi à faire des illustrations un peu plus yé-yé. » LM - tout à fait d'accord.

<sup>60</sup> 'Adapter Jules Verne', *L'Arc*, 29, 1966, pp. 86-91, p. 87.

dispensed with, and, where it was possible, the lengthy dissertations on biology, botany, geography and other useful areas of knowledge were cut.<sup>61</sup> The adaptors altered the tone of Verne's texts to fit their new function as fast-paced adventure stories. In the original text of *L'Île mystérieuse* [*The mysterious island*], for example, Cyrus Smith, the engineer who was the group's leader, engaged in long discussions with his fellow islanders, in which he expressed doubts, hesitation and fear. Once these were cut, the 1960 Smith appeared decisive and in complete control of all situations; he was closer to the supermen of comic books, rather than the anxious, democratically-minded intellectual of Verne's oeuvre.

As for the 'rock and roll' illustrations, once more the influence of the Livre de Poche and the techniques of modern mass culture were evident. The Poche used bright, bold single image covers to attract the consumer. The Rose and the Verte had been using a similar technique from the interwar period, but they now placed greater emphasis on using more modern illustrations and cover images to appeal to the young. Contemporary-looking settings and fashionable clothes appeared. The English author P.L. Travers objected to Jean Reschofsky's images for the new Bibliothèque Rose edition of *Mary Poppins* in 1964. Her French agent called them vulgar, and criticised the cover, which she said made Mary Poppins look too 'pocharde' [like a drunkard]. Her choice of wording also alluded to the populist approach of the Poche, considered by many critics to be tacky and overly commercial.<sup>62</sup> This rendering of the famous nanny was at odds, the agent complained, with the text's very clear description of Poppins as 'perfectly respectable'. Furthermore, she added, the depiction of Mrs Banks as a trendy young woman in a mini-skirt was far removed from the delicate and charming lady of the book.<sup>63</sup> In his response, Pierre Bonvallet set out the department's policy clearly. He explained that because Miss Travers' *Mary Poppins* books were works of fantasy, they had felt it would work perfectly well to dress the characters in contemporary clothes. If they had depicted them in the fashions of 1933, then the book would have looked out-dated, which would have surely lessened its appeal to young French readers 'who are very sensitive to such details'.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For a full exploration of how Verne's books were modernized, see Sophie Heywood, 'Adapting Jules Verne for the baby-boom generation: Hachette and the Bibliothèque Verte, c.1956-1966', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 21: 2013, pp. 55-71.

<sup>62</sup> S14 138 B6, letter from David Higham Associates, via Mme Bradley, 24 January 1964. For a critique of the Poche covers, Hubert Damisch, 'La culture de poche', *Mercure de France*, November 1964, pp. 482-98.

<sup>63</sup> « Qu'est ce que cette fringante jeune femme contemporaine, aux hanches trop larges, à la jupe trop courte, peut avoir de commun avec la précieuse, fragile et charmante Mme Banks de l'histoire ? »

<sup>64</sup> S14 138 B6 Pierre Bonvallet's response to Mme Bradley, 3 February 1964: « Nous pensons cependant que Miss Travers voudrait bien que, son livre étant une œuvre d'imagination, de fantaisie poétique, il n'est pas préjudiciable que dans notre édition, les personnages de Mme Banks et des enfants soient habillés à la mode de 1963. Au contraire, si nous leur avons mis des vêtements 1933, nous aurions donné au livre un caractère *démodé* (comme le dit Miss



The names of the Rose and Verte remained to reassure the public (although they distinguished initially between the Rose in its original format and the Nouvelle Bibliothèque Rose), but the content was completely transformed. It is clear that the editors saw the two series as now fitting into popular culture more generally. In the drive to make books a mass consumer item, the new readers needed objects they could consume in familiar ways. To carry out this work, Mirman appointed women (often secretaries from the department, as well as authors and translators) whom he hoped as mothers, rather than teachers, would be pragmatic when it came to selecting material. Although the references to be found within the readers' reports suggest that many of them were educated, and both Schiray and Jude were well-lettered, it is clear that they were aware of the ethos of the series. For Schiray, readers who disagreed with the popular culture influence were working for the wrong press.

### **New interventions, new norms: the 'responsibilities' of the children's publisher**

Finally, in the context of a weak reviewing system, based principally on the moral suitability of books for children, it was imperative that the publisher's series fostered trust. As highlighted in the introduction, notions of the appropriateness of material for children are historically contingent on, and usually determined by, a combination of internal and external pressures on the publishing house, be they commercial, political, cultural or legal. Children's literature in France in the 1950s and '60s was subject to a particularly stringent set of norms. This section examines the publisher's series as the way in which the publisher could mediate between the pressures of state and regulatory bodies, and a concerned public. It analyses the new complex set of editorial interventions this process generated. While the post-war editor was no longer a genius who shaped tastes, as Fleurent saw it, they might well be called upon to be much more active in the name of child protection. How were these 'responsibilities' of the book interpreted by staff, and to what extent did they enforce these new norms?

In the aftermath of World War Two the young and their education were seen to be central to the moral reconstruction of the country.<sup>65</sup> These years also witnessed heightened tensions surrounding the social and humanitarian responsibilities of literature.<sup>66</sup> As part of this impulse, and with the onset of the Cold War, furious debates ensued around the influence of violent American comics on the nation's youth, fuelled by anxieties around

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Travers elle-même) qui aurait sûrement nui à son succès auprès du jeune public français, très sensible à ces détails. »

<sup>65</sup> Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the new wave: youth and rejuvenation after the Second World War*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains 1940-1953*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.

Americanisation, and the impact of mass production on French modes of consumption of culture. These concerns led to the expansion of associations and publications dedicated to protecting children and promoting 'good' reading matter for children.<sup>67</sup> They also led to the 1949 law regulating publications for children, which banned the depiction of crime, debauchery and violence that might demoralise young readers.<sup>68</sup> The fear that depictions of crime in comics conditioned children to see it as acceptable was common to morality campaigns across the globe.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike the American Comics Code, or the laws enacted in Canada and the UK, the wording of the French law covered far more than comics; it extended to all publications for children. Article three of the 1949 law stipulated that publications in France aimed at children would be regulated by a surveillance commission, to whom publishers had to submit five copies of all material after publication. The aim was to create a culture of self-censorship. It also meant that Catholic and Communist morality leagues played a crucial role in the regulation of the industry, as their representatives proved to be the most active members of this commission. Certainly the guidance issued to publishers by the commission was very clear that 'even if their material is purely recreational, they [publishers] play a part in the education of their young readers. They share educational responsibilities with the family, the school, the teaching profession, the cinema and the press.'<sup>70</sup> Thus, as Michèle Piquard writes, although the law was never used against book publishers, it furnished them with the legal framework and guidelines on their role to which the majority of presses strove to conform.<sup>71</sup>

Louis Mirman was very much a man of his time. The children's editor, in his view, had to be 'much more active than is permissible in literature for adults. And this is for a very simple reason: children's literature must conform to very strict imperatives, moral imperatives first: certain forms of violence must be banned, all types of sectarianism are to be avoided, and certain sentimental situations circumvented...'<sup>72</sup> The author Georges Chaulet recounted how

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<sup>67</sup> On the religious and communist leagues, Thierry Crépin, « Haro sur le gangster ! » *La moralisation de la presse enfantine (1934-1954)*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2001, pp. 195-210.

<sup>68</sup> Thierry Crépin and Thierry Groensteen, (eds) *On tue à chaque page! La loi de 1949 sur les publications destinées à la jeunesse*, Paris, éditions du temps, 1999; Michèle Piquard, 'La loi du 16 juillet 1949 et la production de livres et albums pour la jeunesse', *La licorne*, 65 (2003) pp. 219-35.

<sup>69</sup> John A. Lent, 'The comics debate internationally', in Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (eds), *Comics studies reader*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2009, pp. 69-76.

<sup>70</sup> « Même s'ils ne se proposent qu'un but récréatif, ils [publishers] interviennent dans l'éducation de leurs jeunes lecteurs. Ils partagent les responsabilités éducatives avec la famille, l'école, la profession, le cinéma et la presse d'information. » *Compte rendu des travaux de la commission de surveillance et de contrôle des publications destinées à l'enfance et à l'adolescence au cours de l'année 1950*, Melun Imprimerie Administrative, 1952.

<sup>71</sup> 'La loi du 16 juillet 1949', p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> « Il est sans doute beaucoup plus « actif » même qu'il ne peut l'être en littérature générale. Et ceci pour une raison très simple : la littérature enfantine doit se plier à des impératifs très stricts, des impératifs moraux d'abord : il faut proscrire certaines formes de violence, éviter

when he signed with Hachette 'Monsieur Mirman told me: there are conditions. You must modify your text: there are to be no murders, no blood, and the villains must speak in a refined language without cursing.'<sup>73</sup> In the 1950s, extensive new procedures were introduced to ensure the strict morality of the Hachette product. Each book was passed through many different hands before publication, as Mirman explained to the journal *Enfance* in 1956: 'once we have accepted a book, we put it through a series of checks in order to let nothing through that might be dangerous from the point of view of morality, and our university-trained correctors look out for vulgarities, sections that are unclear, overlong sentences, archaic terms, technical vocabulary, etc. A team of quite exceptional correctors scrutinises the texts, analyses them for their overall coherence, and so forth. There is even a weekly meeting, under the direction of the most experienced members, which examines grammatical questions, recurring mistakes, etc.'<sup>74</sup> He also introduced a new report sheet for every manuscript that functioned 'like an alarm system'. The 'censor' had to grade the manuscript according to the criteria of style, language and morals, using a traffic light system to indicate whether it was green for satisfactory, amber for small problems, or red for serious problems. These were then listed on the back of the report.<sup>75</sup> In the context of widespread fears about 'bad' reading, in both the moral and educational sense, such measures were designed to ensure nothing that could offend or be construed as counter to the educational remit of the publisher escaped the attentions of the department's censors. This was well received. In 1957 the main Catholic book review, *Livres et lectures*, wrote of Hachette's 'solid' new censorship policy in their review of the Verte, quoting Mirman's interview with *Enfance*.<sup>76</sup>

How far did the pieceworkers on the editorial production line share Mirman's views? How were these new norms for the series enacted and understood by those whose task it was to act as censor? The former employees I interviewed explained that they had had no need for explicit 'criteria' because they knew each other well and would spend a long time discussing together with the editors their ideas on books for children. Both Jacqueline Jude and Xénia

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tout sectarisme quel qu'il soit, écarter certains problèmes sentimentaux... » Archambault, 'Département des éditions pour la jeunesse', p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> 'M. Mirman m'a dit: il y a des conditions. Il faut modifier votre texte: je ne veux pas d'assassinat, pas de sang, les méchants doivent s'exprimer de manière châtiée sans dire de gros mots.' Georges Chaulet, *Les secrets de Fantômette*, Paris, Hachette, 2011, p. 52.

<sup>74</sup> « Nos livres, quand ils sont acceptés, passent encore par plusieurs contrôles successifs qui ont pour but essentiel de ne rien laisser passer qui soit nocif du point de vue moral ; et aussi des correcteurs (universitaires) guettent les vulgarités, obscurités, phrases trop longues, archaïsmes, technicités, etc. Une équipe de correcteurs assez exceptionnelle décortique les textes, les examine sur le plan de la cohérence, etc. Il y a même une réunion hebdomadaire sous la direction du plus expérimenté qui examine les problèmes de style et de grammaire, les fautes qui reviennent le plus souvent etc. » Soriano and Guérard, 'Le point de vue des éditeurs', p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> 'Pour maintenir la qualité des livres d'enfants', *Bulletin du livre*, 15 November 1962, pp. 19-20.

<sup>76</sup> *Livres et Lectures*, 116 (1957), p. 567.

Schiray described the working atmosphere in the department as convivial, almost like a family, where ideas were discussed in a friendly way. Jude listed the aspects 'they all knew' to look out for when reading manuscripts: 'no coarse words, nothing religious... yes, well nothing ostensibly that might... [pause] [...] anything that might shock.' She noted it was very common to cut passages and rewrite them.<sup>77</sup> Were they aware of the legislation regulating the trade? In one memo to Mirman, the team of correctors warned him of 'potential recriminations' if he published a novel that contained 'indecent passages'.<sup>78</sup> Schiray stated that she had never heard of the 1949 law, but she had been very concerned by the Catholic leagues. She recalled one incident where she had got so carried away cutting the 'indecent passages' from a book, possibly George Sand's *La Petite Fadette*, that not much had been left. The correctors asked her to repair the damage. Crucially, she emphasised that it had been the thought of what the Catholic leagues might say, not the suitability of the material for children that had led her to such extremes.<sup>79</sup> While Schiray may not have been aware of the legislation, she was certainly worried about the reactions of its enforcers. This supports Jean-Yves Mollier's recent argument that the 1949 law represented in part a triumph for Catholic campaigners, who had long sought regulation of the book trade.<sup>80</sup> The largest publisher for children at the time certainly took the concerns of the Catholic leagues seriously.

This production line of moral and educational surveillance involved a great deal of rewriting, reordering and reworking. As Jude explained, when you cut a sentence, you then had to replace it with another. She rather enjoyed this part of the process, because it allowed her to be creative. With Blyton's texts, Jude had been able to add dialogue and 'embellish' as she pleased. Although the department bought the rights to Blyton without too much thought, her books subsequently required a significant number of interventions. First, all clues to the origins of the books had to be scrupulously removed. Cornwall was easily transposed to Brittany. The names were Gallicised. Jude recalled taking out scenes of Noddy drinking tea as well as changing the food. Scrumptious bacon and eggs for breakfast were replaced with bowls of hot coffee and delicious croissants, while the endless sticky buns and cakes became tartes aux pommes. Such was the temptation for the translators to become seduced by Blyton's jolly English-ness, that the Department produced a list of 'Anglicisms' for the team to avoid: 'kidnapper' had to be replaced

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<sup>77</sup> « Pas de gros mots, pas de religion... oui, enfin de choses ostensibles qui pourraient prêter à... [pause] ça, on le savait. Rien qui pourrait choquer. » Interview 1 October 2013.

<sup>78</sup> 5 April 1956, S14 C47 B2.

<sup>79</sup> « J'avais tellement expurgé que les correcteurs l'ont ramené... je crois que c'était *La Petite Fadette*... où j'avais enlevé toutes les scènes scabreuses qu'il n'en restait plus rien. Alors j'ai accepté, j'étais même pas vexée, j'ai trouvé que j'avais eu la main lourde. Cela dit, j'avais quand même signalé les passages qui m'avaient parus... non pas choquer les enfants, mais éventuellement choquer les ligues catholiques. » Interview 1 May 2014.

<sup>80</sup> *La mise au pas des écrivains. L'impossible mission de l'abbé Bethléem au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2014.

with 'enlever'; the children must not exclaim 'oh!'; they must speak of 'bandits' instead of 'gangsters'; and 'gendarmerie', instead of 'police'.<sup>81</sup> More serious from an education perspective was Blyton's storytelling style, with her love of repetitious and simple prose to drive the dynamic plot. The French translators and correctors transposed her language into a much more formal register, making her sentence structures longer and more complex. To take just one example, in the original *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) a typical Blyton discussion of food, in this case George's heroic renunciation of sweets, in English read: 'this sounded awful to the other children, who loved ice-creams, chocolates and sweets, and had a good many of them'. In *Le club des cinq et le trésor de l'île* (1962) this became the more elegant: 'un tel héroïsme plongeait dans l'admiration les autres enfants qui adoraient les glaces, le chocolat et les bonbons. Tous trois étaient fort gourmands et auraient difficilement accepté de se priver.'<sup>82</sup> Although the new mass-market selection process placed an emphasis on pace and adventure, the educational imperatives of the 1949 law era nevertheless took precedence. In France, Blyton's formula for appealing to the masses had to conform to the educational responsibilities of the sector.

Thanks to the pressures of the 1949 law committee, Blyton's representations of minority ethnic characters also had to be substantially reviewed. In 1954 the 1949 law was revised to include a new ban on material that might foster 'ethnic prejudices', and subsequently Hachette correctors and editors became vigilant on this point. The French editions of *Noddy* removed all references to Blyton's notorious golliwogs. For *The mountain of adventure* (1949) (*Le mystère de l'hélicoptère*, 1963) the translator explained she had specified that the black character, Sam, was an American who did not speak French very well. This meant she avoided having to translate his pidgin English, whilst retaining the fact his speech was difficult for the children to understand, which was central to the plot.<sup>83</sup> Another reader objected to the 'very British' condescension of the white characters towards the indigenous people in *The river of adventure* (1955) (*Le mystère de la rivière noire*, 1964).<sup>84</sup> Enid Blyton's reputation for racism has been much debated by critics over the years, but it is indicative of the impact of the 1949 Law that the French were far quicker to pick up on the issue than their English counterparts.<sup>85</sup> Re-editions of other titles published prior to 1954 also illustrate this change. The deliberations over the depiction of the native islanders in Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi in the South Seas* are instructive. In the 1953 edition for the Bibliothèque Rose, *La princesse de Couricoura*, the potentially offensive nature of the docile natives had not been a problem – in fact the book suggested it was set in Belgian Congo, and the

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<sup>81</sup> S14C27B4.

<sup>82</sup> Hodder & Stoughton, p. 32; Bibliothèque Rose, p. 42.

<sup>83</sup> S14 C30B4.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> See David Rudd, *Enid Blyton and the mystery of children's literature*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, for a summary of the arguments in the UK, and a revisionist analysis of her oeuvre.

cover depicted several little black children bowing down to Princess Fifi. The deliberations over the period 1960-2 concerning a possible new edition show that the editorial team was now alert to the offence it might cause, and indeed, the responsibility to protect children 'who do not have full critical faculties' from racism - 'this is 1961!'.<sup>86</sup> Another reader noted wryly that 'this must have taken place before Lumumba', referring to the leader of the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>87</sup> All the readers recommended removing direct references to Belgian Congo.

Such backroom procedures and discussions are usually hidden from public view. As Marc Bauland notes, the adaptation process is an aspect of their work on which editors prefer to remain silent.<sup>88</sup> The opposite was true for Louis Mirman and the juvenile department in the 1950s and '60s. They were keen to ensure that the book-buying public was aware of its team's commitment to the careful surveillance of content. The editors gave interviews to the book trade press, and to publications whose core readership were the intermediaries who advised parents and children about which books to buy. They explained the extreme prudence they adopted and the protocols they had put in place. Marc Soriano, who worked with Hachette on the Verne project, also published several articles on the adaptation process in literary and educational reviews.<sup>89</sup> The department provided extensive details on their procedures, including their report sheets that had to be applied to every manuscript for publication. Sharing these internal safeguarding procedures was a way of guaranteeing to the consumer that Hachette's series were safe for children, and pointed to the longstanding reputation of the publisher as a family-run and conservative educational book business. It also distracted attention from the dramatic shift that had taken place in Hachette's editorial policy, and from the fact that the Rose and the Verte now bore little resemblance to their original incarnations.

## Conclusion

The case of Hachette and the modernisation of the Rose and the Verte shows how the large publisher's series and series literature were central to the development of children's books as products for mass consumption in post-war France. This expansion touched all aspects: as Maurice Fleurent observed, the paperback revolution led to a complete transformation of the book: 'it is not only just the technical aspect that has changed, but everything at the same time: the packaging, the content, and the target audience.'<sup>90</sup> Henceforth

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<sup>86</sup> S14 C36 B6

<sup>87</sup> « Ceci devait se passer avant Lumumba ».

<sup>88</sup> Bauland, *Bibliothèque Verte*, p. 58.

<sup>89</sup> 'Article in *Bulletin du livre*, November 1962; Survey in *Enfance*, 1956; Marc Soriano, 'Adapter sans trahir', *Le Français dans le monde*, 1963, 20, pp. 47-8; Marc Soriano, 'Adapter Jules Verne', *L'Arc*, 1966, 29, pp. 86-91.

<sup>90</sup> S14C121B1 « Ce n'est pas seulement un détail technique qui change mais tout à la fois : le contenant, le contenu, le destinataire ».

editorial decisions were governed not by literary concerns, but by three key factors: the economic imperative to drive the price down, the need to stimulate consumer loyalty and consumption, and the great moral pressures that were placed upon publishers for children.

When examined from the perspective of the backroom, using the publisher's archive to trace editorial decisions at every level, it is striking the extent to which the senior editors Mirman and Fleurent and their team of editorial workers were apostles of change, keen to provide children with readily-affordable, appropriate and accessible books. Equally palpable is the sense of frustration at the constraints the new technology, producing for a mass audience and the moral pressures of the 1949 Law era placed on their choices. The editorial team felt their autonomy when choosing texts and shaping tastes had been greatly eroded, but at the same time, they felt they had a much more pronounced role to play in the production process. Their approach to texts, to working with authors and to treating older classics reveals the extent to which they felt that *everything* had to change. No text, no image, no package could remain the same. Everything had to conform to the stringent new commercial, moral, and educational imperatives of the post-war era.