

# *Power to children's imaginations: May '68 and counter culture for children in France*

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

Open Access

Heywood, S. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6641-2065>  
(2018) Power to children's imaginations: May '68 and counter culture for children in France. *Strenae* (13). 1838. ISSN 2109-9081 doi: 10.4000/strenae.1838 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/76882/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4000/strenae.1838>

Publisher: Association Francaise de Recherche sur les Livres et les Objets Culturels de l'Enfance

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

[www.reading.ac.uk/centaur](http://www.reading.ac.uk/centaur)

**CentAUR**

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online



**Strenæ**

Recherches sur les livres et objets culturels de l'enfance

**13 | 2018**

**Le '68 des enfants / The Children's '68**

---

## Power to children's imaginations. May '68 and counter culture for children in France

Sophie Heywood

---



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/strenae/1838>

DOI: 10.4000/strenae.1838

ISSN: 2109-9081

### Publisher

Association Française de Recherche sur les Livres et les Objets Culturels de l'Enfance (AFRELOCE)

### Electronic reference

Sophie Heywood, « Power to children's imaginations. May '68 and counter culture for children in France », *Strenæ* [Online], 13 | 2018, Online since 15 May 2018, connection on 22 May 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/strenae/1838> ; DOI : 10.4000/strenae.1838

---

This text was automatically generated on 22 May 2018.



Strenæ est mis à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

---

# Power to children's imaginations. May '68 and counter culture for children in France

Sophie Heywood

---

- 1 "Why am I talking to you about May '68?", asked the children's publisher Arthur Hubschmid at a conference in 2005, "well, it changed things for us radically, that's why".<sup>1</sup> The years around May '68 are widely understood to have marked an important moment for children's literature, particularly picturebooks, in France. The late 1960s to the late 1970s are typically portrayed as a period of renewal, even revolution, in the ways people conceptualised children's picturebooks, which led to great experimentation and ebullition in the genre.<sup>2</sup> Some even speak of the "May '68 of children's books".<sup>3</sup>
- 2 To date, scholars have tended to emphasise the pictorial element of this revolution, documenting its roots in the avant-garde of the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Illustrators and designers absorbed a myriad of influences from the graphic designs of Push Pin Studios and Polish poster art, to psychedelia, pop art, and surrealism, and thrust open the doors of perception in young people's publishing. This marked the advent of a new direction in children's editorial policy. Artistic and literary concerns came to the fore, where previously educational, pedagogic, moral, or commercial considerations had usually taken precedence. The works produced by this new generation of publishers were often controversial. Claude-Anne Parmegiani refers to a 'paper war' that rocked the "little world" of children's books.<sup>5</sup> As Christiane Abbadie-Clerc notes, the debates generated by this movement attracted attention beyond this (perhaps not so little) world and ensured that "children's books finally became an object worthy of interest".<sup>6</sup> Isabelle Nières-Chevreil pinpoints this as the moment when children's picturebooks were briefly part of the counter culture, and showed they had the power to disturb, thus proving their literary and artistic merit.<sup>7</sup>
- 3 This essay argues that the visual transformation, and change in status of picturebooks, were also the product of a wider, political debate around children's books, and that we should take seriously the role of '68 in this narrative. Thus far, 68 has been a neat

shorthand for scholars to paint these years as so exciting that even children's publishers could be hippie rebels. This period, I will argue, can also tell us a lot more about the history of the child in the cultural rebellions of the sixties, and how children and their culture became caught up in postwar social and cultural ideals and their counter cultural response. At the same time, understood as a form of cultural politics, the '68 of children's picturebooks provides a telling and distinct example of the different effects of '68.

- 4 To show how children's books might have something to teach us about the impact of '68 beyond the barricades, this essay understands '68 to mean the global protest movements and countercultural turbulence that stretched before and after the pivotal year of 1968. Historians have begun to employ terms such as the 68 years', or the "long '68", in order to place greater emphasis on '68 as a significant stage within the profound social, cultural changes taking place in the so-called "long sixties" (stretching from the second half of the 1950s well into the 1970s). Crucially, this shift has led historians to move beyond what Sherman et al suggest "was beginning to seem like the canonical treatment of the events focused on familiar figures in the Paris-Berkeley axis", to include events, groups, and ideas, or locations and actors that had not previously been included.<sup>8</sup> As Julian Jackson writes: "we need to explode 'May '68' spatially, sociologically, chronologically and thematically."<sup>9</sup> This move to decentre '68 in the historiography opens the possibility to include cultures of childhood, usually considered marginal in political history.
- 5 Investigating this idea necessitates making a link between two fields of study that have not hitherto engaged in sustained dialogue: French children's literature studies and the history of '68. This essay therefore analyses two linked but distinctive discourses of '68: the construction of "their" '68 by the actors involved in children's books at this time, and how they might fit into the subsequent historiography of '68. The structure of my analysis will be determined by several important flashpoints around children's picturebooks, in order to explore how and why this new generation of children's publishers saw their work as revolutionary. I will argue that the debates and campaigns that arose around children's picturebooks are an excellent example of how '68ers sought to find new ways to organise society and undermine the foundations of the postwar order through cultural rebellion – in this case the ideals of childhood that had formed one of the foundations of reconstructed, modern France.

## Children's publishing in postwar France

- 6 My argument in this essay is undergirded by the notion that the French children's '68 is a good example of Mathew Thomson's argument for the British case - namely that the '68 rebellions and counter culture were a product of the particular concerns created by the postwar settlement.<sup>10</sup> In postwar France, the juvenile publishing sector had been subject to particularly strict surveillance from the state and both religious and secular moral pressures. In order to understand the French children's '68, we must first gain a sense of these strictures.
- 7 The culture of self-censorship that characterised much of the French children's book trade in the 1950s and '60s was in many ways the product of the experience of two world wars. The twentieth century was the period when the ideal of a long, sheltered childhood was becoming possible for an increasing number of children in many western countries.<sup>11</sup> The development of mass schooling and the outlawing of child labour meant that children's daily lives were increasingly demarcated from the adult sphere. Paradoxically,

in this “century of the child” millions of children were caught up in the horrors of two world wars. As Mathew Thomson writes, these experiences served to further strengthen the focus on childhood as a protected space, as “anxieties about human nature and cruelty were played out on the figure of the child.”<sup>12</sup> The theoretical backbone for this discourse was provided by the rise of child psychology, including the popularisation of Freud’s theories that our early years play a key role in our psychic development, and that childhood traumas can scar us for life.

- 8 In France, a growing cadre of specialists (librarians, teachers, leaders of organised youth movements, and child psychologists) developed not so much a critique, but a pathology of children’s culture. When evaluating children’s culture, the question of whether it might traumatised a vulnerable young reader became a central concern, just as important, if not more so, than moral, religious and pedagogical criteria.<sup>13</sup> As the pioneering French child psychologist and education reformer Henri Wallon wrote in his preface to an extensive report on children’s books in 1956: “advances in microbial biology have led to the reduction of child mortality, it is now time for psychologists to improve children’s moral environment”.<sup>14</sup> Such concerns were to have an important influence on the regulation of the children’s publishing trade. France had the dubious honour of leading the field when it came to the surveillance of children’s publications in the postwar era.<sup>15</sup> On 16 July 1949 the Fourth Republic passed a law on publications destined for the young, which prohibited such material from depicting “in a favourable light criminal activities [...] or all acts that might be termed as crimes or offences of a nature that might demoralise young readers.”<sup>16</sup> The problem this law aimed to solve was that of the ‘invasion’ of cheap, lurid American comics since the 1930s. Fear of the nefarious influence of comics gripped many western countries from the late 1940s and into the mid-1950s. France was the first country to pass legislation in response to the comics debate. Other nations would follow suit over the course of the next six years, but none would go as far as the French law.<sup>17</sup> The French legislation covered *all* publications for the young, and set up a commission tasked with monitoring the industry. Even though no book publishers were ever taken to court, the law and its commission nevertheless gave morality leagues far greater weight and influence over the field than they had enjoyed previously.
- 9 This climate of conservatism had become a serious source of frustration amongst newcomers to the publishing scene in the 1960s. It also ensured that French children’s books gained a reputation abroad for conformism and lack of creativity. Writing in 1966, the American publisher and journalist Herbert Lottman characterised the French children’s book sector as lacklustre and over-reliant on the classics, in part due to children’s reading matter being subject to “incredibly severe” censorship.<sup>18</sup> By the mid to late 1960s, the postwar cocooning of the child was fostering mounting concern about loss of freedom, and this in turn spawned a radical vision of children’s liberation.

## Challenging postwar iconophobia

- 10 The first major flashpoint in children’s publishing was around the idea that picturebooks for children should aim, above all, to stimulate their imagination. While this hardly sounds like a controversial argument, the “68ers” emphasis on freedom ensured that it struck at the heart of one of the great tenets of twentieth century children’s picturebooks: that their images must be adapted to children’s psychological and educational needs. Inspired by progressive education, in the interwar years the highly

successful (and much beloved, still today) Père Castor series produced by Paul Faucher for Flammarion forged an important avant-garde movement in French picturebooks, inspired by Soviet innovations.<sup>19</sup> The French movement under Faucher developed a theory of how to adapt children's picturebooks to their needs.<sup>20</sup> Postwar, this chimed well with the wider pathologisation of children's books discussed above, and, when combined with the fears of the comics debate, created what Cécile Boulaire calls an "iconophobia" amongst critics and other adult mediators.<sup>21</sup>

- 11 Thus it was that L'École des loisirs [*Playtime school*], one of the first of the new generation of avant-garde publishers, identified a book entirely composed of images as their most important and radical publication. This press was founded in 1965 as the children's department for the education publisher L'École by two Frenchmen, Jean Fabre and Jean Delas, and the Swiss Arthur Hubschmid. They were influenced by innovators abroad – indeed the entire impetus to set up the department had come from a trip to the Frankfurt book fair. There Fabre and Hubschmid discovered a world of children's books and publishers with ideas unlike anything they had ever seen before.<sup>22</sup> One of these publishers was the Italian Rosellina Archinto, head of the new press Emme Edizione, whom they met in 1967.<sup>23</sup> She introduced them to the experimental books being produced in Italy at the time, by Bruno Munari, or Enzo Mari for example. This encounter led to L'École des loisirs publishing Iela Mari's *Il palloncino rosso* as *Les aventures d'une petite bulle rouge* [*The adventures of a red balloon*].



ILL. 1: Front cover, Iela Mari, *Les aventures d'une petite bulle rouge* [*The adventures of a red balloon*], L'École des loisirs, 1968.

Jean Delas recalls how they produced this book: "in May '68 to be precise. It was a revolutionary book: without words, it was a graphic poem about a bright red bubble, a colour resonant of the time. This picturebook became emblematic of our publishing house!"<sup>24</sup> Whilst the French national library catalogue suggests it may actually have been published in late 1967, and the 1949 law deposition was made in October 1968 (and surely

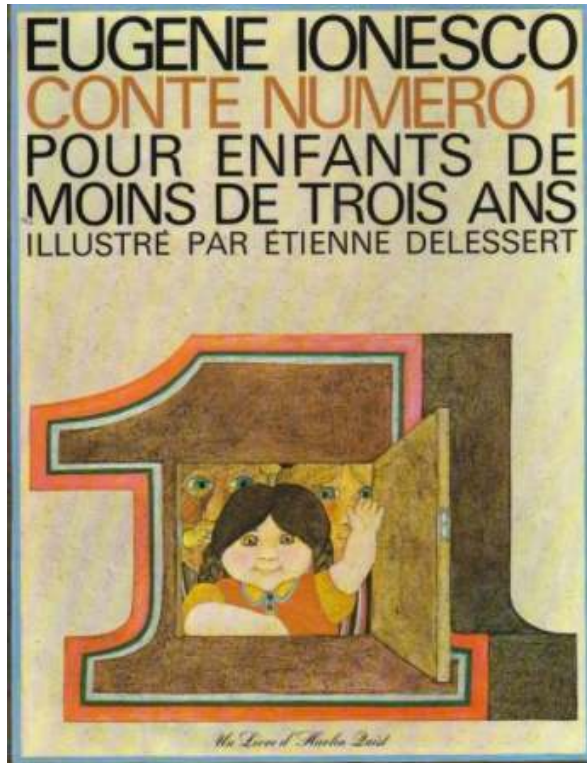
the general strikes would have prevented any publication in May '68?), the key point here is that for L'École des loisirs, this book was a part of the events of May '68.

- 12 What was it that the French found so revolutionary about Mari's book? Admittedly, the book's cover, with its bright red circle on a vivid green background, is more reminiscent of a third world independence movement flag than a children's picturebook. As the reader flicks through the pages, the red circle morphs into different shapes (a chewing gum bubble, a balloon, an apple, a butterfly, a blossom) across the pages. Mari's spare line drawings provide a minimum of information, and, as Delas underscores, there are no words to explain what is happening. The book encourages the child to interpret the pictures using their imagination. But how could books without words help to introduce children to the world of literature? Surely, in a modern world dominated by images, the risk was that children would be tempted to simply be content with pictures? This was the concern raised by Marc Soriano, an eminent children's literature critic, at a conference on children and images in 1972.<sup>25</sup> Jean Fabre had just presented the work of L'École des loisirs, in which he had warned adults not to be too domineering, but instead let children discover picturebooks for themselves, so they could foster communication between children and adults. The critic disagreed: "I tend to believe that adults can and should adopt much more of a guiding role".<sup>26</sup> Soriano's reaction reveals much about the divisions within the postwar French children's book world when it came to images. His great fear was that television, comics, cinema, and the primacy of images in modern consumer culture posed a threat to literacy rates.<sup>27</sup> The tendency hitherto had been to adopt a mediated approach, such as that Paul Faucher had developed for the Père Castor series, in which picturebooks for the very young were prefaced by lengthy explanations for parents and mediators on how to use the books as an educational tool.<sup>28</sup> The appearance of Mari's book, along with several other word-less picturebooks – such as Mitsumasa Anno's *Jeux de Construction*, also from L'École des loisirs, 1970, and Guillermo Mordillo's *Le Galion*, published by François Ruy-Vidal for Editions Harlin Quist in 1970 – challenged this fundamental cultural hierarchy.
- 13 Faucher had set out his principles on the process of adapting pictures to the needs of the child in 1958. For him, "the image must satisfy, in the way it is constructed, a certain number of criteria. Just like the text, it must contribute to the moral and affective security of the child; it must not frighten or trouble the child. Images should bring the child joy, through their gaiety and the harmony of their colours. They should avoid exaggeration and distortion, should not be too schematic and dull, and must communicate a clear and sensitive vision of reality."<sup>29</sup> For Isabelle Jan, a former employee of Faucher, who subsequently launched a children's book series in 1968 with Nathan, this emphasis on security was stifling. This interwar avant-garde had paradoxically created a deeply conservative strategy.<sup>30</sup> After the Second World War, this well-meaning discourse became overlaid with a fear that excessive stimulation of the child's imagination was not just anti-pedagogical, but potentially traumatising for a child who had lived through the horrors of war. The report from the first meeting of the Committee tasked with enforcing the 1949 law for example stated that: "stories must remain within certain limits, and must retain a relationship with reality, before eventually reintegrating it by the end. This restraint is necessary in order to avoid projecting the childish imagination in an entirely fictitious universe."<sup>31</sup>
- 14 The main leaders of the cultural rebellion in children's books thus targeted much venom at this culture of protectionism. The newcomer François Ruy-Vidal referred derisively to



the idea that children's culture had to be adapted to their needs as "masticatory explanations". He railed against "this condescending, reassuring, concession to their age and mental level, to this category of the child [...] It is in the name of this racism, this protectionism by adult-judges of books for children and educational psychologists, that most books for children are produced and the best ones are rejected."<sup>32</sup> Instead, he wanted to encourage children's imaginations to run wild: "we always ask whether the child should be given what he already can cope with, rather than whether he should be incited to surpass himself."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, there is no such thing as "what a child needs", he argued, there are only children, individuals, with their own subjectivities, who will respond differently.<sup>34</sup> Ruy-Vidal's provocative new press was the most vocal, and most radical of the first wave of children's '68ers. Founded in 1967, Editions Harlin Quist was a French company of which Ruy-Vidal owned the majority share, and which worked in co-production with his American partner Harlin Quist's New York-based press, A Harlin Quist Book.<sup>35</sup> Theirs was to be a short-lived, passionate and explosive Trans-Atlantic publishing venture.<sup>36</sup> Many colourful adjectives have been used to describe Editions Harlin Quist: kamikazes, revolutionaries, musketeers, and Maoists, to cite but a few. What set the new venture apart from many of its predecessors and peers was Ruy-Vidal's promotion of a new European, and particularly French school of artists for children, and their theoretical, and, as we have seen, often aggressively phrased stance on children's books. The artist Etienne Delessert recalls the passion in the New York office: "we visited one another constantly, persuaded that we were going to break down all barriers and transform the world of children's books. No more cosy bedtime stories! [...] We were going to make books that took readers on journeys into parallel imaginary universes, and would act as mirrors for our age."<sup>37</sup>

- 15 In this spirit, the new press sought to bring contemporary avant-garde literature, art and design into children's literature. One of Ruy-Vidal's first editorial projects was the publication over 1968 and 1969 of a series of short stories for children by the absurdist playwright, Eugène Ionesco.<sup>38</sup>



**ILL. 2:** Front cover, Eugène Ionesco, *Conte numéro 1*, artwork by Etienne Delessert. (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1969 French edition).

In the second volume, for example, the father chats languorously with his daughter Josette and so unfolds an absurd and funny game, that plays with language and meaning, as he mixes up all the names of the household objects. “I open the wall, and I walk with my ears”, Josette intones. She then exhorts her father to “take the window father and draw me some images.” The accompanying artworks by Etienne Delessert took this playfulness of the text and expanded it, exploring the surreal ideas suggested by the text, but also bringing in his own. In the first story we encounter a rhinoceros at the park, in homage to the author’s most famous play, and a large Cheshire cat, referencing Lewis Carroll and the English nonsensical tradition.



**ILL. 3:** Etienne Delessert, illustration for Eugène Ionesco, *Conte numéro 1* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1969 French edition).



**ILL. 4:** Etienne Delessert, illustration for Eugène Ionesco, *Conte numéro 1* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1969 French edition).

Recruiting the luminaries of the French literary avant-garde was an effective strategy to bring high art into French children's books, for Ionesco was an author that critics would

struggle to ignore (which is what had happened when the art publisher Robert Delpire had introduced Maurice Sendak's *Where the wild things are* onto the French market in 1968<sup>39</sup>). It was also a way of demonstrating that the French were perfectly capable of innovating in children's literature. Where L'École des loisirs initially focused on importing exciting books, for François Ruy-Vidal, an integral part of his project was to foster specifically French production.<sup>40</sup>

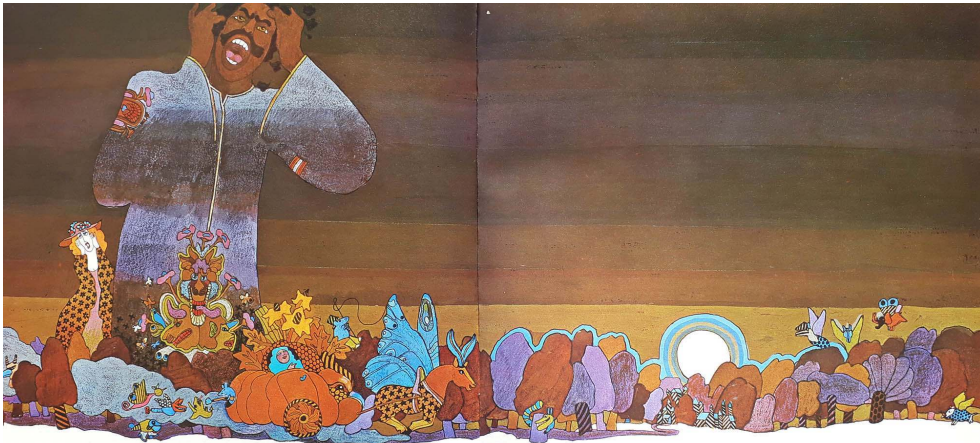
- 16 In this book, just as with Mari's *Balloon*, toddlers were trusted to understand – or at least be able to enjoy in some way – contemporary art.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, these *Stories* were the books that moved the pioneering Swiss child psychologist, Jean Piaget to reassess his assumptions about children and experimental picturebooks. Piaget explained how in 1971, at the behest of the artist Etienne Delessert, who was working on a book with Piaget for L'École des loisirs, he and a team of fellow child psychologists examined Ionesco's and Delessert's *Stories* with a group of children, and: "we were agreeably surprised to note that the children often managed to distinguish clearly between the different animals, people and objects represented, and took pleasure in this [...] They are not disturbed by the intervention of the imagination or the fantastical, just as long as the surrealist elements are clearly drawn."<sup>42</sup> Piaget's reticence is an excellent illustration of just how uneasily the notion of artistic freedom and material produced for children sat together. As Ruy-Vidal noted, the question in critics' and mediators' minds was often: "can freedom of expression be a good thing when the reader is a child?"<sup>43</sup>
- 17 Quist and Ruy-Vidal argued that children were individuals and as such should have access to all sorts of different materials, and that this meant they should not concern themselves with generalist psychological theories on what could potentially upset one particularly vulnerable child.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, this included books that stimulated all sorts of responses. As Quist would write later, in 1978: "my point is to wake the child up, to start him thinking, to stimulate him, to provoke him, and sometimes to *torment* [original italics] him."<sup>45</sup> Their emphasis on giving children books that might be disturbing, or shocking in some way, constructed children as potentially resilient, even needing to be a little shaken up by their books. To see child readers in this way was a radical concept in France at this time. By starting from the premise of the individual, and potentially resilient child, Editions Harlin Quist waged a campaign against censorship. The two examples of books that have thus far been discussed were both relatively commercially successful – eventually at least –, garnered praise as well as condemnations, and are still very much in print.<sup>46</sup> This was not always the case. The children's counter culture was often on the margins of the conventional, and thus the saleable (when booksellers agreed to stock them).
- 18 Nicole Claveloux was an artist who embraced the freedom of working with Quist Books. To Claveloux, children's picturebooks were a medium for artistic exploration and experimentation, and her imagination was generally unfettered by notions such as readability, taboo subjects, or commercial viability. She joined the Harlin Quist stable in Paris in 1967, after Ruy-Vidal had spotted her work in the magazine *Marie France*.<sup>47</sup> Her mastery of the surreal psychedelic style (amongst many within Claveloux's impressive range) would create some of the most memorable and controversial '68 era Quist books. Claveloux writes that some of her artistic influences at this time were the graphic design of Push Pin Studios and Heinz Edelmann.<sup>48</sup> This was most apparent in the exuberant images she created for *Alala : les télémorphoses* (1970).





**ILL. 5:** Front cover, Guy Monreal, *Alala : les télémorphoses*, artwork by Nicole Claveloux (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1970).

Intensely detailed and erotically-charged motifs create textures that pullulate across the pages, offset by the lush blacks, browns, pinks and greys of the backgrounds, or contrast starkly with the great white expanses of other spreads.

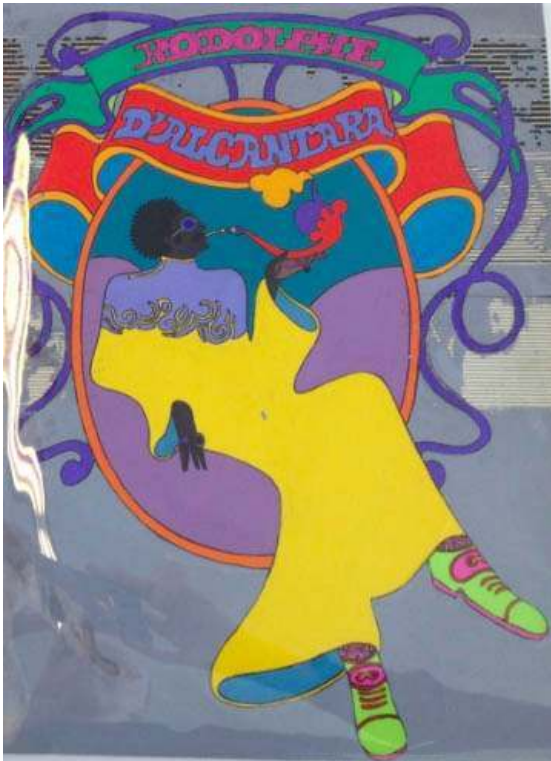


**ILL. 6:** Nicole Claveloux, illustration for Guy Monreal, *Alala : les télémorphoses* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1970).



**ILL. 7:** Nicole Claveloux, illustration for Guy Monreal, *Alala: les télétransformations* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1970).

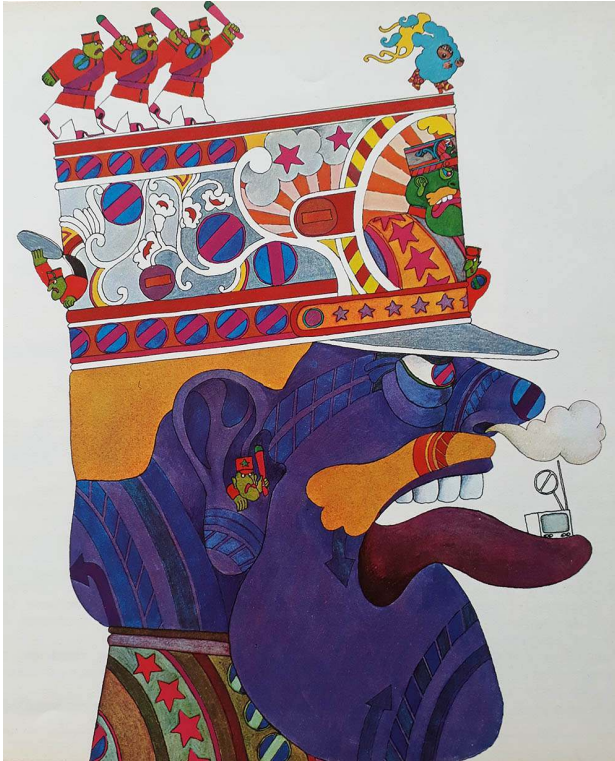
Although Claveloux writes that she was inspired by “images, not ideologies - of which I am deeply suspicious”,<sup>49</sup> the book abounds in political and counter- and pop-cultural references. Taboo subjects such as inter-racial marriage and drugs culture are thrown into the whirl with gay abandon. The protagonist’s father for example closely resembles Jimi Hendrix, and the preparatory drawings show earlier incarnations of the character looked more like a black panther or a jazz musician.<sup>50</sup> In one image (that was not used) he is clearly smoking a pipe in the shape of a bomb.



**ILL. 8:** Nicole Claveloux, preparatory image for Guy Monreal, *Alala : les télétransformations* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1970), unpublished (Heure Joyeuse archive, Ruy-Vidal papers).

Evidently there were some limits to the liberties she felt she could take. (A subsequent Quist catalogue played up this subversive element of the book, featuring an image of the

father shouting, and proclaiming that “third world children will love this book!”<sup>51</sup>) Similarly, Claveloux interpreted the text’s reference to the heroine being wanted “by all the police in the world” with a giant police chief who pays homage to Seymour Chwast’s anti-Vietnam war poster “End bad breath” (1968) and is also reminiscent of the caricatures of the General de Gaulle in May ’68 posters.



ILL. 9: Nicole Claveloux, illustration for Guy Monreal, *Alala : les télémorphoses* (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, 1970).

Even more so than Delessert did for Ionesco’s *Stories*, Claveloux used the text as a launchpad for her inspiration. Quite often the artworks bear very little relation the story being told. The book itself – designed by Claveloux’s then studio partner Bernard Bonhomme – bears all the hallmarks of the Quist approach to book design. The cover and flyleaves are a dense, shiny black (a colour considered along with brown and purple to be “far too depressing for children”<sup>52</sup>), and are made all the more striking by the large size of the book. The book remains unusual, and has, as Claveloux herself says, dated rather badly “because it conformed too much to the fashions of the time”.<sup>53</sup> If we are looking for a book that reverberates with countercultural ideas, this is an excellent case. More to the point, it illustrates the provocative stance of the publisher, but also the evident fun they had producing these books. Later, Claveloux said she did not enjoy working for adult audience publishers: they were too concerned to produce books that would sell to worry about changing the world. Children’s books suited her much better: “children’s publishers have ideas about how to revolutionise what currently exists.”<sup>54</sup>

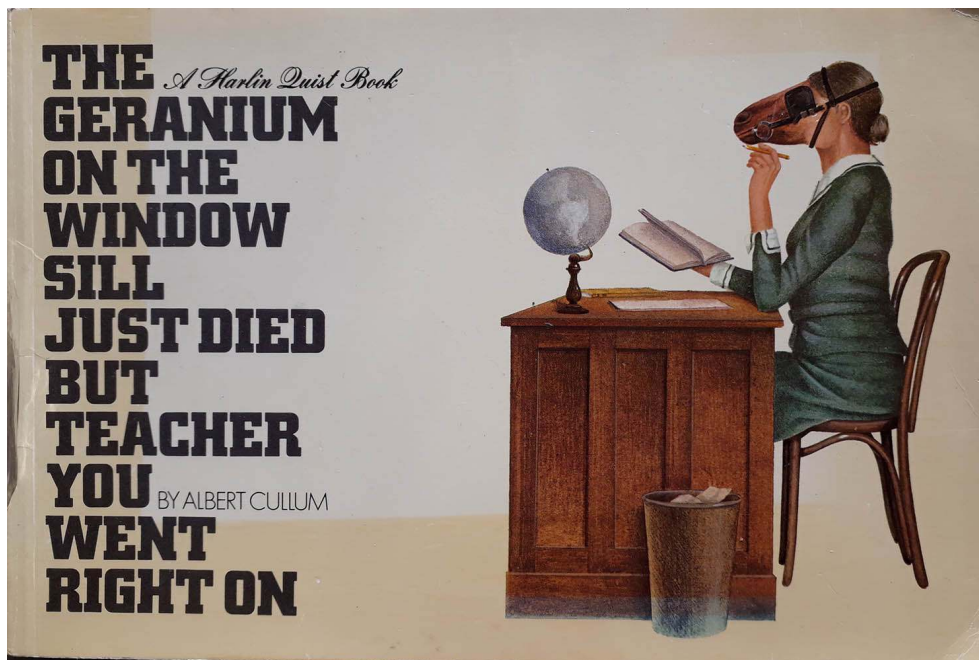
## Liberating children

- <sup>19</sup> The fight for imagination instead of protection in the children’s ‘68 was also cast as an anti-authoritarian struggle. In this way, Editions Harlin Quist connected with the children’s rights activism of the ‘68 years. As Michael Grossberg writes, the concept of



children's rights as it developed in the twentieth century can be characterised by two main approaches: the care-taking and the liberationist. In the post-war period, the emphasis had been on children's right to protection from the state. The other end of the scale was the liberationist approach, which emphasised children's right to freedom and autonomy. He notes that in the 1960s, and reaching a peak in the '68 years with the rise in youth activism, the liberationist approach came to the fore, albeit briefly.<sup>55</sup> Quist and Ruy-Vidal's approach to children's books was very much a part of this liberationist mode. Their paratextual material and writing on children's books adopted this language of liberation and rights. For Ruy-Vidal, the censorship and condescending attitude of "adult-judges" towards children was akin to racism.<sup>56</sup> Children's rights activists at the same time were making similar arguments: the notorious Danish publication, *The little red schoolbook* (1969), advised pupils to ignore adults who denied children the right to decide for themselves because they were not mature enough: "People have said the same thing about Africans, Eskimos, Red Indians, [sic] Chinese, etc. You know yourself what this argument is worth".<sup>57</sup>

- 20 Many of their books would seek to speak to children who felt rejected, or left outside the system. Portraying adult authority as arbitrary and unjust was a favourite trope in Harlin Quist books, and they often exhorted both adults and children to think critically about adult authority and its impact on children. Witness for example the impassioned plea for teachers to wake up to the problems caused by their authority over children, *The Geranium on the window sill just died but teacher you went right on* by the respected New York teacher Albert Cullum.<sup>58</sup> Dedicated "to all of those grownups who, as children, died in the arms of compulsory education", this slim volume pairs children's reflections on the education system and their teachers with artists' rememberings and imaginings of school, rendered in a kaleidoscope of different styles, from the psychedelic to the faux naive. The front cover by Philippe Weisbecker was particularly aggressive in its portrayal of adult authority. It depicted a female teacher, her face morphed into a horse's, wearing blinkers and a bridle.



ILL. 10: Front cover, Albert Cullum, *The geranium on the window sill just died but teacher you went right on*, artwork by Philippe Weisbecker (Harlin Quist/ Ruy-Vidal, American edition, 1971).



Provocative as it was, the book had an important point to make. The publishers' note explained:

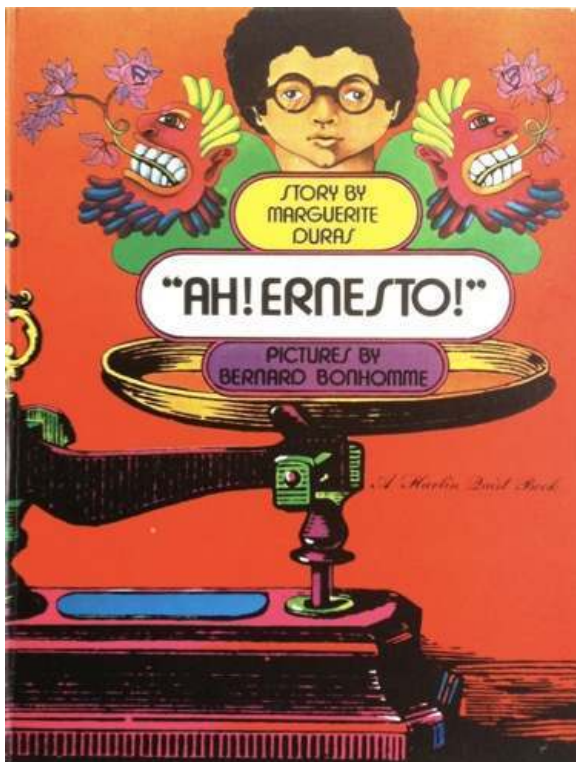
Remember how you felt, small and awkward and powerless, in a world of teachers and parents and principals. It reminds you that children still feel that way. Give the book to the children. It will evoke delighted recognition – and even, reassurance: “I’m not the only one who thinks that way!”<sup>59</sup>

- 21 Many more Quist books celebrated children’s efforts to rebel against their powerlessness. In several cases, François Ruy-Vidal sought to align such rebellion explicitly with the 1968 years protests. He and Claude Lapointe produced a 1972 update of *Pierre l'ébouriffé* [*Shock-headed Peter*] which portrayed the eponymous boy as a long-haired hippy in a tree, shouting “No!” as the bulldozers draw near.<sup>60</sup> The book was linked in both Ruy-Vidal’s and Lapointe’s minds to the current political situation. In a draft preface for the book, Ruy-Vidal mused:

He no longer believes in flower power, but he is beginning to speak of a venal civilisation where everything is for sale... The adolescent’s soul has not yet become trapped in the system. He can still see the wheel turning. He has not yet been fully civilised; and he is scared of becoming so. He needs to gain self-knowledge and to test his limits. He is Shockheaded Peter.<sup>61</sup>

The book’s illustrator Claude Lapointe, concerned at the punishments meted out to the children in the stories, used the illustrations to suggest that it was really the parents who were at fault. Little vignettes at the bottom of the pages depict the negligent parents enjoying their dinners while their offspring suffer awful fates.<sup>62</sup>

- 22 Their most famous example of a child shouting “No!” at the system, and the most explicitly '68 of the Editions Harlin Quist books, was Marguerite Duras’ *Ah ! Ernesto*.<sup>63</sup>



ILL. 11: Front cover, Marguerite Duras, *Ah ! Ernesto*, artwork by Bernard Bonhomme, (Harlin Quist/Ruy-Vidal, 1971).

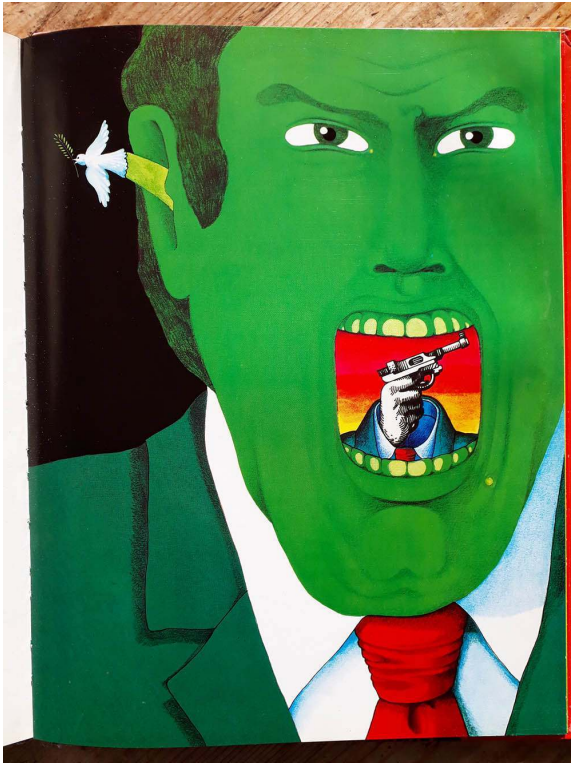
The project was, according to Ruy-Vidal, “born in May 1968, out of conversations I had with her. [...] They [young people] needed to reinvent the norms, morals, the rules of

life.”<sup>64</sup> He had wanted to work with Duras because of her French literary capital, but also her political convictions. He felt she would be just the sort of author who could revolutionise children’s books. She responded positively. As Anne Cousseau writes, the project appealed because “68 had reignited Duras’ revolutionary passion, and she was involved both in the events, and in writing engaged literature.”<sup>65</sup> Duras and Ruy-Vidal discussed together how their teenaged sons and the nation’s youth had lost hope in the education system and doubted the future of the so-called “advanced” liberal bourgeois society. The new generation, they agreed, understood that schools perpetuated inequality, and supported a system that was rotten to the core.<sup>66</sup> This idea became the heart of the book. It follows young Ernesto (named by Duras in homage to Ernesto “Che” Guevara) as he refuses to go to school “because at school they teach me things I don’t know”. Duras’ elliptical text, set out in stark bullet points, developed a dialogue between parents, teacher and child of mutual incomprehension of growing absurdity, culminating with Ernesto’s last stand: “NO! That’s what I know! I know how to say NO! - and that’s enough!”. Bernard Bonhomme’s accompanying artworks were inspired by the text, rather than illustrating it. His lurid palette, dominated by bright reds and hot, fluorescent pinks, served to further amplify the violence of Ernesto’s rebellion.



ILL. 12: Bernard Bonhomme, illustration for Marguerite Duras, *Ah ! Ernesto*, (Harlin Quist/Ruy-Vidal, 1971).

Once again, the Push Pin influence is clear. Bonhomme (an erstwhile collaborator with Claveloux) also referenced Chwast’s “End bad breath”, this time in an image that filled an entire page with a green-faced man in a suit, opening his mouth to reveal a pistol.



ILL. 13: Bernard Bonhomme, illustration for Marguerite Duras, *Ah ! Ernesto*, (Harlin Quist/Ruy-Vidal, 1971).

The book closed with a photomontage by the respected Polish poster artist Roman Cieslewicz, depicting a child's face below an ominous mushroom cloud. As she was writing it in 1968, Duras told Ruy-Vidal that she was so 'mobilised' by the Vietnam war that everything else seemed unimportant. She delivered the definitive version to him in January 1969, presenting him a story that was "explosive, as you wanted" [author's emphasis] all the while maintaining "a laconicism that should shock" [*frapper*].<sup>67</sup>

- 23 The book was not published until 1972. The delay, Ruy-Vidal explained in a letter from February in that year, was because they had struggled to find an illustrator.<sup>68</sup> By this time, Editions Harlin Quist was suffering serious financial problems. The Frenchman's revolutionary ardour appeared somewhat dimmed: "I'm trembling at the thought of putting this book on the market [...] I'm also trembling at the thought of your judgement."<sup>69</sup> When it was published, Duras realised that some sentences had been changed. Ruy-Vidal explained he had tested the book in various schools, and the answer had been the same – it went over children's heads. He had added to some of the dialogue in order for it to be less intellectual. It seemed that as Editions Harlin Quist was heading for closure, the radicalism of the project was becoming clear. The question of challenging people's understanding of what constituted children's books had been central to their entire venture, but here Ruy-Vidal's confidence seemed to falter. The book was a commercial failure. Many booksellers refused to stock it. Thanks to its bright red cover and flyleaves, and the reputations of its author and publisher, it was accused of being the children's version of Mao's *Little red book*; "a product of leftist extremism".<sup>70</sup>
- 24 Then, in Christmas 1972, the most dramatic flashpoint in the children's '68 came when the child psychoanalyst Françoise Dolto attacked François Ruy-Vidal as director of Editions Harlin Quist in an interview entitled "Danger, children's literature!" published in

the magazine *Express*.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, while she clearly had made the association between the counter culture and this publisher, her article did not focus on the overtly political messages of the books. For Dolto, it was once more the concern that artistic freedom in children's books was not just wrong-headed but could block the psychic development of the child, and ultimately, threaten the moral fabric of society. Analysing the terrible harm such material "allegedly for children" could do, she argued that the creative imagination of these artists reflected their sick psyches. She worried they were exploring the sexual phantasies of children, singling out the depiction of relationships between children and their schoolmistresses in *Geranium* as concerning. The surreal images that Claveloux had created for Richard Hughes' *Gertrude et la sirène* [*Gertrude and the mermaid*] (1971) posed particular problems for Dolto. She warned that not only did they celebrate homosexuality, but the illustrations also represented primal childhood fears of becoming disembodied. Mixing animal and mineral, and distorting reality into dreamscapes was also worrying. It is important that men look like men, and trees like trees, wrote the doctor. The article concluded by accusing Editions Harlin Quist of trying to poison the minds of the children of the social elite, of a "genocide" carried out at the imaginary level of the social class that the revolutionaries were trying to destroy. This piece was a very different matter to the lively debates that had hitherto been taking place in specialist reviews, conferences, and other forums dedicated to the analysis of children's literature. Here a leading child psychoanalyst had pronounced a damning verdict – that this material was dangerous, and wilfully so. The fact that it was published in a respected large circulation magazine, just before Christmas, delivered the death blow to a venture that was already in financial and personal crisis.

- 25 But was this the end? Far from it. The expansion of education meant that by the 1970s, many more mothers had been university educated, and were more receptive to "intellectual" books for their children.<sup>72</sup> As Arthur Hubschmid observes, while L'École des loisirs did not enjoy much commercial success until well into the 1980s, he feels that '68 helped a lot: "this revolution in people's way of living and seeing the world gave us an authority, an authenticity, and librarians began to follow us from that moment on."<sup>73</sup> The ferocious debates, the conferences, and the provocations in the children's book world and beyond had attracted people's attention. This, combined with a sense that there might be a market for such material, piqued the interest of mainstream publishers. Pierre Marchand and Jean-Olivier Heron convinced Gallimard to let them set up a juvenile department by arguing – with Editions Harlin Quist and L'École des loisirs very much in mind – that '68 had changed the way we spoke to children, and that they should no longer be deprived of forms of [literary and artistic] expression hitherto reserved for adults.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, François Ruy-Vidal was swiftly recruited by the CEO of Hachette, Simon Nora, to set up a new children's list for its subsidiary Grasset. These literary presses had been inspired by the avant-garde, which had shown just how exciting and challenging children's literature could be. Ruy-Vidal was bullish once more, and distilled his philosophy into a statement that is now famous: "there is no such thing as children's literature", he wrote in the first catalogue for Grasset in 1973, "only literature."

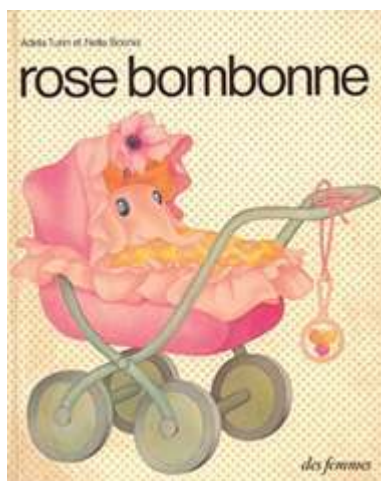
## Feminism: the second front

- 26 Further proof that the children's '68 had wide-ranging repercussions for the postwar order of society came in the mid-1970s, when the children's cultural rebellion moved in a

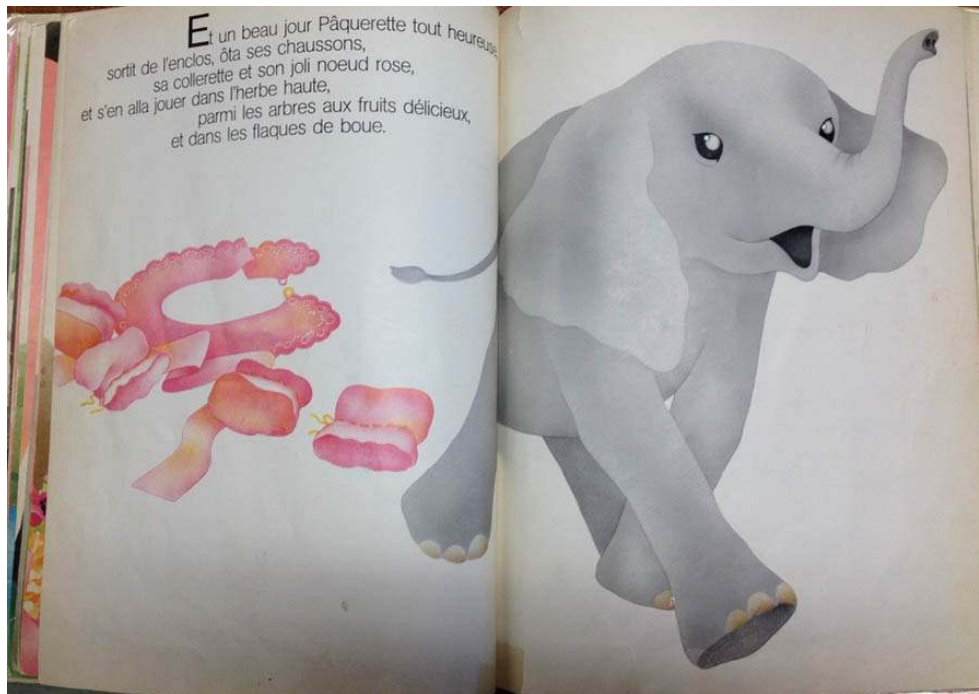


new direction, as a new generation of educated women became mothers, and second wave feminism surged in the aftermath of May '68. The new focus became laying siege to the ideal of women's inferior role in the nuclear family, one of the pillars of postwar reconstruction after the horrors of World War Two. These new publishers were much more focused on concrete change, reflected in their logos featuring children and the raised of the revolutionary came to the fore, as the delirious artistic experimentation of the early years was overtaken by a more serious approach. "We were part of the militant aftermath of May '68", recalled Christian Bruel, talking about his publishing collective *Sourire qui Mord* [*The smile that bites*]. Inspired by the pioneers such as Editions Harlin Quist, they saw that children's books and education offered "a second front", through which they could effect radical social change where political action had failed.<sup>75</sup>

- 27 Although women artists and writers had very much been a part of the radical rethink of children's culture in the late sixties, now the movement became explicitly feminist, and aligned to the women's liberation movements.<sup>76</sup> May '68 had acted as a catalyst. The women's movements were, as Bibia Pavard observes, both a part of the '68 protests and counter culture, and a reaction against them. Feminists adopted many of the "68ers" anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical practices, but they also challenged the exclusion of women from the protest movements.<sup>77</sup> In 1975, Adela Turin, an Italian translator and publisher who had been involved in both the French and Italian women's movements, decided it was time to "open the conversation with children, to provide adults with the arguments in order to talk to children about sexism".<sup>78</sup> She took her publishing project of producing "militant books" for girls to Antoinette Fouque, who was the head of the newly set up publishing arm of the women's movement, *éditions des femmes* [*for women press*]. They agreed to set up a co-edition, between Turin's new "dalla parte delle bambine" and a French imprint translated as "du côté des petites filles" [*for little girls*], with the Italian production financed by the agreed sale of the French rights.<sup>79</sup> This ensured the books could be produced in full colour, and in large print runs (50,000-80,000). The first book to appear was *Rosaconfetto/ Rose Bombonne* [*Candy Pink*] in 1975, which tells the story of a girl elephant who leads a rebellion against the sexist dictates of her tribe. In the land of the elephants, all girl elephants must eat flowers, and play within the confines of a pen, so that their skin turns a sweet pink colour. Then they will be marriageable. The heroine of the story, whose skin fails to be transformed, suffers rejection as a result. She leads her sisters to escape the pen, and join the boys, until no-one can tell the difference any more.



ILL. 14: Front cover, Adela Turin *Rose Bombonne* [*Candy Pink*], artwork by Nella Bosnia, (Editions des femmes, 1975).



ILL. 15: Nella Bosnia, illustration for Adela Turin *Rose Bombonne* [*Candy Pink*], (Editions des femmes, 1975).

This title and subsequent volumes in the imprint sold well. As Turin noted, “my books were popular”, and helped to raise the profile of the feminist publishing in France, “they were the real motor of the press”.

- 28 This new imprint, and *Rose Bombonne* in particular, played a key role in opening up the French field to feminism. At the same time a group of researchers, teachers, journalists, psychologists and artists dedicated to analysing contemporary children's books was founded by Christian Bruel.<sup>80</sup> When it came out, they studied *Rose Bombonne*, and were inspired to action. As Bruel put it: “I became a publisher thanks to this book”.<sup>81</sup> Their discussions had ultimately been critical of its happy ending, in which the girl elephants find emancipation from restrictive gender roles through becoming grey like their male counterparts. Turin and Bosnia had opened the discussion. In 1976, the collective was turned into a more permanent publishing structure, which they called “Le Sourire qui Mord”. Their first book was entitled *Histoire de Julie qui avait une ombre de garçon* [*Story of Julie with a boy's shadow*], and it was written by Bruel in collaboration with the artist Anne Bozellec and primary schoolteacher Anne Galland. *Julie* is a fearlessly dark exploration of the emotional fallout experienced by a little girl when her parents cannot accept her for who she is. Her efforts to conform to their ideas of a good little girl fail, and this failure takes physical shape when Julie realises that her shadow is a boy. All her efforts to get rid of this humiliating deformity do not work. Finally, at her wits' end, Julie decides to dig herself a hole so she can be “where it is always dark and there are no shadows”. In the park, she meets a boy, who confesses his sadness at being bullied for being too “girly”. Through sharing the pain caused by their failure to conform to their assigned gender identities, the children realise they are not alone. Julie concludes she has the right to be “Julie-the-minx, Julie-the-fury, Julie-Julie”. All *Sourire qui Mord* books came with a manifesto, that explained to parents and mediators what the book was about, and that incited them to think about children's books critically (the tone had changed dramatically from Jean Fabre's exhortation to parents to take a step back!). The

presentation of *Julie* argued that, in a society dominated by men, simply becoming a tomboy does little to emancipate girls, for it still supported the notion that to be female is something negative. It was important for Julie to realize that accepting “being Julie” was the way to resist oppression.<sup>82</sup> They also felt it was crucial to make the protagonist a girl, rather than an elephant or an animal, so that she was recognizable and readers could identify with her more readily.<sup>83</sup> Against all their expectations, the book did well. Within nine months Julie had sold five thousand copies, and was warmly received by critics. Over the course of the twenty years *Le Sourire qui Mord* operated, it sold over 120,000 copies, went into eight re-editions, and was translated into eleven languages.<sup>84</sup>

- 29 Bruel later observed that this was an era when those on the margins could survive in publishing.<sup>85</sup> He suspects Julie came at just the right time, ideologically, artistically and sociologically speaking. It “seemed to answer a need for hope, for an outlet of some kind”.<sup>86</sup> It appeared that the context for children’s picturebooks had changed, but how far? Certainly the success of the “du côté des petites filles” imprint, and the warm reception of *Julie* suggests that their books answered a need, but also that the political context may have been more favourable under the more socially liberal government of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing - the Health Minister Simone Veil had passed a law legalizing abortion in 1975. Still, in the case of *Julie*, the controversial subject matter did not go unnoticed. In July 1976, before the *Sourire qui Mord* had even become a legal entity, the collective received a warning letter from the 1949 law commission, which accused the book of being “morbid”, “depressing” and “pornographic”.<sup>87</sup> Their production was then subject to scrutiny by the commission for the next year, according to the provisions of the law. This posed little problem for a press so small that they only produced one book per year. In any case, and no doubt a sign of how attitudes to children’s publishing had changed since ’68, the commission took no further action, and Julie went to the bookshops uncensored. Jacqueline de Guillenschmidt, who was president of the 1949 law commission between 1995 and 1999, has suggested that in the 1970s the spirit in which the commission worked was “profoundly changed”, and it moved away from the “moralising approach” of the 1950s and 60s.<sup>88</sup> The relatively light treatment of a book that dealt with suicidal thoughts, masturbation, and questioned gender boundaries, may well be a good example of this modified approach, as the commission turned its focus instead to protecting children from real pornography.

## Conclusion

- 30 In the hands of a new generation of iconoclastic publishers and artists, children’s picturebooks in France became a medium for protest and social change. With its counter cultural anti-censorship message, and alignments with the children’s rights and women’s liberation movements, this brief (and necessarily incomplete) panorama of the children’s cultural rebellion suggests that while the children’s ’68 may have been a distinctive movement, with its own motivations and chronology, it nevertheless should not be seen as separate or peripheral to what have hitherto been considered the main events of ’68. As the authority structures underpinning western capitalist society were challenged and re-conceptualised in ’68, children’s culture should therefore be seen as integral to this moment. Artistic freedom, and complete rejection of pedagogical notions, ideas of adapting their books to children, became ways to protest against “the system”.

31 Above all, this essay has shown that the children's '68 was a reaction against censorship of children's imaginations, and particularly the protectionism that had arisen with the postwar settlement, and the ascendancy of child psychology. Maurice Sendak and Tomi Ungerer had similar issues over in the United States; Sendak with Bruno Bettelheim, while Ungerer famously told a gathering of child psychologists that "I do believe children should be traumatised!"<sup>89</sup> This is a battle that has by no means been won, even though the workings of the 1949 law committee may have changed. The law itself is still very much in vigour, while child protection is still an important justification for censorship.<sup>90</sup> It seems fitting therefore to leave the last word to Nicole Claveloux, one of the artists whose career stretched across the entire children's '68 (and far beyond). When reflecting on her part in this revolutionary era, she concluded by explaining why she is profoundly irritated by the conventions and taboos of children's books, policed in large part, she feels, still today, by notions of protecting the child's psyche:

"Le psy, voilà l'ennemi des images !"

[Psychology, that is the enemy of images!].<sup>91</sup>

32 Spoken like a true children's '68er.

## NOTES

1. "Témoignage d'un éditeur: quarante ans à l'Ecole des loisirs", *Regards sur le livre et la lecture des jeunes: la Joie par les livres a 40 ans !* (Paris, La Joie par les livres, 2005), pp. 83-90, pp. 86-7. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are by the author.

2. For example, see Christiane Clerc et al (eds) *Images à la Page. Une histoire de l'image dans les livres pour enfants* (Paris, Gallimard Jeunesse, 1984); "1965-1975, la mutation d'un paysage ? ", special issue of *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 244 (2008); Jean Perrot, "L'édition pour la jeunesse de l'écrit aux écrans", Pascal Fouché (ed) *L'édition française depuis 1945* (Paris, Éditions du cercle de la librairie, 1998), pp. 227-250; and Isabelle Nières-Chevrel, *Introduction à la littérature de jeunesse* (Paris, Didier Jeunesse, 2009), pp. 46-9.

3. Jacques Desse, introductory essay to *Les livres d'Harlin Quist et de François Ruy-Vidal (1964-2003) Catalogue bibliographique* (Paris, Chez les libraires associés / Librairie Michèle Noret, 2013).

4. Clerc et al (eds) *Images à la Page* is a good example; see also the chapters by Sandra Beckett and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer in Elina Druker and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (eds) *Children's Literature and the Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 2016).

5. "Des livres d'images sous influence : les petits-enfants du surréalisme", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 90 (1983) pp. 19-26, p. 20.

6. Avant-Propos, *Images à la page*, p. 7.

7. Isabelle Nières-Chevrel, "La Réception française de *Max et les maximonstres*: retour sur une légende", *Strenæ*, 1 (2010), connection on 31 July 2017, <http://strenae.revues.org/83>.

8. Daniel J. Sherman, Ruud van Dijk, Jasmine Alinder and A. Aneesh (eds) *The Long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives*, Indiana Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013, "Introduction", p. 2.

9. "Rethinking May 68", Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne, and James Williams (eds) *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution*, pp. 3-16, especially p. 4.



10. See *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), particularly chapter 7 Radicalisation and Crisis of the Post-War Landscape Settlement.
11. Paula S. Fass (ed) Introduction, *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-14.
12. *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 3. On the French case in particular, see Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the new wave: Youth and the rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2007).
13. On this early postwar period, see Cécile Boulaire, "La critique périodique de livres pour enfants depuis l'après-guerre", *Strenæ* 12 (2017), connection on 31 July 2017, <http://strenae.revues.org/1703>
14. *Enfance*, n° 9 -3, 1956. pp. 3-9, p. 3.
15. Jean-Pierre Rioux, "L'ardent contexte", 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), pp. 64-70, p. 70.
16. See the online legislation repository: [https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jo\\_pdf.do?id=JORFTEXT000000878175](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jo_pdf.do?id=JORFTEXT000000878175)
17. John A. Lent, "The comics debate internationally", Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (eds), *Comics studies reader*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2009, pp. 69-76.
18. Herbert Lottman, "No Time for Childhood", *Library Journal*, 91, (1966), pp. 5709-12, p. 5709.
19. Druker and Kümmerling-Meibauer (eds) *Children's Literature and the Avant-Garde*.
20. "Comment adapter la littérature enfantine aux besoins des enfants à partir des premières lectures", *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France*, 5 (1958) pp. 345-352.
21. Boulaire, "La critique périodique de livres pour enfants"
22. Hubschmid, "Témoignage d'un éditeur", pp. 84-7.
23. On this Italian press, see Loredana Farina (ed), *La Casa delle meraviglie: la Emme Edizione di Rosellina Archinto* (Milan, Topipittori, 2013).
24. "1965, naissance d'une grande maison d'édition : L'École des loisirs. Entretien avec Jean Delas", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 244 (2008) ; pp. 125-33, p. 127.
25. Discussion following Jean Fabre's paper "L'Album, miroir de l'enfance", Denise Escarpit (ed), *Les exigences de l'image dans le livre de la première enfance*, (Paris, Magnard, 1973) p. 25.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
27. On Soriano's concerns about children's reading in the modern consumerist era, 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.
28. This fits with the general understanding of the development of the modern picturebook in France, in which images, from the interwar period onwards, gain primacy over the text. See for example Michel Defourny's useful summary, "L'enfant et les images d'album, de 1950 à nos jours", *Regards sur le livre et la lecture des jeunes*, pp. 31-46.
29. "Adapter la littérature enfantine aux besoins des enfants", *op cit.*
30. "Entretien avec Isabelle Jan mené par Laurence Kiefé", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 244 (2008); pp. 111-115, p. 112.
31. *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), p. 27; Alfred Brauner's *Nos livres d'enfants ont menti ! Une base de discussion*, Preface by Henri Wallon (Paris, SABRI, 1951) developed a similar argument.
32. "Dialogue avec un éditeur. François Ruy-Vidal (Harlin Quist)", *Bulletin d'analyses de livres pour enfants*, 19 (1970), pp. 31-2.
33. Escarpit (ed), *Exigences de l'image*, p. 34.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 37. He returned to this idea several times in the conference discussions reported in this book.
35. Because this essay is interested primarily in France, it will refer to “Éditions Harlin Quist”, and only specify where necessary (or possible) whether it was the French or American company that commissioned the work and/ or held the copyright. On this venture, see: Isabelle Nières-Chevrel, “François Ruy-Vidal et la révolution de l’album pour enfants dans les années 1970”, Annie Renonciat (ed) *L’Image pour enfants : pratiques, normes, discours*, (La Licorne / Université de Poitiers, 2003), pp. p. 251-263; Jacques Desse’s essay in *Les livres d’Harlin Quist et de François Ruy-Vidal*; and Etienne Delessert, *L’Ours bleu* (Geneva, Slatkine, 2015), pp. 77-89.
36. The correspondence can be consulted at the archives of the Heure Joyeuse, [henceforth HJ] Médiathèque Françoise Sagan, Don François Ruy-Vidal.
37. *L’Ours bleu*, p. 78. He also notes the influence of American-based artists such as Maurice Sendak and Tomi Ungerer. There is not the space in this article to discuss this.
38. The book’s publication process remains obscure. The American edition appeared first in 1968, but the French version was delayed until 1969 for legal reasons. See Elisabeth Gardaz’s chapter “Mots et contre-mots dans Les Contes de Ionesco”, Jean Perrot (ed) *Jeux graphiques dans l’album pour la jeunesse*, (Paris, CRDP Académie de Créteil/Université Paris-Nord, 1991), pp. 137-156 (I would like to thank Isabelle Nières-Chevrel for this reference); and Desse’s explanation in *Les livres d’Harlin Quist et de François Ruy-Vidal*, p. 26.
39. See Nières-Chevrel, “Réception française de *Max et les Maximonstres*”. In a letter to Ruy-Vidal, Sendak referred to the episode as a “fiasco”.
40. Interview with Thierry Defert and Bruno Capet for *Phénix : revue internationale de la bande dessinée*, 18 (1971), pp. 27-33.
41. See the discussion following the critic Janine Despinette’s paper “l’Éducation esthétique est-elle possible par l’album ? ”, Escarpit (ed) *Exigences de l’image*, pp. 63-90.
42. Postface to Etienne Delessert, *Comment la souris reçoit une pierre sur la tête et découvre le monde* (Paris, L’Ecole des Loisirs, 1971).
43. “François Ruy-Vidal, Les enfants soumis à l’expression contemporaine”, *Trousse-Livres*, avril 1982, n° 30, pp.4-5.
44. Escarpit (ed), *Exigences de l’image*, p. 37.
45. Quoted in Nicholas Paley, Why the Books of Harlin Quist Disappeared—Or Did They? *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 14 (1989), pp. 111-4, p. 112.
46. Ionesco’s *Contes* are now produced by his publisher Gallimard.
47. Christian Bruel, *Nicole Claveloux & Compagnie* (Paris, Gallimard and Sourire qui Mord, 1995), pp. 33-41.
48. Nicole Claveloux, email correspondence with the author, 16 August 2017.
49. Nicole Claveloux, email correspondence with the author, 16 August 2017.
50. HJ, Don François Ruy-Vidal. Boîte neutre n°5 : Originaux, Nicole Claveloux.
51. Harlin Quist Catalogue, Fall 1973, p. 36.
52. François Ruy-Vidal, email correspondence with the author, 18 October 2017.
53. Claveloux, email 16 August 2017.
54. Lou Perdu, “Faiseuses d’images”, *Sorcières*, 23 (1982), pp. 122-8, p. 124.
55. Michael Grossberg, “Liberation and caretaking: fighting over children’s rights in postwar America”, in Paula S. Fass and Michael Grossberg (eds), *Reinventing childhood after World War II* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 19-37.
56. “Dialogue avec un éditeur. François Ruy-Vidal (Harlin Quist)”, *Bulletin d’analyses de livres pour enfants*, 19 (1970), pp. 31-2.
57. Bo Dan Andersen, Jesper Jansen and Søren Hansen, *Den lille røde bog for skoleelever* (*The little red schoolbook*) 1969, this edition translated by Berit Thornberry (London, Pinter & Martin, 2014) p. 216.

58. The American edition and French editions were both published in 1971, with slight variations in illustrations and prefatory texts. Subsequent editions would see further changes. See Jacques Desse's bibliography for details, *Les livres d'Harlin Quist et François Ruy-Vidal*.
59. This quote is taken from the American edition, p. 7.
60. Heinrich Hoffmann, illustrated by Claude Lapointe, translated by Sigrid Holzlehner and Liliane Lapointe, and adapted by François Ruy-Vidal, *Pierre l'ébouriffé*, (Boissy-Saint-Léger, Editions Harlin Quist, 1972).
61. Copy consulted in the Michèle Piquard archive, box 48, Bibliothèque Universitaire de Tours.
62. HJ Don Ruy-Vidal, Carton 15 : Archives. Correspondances et échanges sur publications. Dossier Pierre L'Ebouriffé, letter 4/12/70.
63. Marguerite Duras, illustrated by Bernard Bonhomme, *Ah ! Ernesto*. Published in 1971 in both US and French editions by Harlin Quist Books/ Editions Harlin Quist.
64. Escarpit (ed), *Les exigences de l'image*, p. 112.
65. Anne Cousseau, "Ah! Ernesto de Marguerite Duras: du côté de l'enfance", Pierre Bazantay and Jean Cleder (eds) *De Kafka à Toussaint: Écritures du XXe siècle* (Rennes, PUR, 2010) pp. 69-80.
66. François Ruy-Vidal, "Ah! Ernesto", *Ah! Duras*, (Paris, Thierry Magnier 2014), p. 18.
67. HJ Don Ruy-Vidal, Carton 18 : Dossier Duras, *Ah ! Ernesto*. All subsequent correspondence references will be from this file. Letters from Duras to Ruy-Vidal, 23 February 1968, and 20 January 1969.
68. Letter dated 3 February 1972.
69. Letter dated 3 February 1972.
70. Ruy-Vidal, "Ah ! Ernesto", *Ah ! Duras*, p. 19.
71. "Littérature enfantine : attention danger ! ", interview with Jannick Jossin, *L'Express*, 11-17 December 1972, pp. 139-40.
72. Nières-Chevrel, *Introduction*, p. 47.
73. "Entretien d'Arthur Hubschmid", p. 56.
74. Massin, *L'ABC du métier* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale Editions, 1988), pp. 175-8.
75. Nathalie Beau and Éliane Meynial, "Rencontre avec Christian Bruel", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 212 (2003), pp. 66-70, and also Christian Bruel, "Sous les pavés l'album, des influences croisées d'une période et d'un genre littéraire", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 244 (2008), pp. 89-97.
76. There was some overlap in the two stages, for example in the person of Nicole Claveloux, who went on to work with both éditions des femmes and Sourire qui Mord.
77. Bibia Pavard, *Les éditions des femmes: histoire des premières années, 1972-79* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005), p. 36.
78. Pavard's éditions des femmes interviewed Turin on this imprint, see pp. 88-90. All quotes from Turin are from this source.
79. The series took its name from a study of books for girls by Elena Gianini Belotti, published in 1973 by Feltrinelli.
80. For a history of this collective, and Bruel's future publishing ventures, see Dominique Perrin and Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivrier (eds) *Christian Bruel: auteur-éditeur, une politique de l'album* (Paris, Editions du cercle de la librairie, 2014).
81. Author interview with Christian Bruel, 7 October 2016.
82. Présentation de l'album *Histoire de Julie qui avait une ombre de garçon* (c. 1979/1980), BCU, cote C10124, fo 21.
83. Author interview with Christian Bruel, 7 October 2016.
84. Beau and Meynial, "Rencontre avec Christian Bruel", 2003, p. 68; see also the translations listed in the Clermont-Ferrand Fonds Bruel inventory: <http://bibliotheque.clermont-universite.fr/fonds-christian-bruel>.
85. Beau and Meynial, "Rencontre avec Christian Bruel", 2003, p. 68.
86. Author interview with Christian Bruel, 7 October 2016.

87. He recounts this episode in Beau and Meynial, "Rencontre avec Christian Bruel", p. 67.
88. Quoted in Crépin and Groensteen (eds), *On tue à chaque page !*, p. 211.
89. This was at a conference in Annecy in 2002. He repeats this idea across interviews, here, in English: Interview with Tomi Ungerer and Judith Kerr, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, 4 October 2011, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9604000/9604157.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9604000/9604157.stm).
90. Marjorie Heins, *Not in front of the children: "Indecency", censorship, and the innocence of youth* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2007); on the 1949 law and censorship in contemporary France, see Christian Bruel, "Quand la politique s'en mêle!", *Revue des livres pour enfants*, 266 (2017), pp. 114-9.
91. Email, 16 August 2017.

## ABSTRACTS

"Why am I talking to you about May '68?", asked the children's publisher Arthur Hubschmid at a conference in 2005, "well, it changed things for us radically, that's why". The years around May '68 are widely understood to have marked an important moment for children's literature, particularly picturebooks, in France. The late 1960s to the late 1970s are typically portrayed as a period of renewal, even revolution, in the ways people conceptualised children's picturebooks, which led to great experimentation and ebullition in the genre. Some even speak of the "May '68 of children's books". This essay argues that the visual transformation, and change in status of picturebooks, were also the product of a wider, political debate around children's books, and that we should take seriously the role of '68 in this narrative. Thus far, 68 has been a neat shorthand for scholars to paint these years as so exciting that even children's publishers could be hippie rebels. This period, I will argue, can also tell us a lot more about the history of the child in the cultural rebellions of the sixties, and how children and their culture became caught up in postwar social and cultural ideals and their counter cultural response. At the same time, understood as a form of cultural politics, the '68 of children's picturebooks provides a telling and distinct example of the different effects of '68.

## AUTHOR

### SOPHIE HEYWOOD

Associate Professor in French Studies

Department of Modern Languages and European Studies

University of Reading, UK

Le Studium/Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research fellow in residence at InTRu (Equipe d'Accueil 6301), Université François-Rabelais de Tours - FR (2016-17)

Sophie Heywood is Associate Professor in French at the University of Reading (UK). She is a specialist in the history of children's literature, publishing and archives policy in modern France. She has published in French and English on topics including Jules Verne (*Modern and Contemporary France*, 2013); francophone literary archives (Arc, forthcoming); and her monograph

on the classic French children's author the Comtesse de Ségur (1799-1874) was published by Manchester University Press in 2011. She was a STUDIUM / Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow 2016-17, based at the University of Tours, laboratoire InTRu, where she led the research project "The Children's '68".