INTRODUCTION

In his report on the colloquium entitled “The Future of Criticism” held in 2003 under the aegis of the literary journal *Critical Inquiry*, the editor W. J. T. Mitchell draws the following conclusions: “It has been suggested the great era of theory is now behind us and that we have entered a period of timidity, backfilling, and (at best) empirical accumulation. True?” W. J. T. Mitchell was actually elaborating on a discussion that had already opened regarding the end of the Great Theory era (see in particular the publications *Beyond Post-structuralism*, ed. by W. Harris and J. Butler, 1996 along with *What’s Left of Theory?*, eds. J. Guillory and S. Thompson, 2000) which was sealed by the publication of Terry Eagleton’s book *After Theory* in 2004. A significant number of texts and essays contributed to the discussion shaping critical thought and influencing literary scholarship. For many of these critics and scholars, the boundaries set by the new area are shifting.

While theory and criticism of children’s literature has greatly developed in the past years, there still exists an “ambivalence” (notion employed by Zohar Shavit already in the ’80s) about a children’s-literature-specific theory. In his book *Nimble Reader. Literary Theory and Children’s Literature* Rob McGillis maintains that today we are in the “after theory” era. Some years earlier (1997), Perry Nodelman in his study “Fear of Children’s Literature: What’s Left (or Right) After Theory?” advanced interesting arguments for and against a children’s-literature-specific theory. He raised the debate once again regarding this subject in the pages of the review *CCL* (vol. 31/2, 2005 and 32/1, 2006). Researchers and prominent scholars participated in the discussion concerning the autonomous status of children’s literature, potentially applicable literary theories and the creation of a theory specific to children’s literature.

“In our particular field of inquiry, the ‘children’s-literature-specific theory’ that Peter Hunt advocated as early as the 1980s we need, in addition to our general attitude toward literature, to position ourselves in relation to the subject of the texts we are dealing with, the child and childhood” proposed Maria Nikolajeva in an article published in the review *CCL* (2006, 32/1: 90) – which delimits, in our estimation, the principal aspects of research in the domain of children’s literature and the establishment of its identity.

Given these new perspectives in the field of children's literature and theory thereof, the present issue aims to present certain notions regarding the place of youth fiction within the domain of literary theory along with various other critical approaches to a literary text or a national literature. From this viewpoint, those who contributed to the present issue "read" literary works for the young in a different manner and thus address the thematics relative to gender in the postmodern era, questions of Identity/-ies and Alterity in a postcolonial context and in a global world, the questions of "openness" but also the problems that present the translation of a literary text in an intercultural educational context.

In her work "Theory, Post-Theory and Aetnormative Theory" Maria Nikolajeva examines the strategies of alterity in classical and contemporary texts for young readers and the synergy of their impact on our perception. She also focuses on adult normativity and on the established power structures through the medium of queer and carnival theories. The text co-written by Anastassia Katsiki-Guivalou and Dimitris Politis takes a retrospective look at the relation between children's literature and theory, presenting the different periods marking its development that ultimately lead to its autonomy. Through the works of illustrators M. Ocelot and J. Piéncowski, Jina Kalogirou examines the concept of "openness" thus anticipating themes that are central to literary theory. By way of three different theatrical pieces for children by J.M. Barrie and D. Almond, Rosemary Johnston examines the multifarious manifestations of otherness, and especially "internal" otherness. The complex genre of the play for theatre offers a particularly acute focus for portraying and viewing otherness. Vassiliki Lalagianni undertakes an exploration into contemporary Greek literature for young adults with a view of presenting many different facets of alterity: xenophobia, ethnocentrism, racism. Michèle Bacholle-Bošković, dialoguing with the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, considers "la littérature beure" produced in the wake of Maghrebian migration into France as well as the questions about identity that this movement raised. Odile Cazenave studies the question concerning the reconfiguration of youth literature on the African continent, with an emphasis on the place of the child and the youth in African literature from the 1990s until the present and its impact on the public. Based on Emer O'Sullivan's theoretical premises, Meni Kanatsouli analyzes folktales from a comparative perspective focusing on their mutations over the ages. Valerie Coghlan discusses contemporary Irish children's literature in relation to today's publishing trade, the influence it has on the formation of an Irish identity and "Irishness" in the era of globalisation. In her article Li Yin analyzes theoretical influences, tendencies and problems in the creation of Chinese children's literature and literary studies from the mid-1990s to the present, situating this particular genre in the age of global commercialisation. Christine Hélot and Britta Benert advance a critical reading of three works by Tomi Ungerer that deal with the Second World War. They examine the different translations in German and English with the objective of exposing various ways of confronting notions like ethnocentrism, alterity/identity and hybridity. Mireille Blanc also deals with the domain of transla-

tion by analyzing difficulties encountered when adapting a literary classic, in this case the beloved Pinocchio, for educational purposes. Claudia Soussa Pereira considers reception of the literary text by a young readership within a school context. The author assesses the literary value of a children's book from a global perspective where intercultural factors play an increasingly important role.

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