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Sandra L. Beckett, ed. *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997. xi + 203 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-30145-2.

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Reflections on Change: Children's Literature Since 1945 joins a growing discourse on radical change in children's literature. Perhaps it is the *fin de siecle* that prompts a backward glance. I tend to be shy in making grand pronouncements that suggest a teleological progression. A case could be made for the 1920s and 1930s in the United States as a period of enormous experimentation more dramatic than our own. Many subversive texts have surfaced in the post-Lear and Carroll era. Our half-century has no claim on modernity, despite the fact that this is my generation.

Nevertheless, it is critical to explore the effects of postmodern literary criticism, mass media, technology, and publishing, as well as the effects of wars, the Cold War, and the many global changes in ethnic and regional identity. The explosiveness and immediacy of these changes can dull the critical edge by which we ask the historical questions of how children's literature both reflects and constructs culture. Despite the haze, we must break ground.

This collection of essays is the product of the Twelfth Biennial Congress of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL), held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1995. Scholars from twenty-five countries gathered to discuss the theme of changes in children's literature and children's literature theory and criticism since 1945. Papers were chosen from the conference to be included in this volume, which often leads to uneven quality. A variety of papers were required to represent the international perspective, but they don't necessarily hold together well, except in a common historical component.

In the introduction, editor Sandra Beckett briefly summarizes from the conference papers, largely those related to literary theory and criticism. She finds an enhanced status for children's literature, a phenomenon that owes much to postmodernism and its leveling effects. An unprecedented growth in children's literature research internationally is elevating the field in academia. A more secure stature has encouraged experimentation in approach, especially in the realm of literary criticism, which now applies many of the same critical postures to children's books as to adult books. In Beckett's words, "readers are confronted with new temporal, spatial, and human dimensions" (p. xi). The result is a greater sophistication of discourse and demand on child readers. The question, as raised, is does this duality of audience signal the demise of children's literature? My hasty answer to that quandary, based on my research into Victorian picture book reception, is that a creative tension historically exists between the binaries of child and adult in children's literature. A useful resource on this question is the special issue of *Children's Literature* on "Cross-writing Child and Adult," edited by U. C. Knoepflmacher and Mitzi Myers (v. 25).

The book is organized into six broad divisions: "Theory and Children's Literature," "Shifting Boundaries between Children's and Adult Literature," Experimental Writing and Postmodern Trends," "Paradigm Shifts," National Literatures," and "Reconceptualizing the Past." Being an international conference–one of few in the field–many of the essays address specific countries and their literature for children, although are were not mentioned in the introduction. I would like to have seen a fuller discussion of all the papers with some interconnections between them. In short, the introduction does not really introduce the book that follows, although it is valuable for its generalizations on changes in literary criticism and theory.

The slight introduction is followed by slight editing. I spotted various typos and grammatical errors as I read the text. The chapter on German children's literature needed attention, if not better translation. Vague expressions occasionally impede the reading, such as