



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The Censorship of Enid Blyton in Two of her Novels

The Island of Adventure and Five on a Treasure Island

B.A. Essay

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Note:

The main problem with an essay such as this one about Enid Blyton and her works is a distinct lack academic secondary sources, or critique. No one has really delved into her work on an academic level. That is obviously an issue for anyone attempting to write about her novels in an academic setting. The compensation here is the use of the internet where writers and others have conversed about Blyton. I tried to use those pieces of writing by amateurs and professionals alike to depict certain societal trends and views about her to make up for the lack of recognized academic writing on the subject.

Abstract

Enid Blyton's books have been altered considerably since her death in 1968. This essay seeks to investigate the nature of those changes and the reasons behind them. That is no easy task as almost her entire, very vast, catalogue of books has been altered in some way. On top of that there are multiple editions of each book and each edition is different from the other. Therefore, the focus is on alterations made in two books, *The Island of Adventure* and *Five on a Treasure Island*. Because of Blyton's immense popularity in England there are a great many editions available for each book and the changes become incredibly difficult to track. The Icelandic translations of her books, however, have remained mostly unaltered even when re-published in 1991. Thence, the translations of each novel are used to determine the nature of the changes. The changes are mainly updates on archaic language and altering of Blyton's 'supposed' attitudes towards race and gender. Because of the lack of academic sources available on Blyton there is a reliance on material from the internet, columns, opinion pieces, blogs and news stories to determine certain societal fluxes of opinions for and against Blyton. Lastly, the essay attempts to investigate, through feminist criticism, whether the changes made to alter the supposed negative attitudes toward gender and race are successful.

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Introduction

Despite her massive popularity as a children's author, the majority of Enid Blyton's books have been revised by her current publishers. This essay investigates the nature of those revisions, the reasons behind them and their effects. Blyton was an extremely prolific author and there is not space here to give a full account of all the books or even to classify all the alterations. Instead, this essay focuses on *The Island of Adventure* and *Five on a Treasure Island* and attempts to make some general observations based on them. This is both because they appear to typify the kinds of content and expression that her current publishers, Hodder Children's Books, have made. The alterations fall into two main types, those that update Blyton's language and those, more importantly that attempt to excise what the publishers deem as offensive. The former comprises by far the larger group, but the latter is more significant and focuses on issues of race and gender. Updating a writer's idiomatic use of the language is odd in itself and seems to have rarely been applied to other writers, but altering an author's 'supposed' attitudes to race and gender raises a great many questions. Since they substantially change some of the original conceptions of the books. These revisions have not been incorporated into the Icelandic translations of Blyton's works, which means that they remain closer in some respects to the original. Blyton's celebrity was greater than her literary reputation and that may explain why Hodders censorship has elicited little response from anyone but the staunchest Blyton fanatics.

The changes in *Five on a Treasure Island* mainly revolve around Anne, who is the youngest character and the most traditionally feminine. Her interactions with the tomboy George have been heavily revised. The second book under discussion here, *The Island of Adventure*, once contained Jo-Jo, the only black character in Blyton's books (except for the highly offensive gollywogs who do not feature in either of the books treated here) but he is now white and has been renamed Joe.. Equally curious is the publishers' attempt to interfere in Blyton's gendering and the final section of this essay addresses this aspect of the changes through the prism of feminist criticism. I conclude that all these alterations only serve to dilute the original content and, furthermore, that they fail to remove racism and sexism from the books.

What has been altered?

There are two main types of alterations in the two books that are under discussion here. The first type is changes made in order to make the books more politically correct. These are changes that concern either a character's race or gender. There is one black character in *Five on a Treasure Island*, Jo-jo, who turns out to be the evil mastermind behind the money laundering scheme at the heart of the book. There are also countless stereotypes in both books whose gender appeared not to have awoken any discussion when the books were first published. . The second type comprises changes made in order to modernize Blyton's language, much of was deemed archaic by her current publishers and therefore incomprehensible to contemporary readers. In some instances this "updating" process has the desired effect; in others it fails.

One collector of Enid Blyton books has gone to the trouble of cataloging all of the differences on the first three pages between the original *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) and latter editions that appeared in 1964, 1997 and finally, in 2010, the last of which contains the most alterations. The results can be found at his internet site.¹

The first type of alterations comprises what Blyton current publishers, Hodder Children's Books, consider being politically incorrect words, phrases and concepts. This occasionally extends to character. For example, in the original version, Dick mentions how Anne wanted to bring all of her dolls with her to the family's last summer holiday:

Anne wanted to take all her fifteen dolls with her last year," said Dick. "Do you remember, Anne? Weren't you funny? (1942/1964)

This has now been changed to:

Anne wanted to take all her fifteen **teddies** with her last year," said Dick. "Do you remember, Anne? **That was funny!**" (2010)

It is odd that a young girl is supposed to have teddies and not dolls. Indeed, the revision itself maybe interpreted as being a little more sexist than the original if it is taken as suggesting that dolls are in some manner inferior to teddy bears. When revisions go too far, they may become offensive. Obviously someone on the editorial board decided that there is something demeaning about a girl

¹ Björnsson, Eysteinn. "Five on a Treasure Island/ Fimm á Fagurey." *Eybjörn Blyton*. N.p., 4. November. 2011. Web. 2 Apr 2012. <https://notendur.hi.is/~eybjorn/blyton/ff01_eng.html>.

having dolls and therefore concluded that Anne Anne should not own dolls. Yet, why can Anne not just own dolls and be a strong young girl? This change infers the opposite: that owning dolls would weaken her character.

Most of the “politically correct” changes in *The Famous Five: Five on a Treasure Island* revolve around Anne. Anne is also a bad swimmer². There are two mentions of Anne's lack of swimming acumen. In the first, Blyton notes Anne's lack of a good swimming stroke and when they go to swim again, George teaches Anne to swim better and she changes her stroke.³ Anne says she will never be as good as George but she hopes to be as good as the boys. Anne and George have an exchange after Anne has almost blundered and told George's mum about Tim, the dog⁴ where Anne comes out to George to apologize. The girls make up and George gives Anne a hug but is immediately embarrassed because no boy would have done that. Interestingly, this exchange is almost completely unaltered in the 2010 version of the book. The functions of the alterations around Anne seem to be to change her role from that of a quite feminine girl to a baby, eschewing her femininity for more childish characteristics. For the most part, that change is successful. Whether or not that change is warranted is another matter entirely.

There are plenty of examples of the second type of alterations, the modernization of language. The very simple exchange at the beginning of *Five on a Treasure Island*, where the three siblings talk to their parents about their prospective summer vacation, has had the words “mother” or “father” removed and replaced by mum or dad. Sometimes, an entire sentence has been altered, as this:

“No!” said Anne. “Oh, Mother – is it true? Can't you really come with us on our holidays? You always do.” (1942/1964)

Has been changed to:

“No!” said Anne **in surprise**. “But . . . you always come with us on our holidays!” (2010)

What is also interesting about that passage is that one of the criticisms laid against Blyton is her reliance on exclamation marks to influence the reading of her prose⁵. In this instance exclamation marks have been added.

In other instances, some descriptive elements have been removed altogether:

“Quentin?” said Mother, **pursing up her lips**. “Whatever made you think of him? I shouldn't think he'd want the children messing about in his little house.” (1942/1964)

has been changed to:

“Quentin?” **said Mum**. “**What** made you think of him? I shouldn't think he'd want the children

messaging about in his little house." (2010)

In this example Blyton gives a little added description of Mother (or Mum) to give spice to the proceedings but the new version prefers to keep the action moving. There is also an instance where Blyton means to keep the action with the children as their father goes out into the hall to make a telephone call to Uncle Quentin. As the new version is concerned with updating the language all instances of “telephoning” or “putting a call through” have been removed like so:

They had all finished their breakfast, and they got up to wait for Daddy to telephone. He went out into the hall, and they heard him putting the call through. (1942/1964)

turns into:

They had all finished their breakfast, [but they waited while Dad went out into the hall to telephone.](#) (2010)

There is also the problematic “and they got up to” part of the sentence that is obviously something that children today would not do, i.e. stand up from the dinner table as an elder leaves. But in removing the words “and they heard him” the sense of hearing has been removed from the book. Obviously, there is the archaic expression “to put a call through” which no one uses, and that is the reason this section has been changed. It would be quite easy to change the sentence to “they heard to telephone” thereby readers would not lose the image of the children listening in on the telephone call. The evocation of the senses is a well-known literary tool that is useful to draw the reader into a story or a scene. It seems odd that Hodders felt the need to remove that sense and that image from this scene.

Possible Reasons for the Alterations of the Books

One of the reasons that the alterations of Blyton's books were possible in the first place is that the opinion of her, as a writer, is quite poor in Britain. She was a marvelously prolific author, writing somewhere around a staggering 800 books in her 40 year writing career. She is still very popular; so much so in fact that her series live on without her. In 2009 six new books in her *Malory Tower* series were published. She did not write these books, a stand-in writer, Pamela Cox, was hired. This has been carried out on a number of other famous series, such as the James Bond series. Blyton's popularity might have been a hindrance to her artistic credit. Much as prolific and profitable authors such as Stephen King and John Grisham have found it difficult to be deemed worthy as writers, Blyton was, and is, always considered sub-par when it comes to critics. Therefore, she was never respected as a true author – making it easier to modify, censor or add to her books.

When Enid Blyton was in her prime as an author, the most read children's author in England, she tried to get a job as a broadcaster for the BBC. She wrote them a letter asking if she could appear, and even listing her accomplishments in the realm of children's literature. She never received a reply. There are however, in-house notes available on the BBC archive page where the director general from the BBC schools broadcast department, a Mr. JE Sutcliffe, explains his feelings towards Mrs. Blyton:

My impression of her stories is that they might do for children's hour but certainly not for schools dept they haven't much literary value - but are competently written without sentimentality on the whole. They are well-designed for children to read for themselves (this is their primary object I imagine) There is rather a lot of the Pinky-winky-Doodle-doodle Dum-dumm type of name (and lots of pixies) in the original tales.

Later on in the memo, which was labeled as an “internal circulating memo” he goes into further details regarding his thoughts on Blyton. He said that he “might have met her” and thought she was “very nice”. Sudcliffe also writes that he finds Blyton's nature studies to have a “very animistic tendency and no feeling for the true characteristics of different animals” and then goes into detail about specific textual evidence regarding his observations. Without getting bogged down into too much detail about a specific memo circulated within the BBC in the 1950s, it cannot be denied that it illustrates a particularly negative attitude towards Enid Blyton as a writer and helps us to understand why alterations of her texts were not met with hostility. It is also worth noting that Blyton did not appear on the BBC until 1963, when it lifted what was effectively a ban on her. Apparently the public also perceived her similarly. As Michael Hann hypothesizes in an article published on *The Guardian*:

Was it because she was racist and snobbish? Reasons the former children's laureate Michael Rosen suggests might have been behind her BBC ban. I don't think so. It was because plenty of people simply saw her books as vulgar, applying her own snobbery right back on to her. She existed in relation to, say, Phillippa Pearce Marks & Spencer, as Ford did to Rover, as ITV did to the BBC. Just as "nice" people didn't watch ITV (except Alan Ayckbourn adaptations and *Brideshead*), so "nice" people didn't read Enid Blyton.

It seems as if Hann is defending Blyton here, but he is not. He continues in his article to explain that Blyton did not write challenging books or create a believable world. In fact he says she wrote about the middle-class from an upper-class perspective. Blyton was not only banned on the BBC but also in Hann's childhood home, and that was not uncommon. It is obvious that neither the upper-class who wanted challenging books, according to Hann, nor the middle-class who, by all accounts should have been offended by her books, wanted much to do with her. That seems baffling, when her popularity is taken into consideration. So, there are people who love Enid Blyton but it seems to be a little bit of a faux-pas to do so. As with most aspects of culture in England, there are invisible class structures in place – Enid Blyton is no different. As Hann wrote in the above passage, Blyton both projected those class structures onto others in her book and was a victim of them when being criticized or enjoyed as an author. Robert McCrum, a literary critic for *The Guardian*, agrees that there is a class system in place in English literature (he writes about British literature in his article). There, he proposes that poets such as Shakespeare and Byron are at the top of the hierarchy and are followed by playwrights like Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. At the bottom of the pile he situates children's authors but he parenthesizes J.K. Rowling, saying that she is: “too rich and famous to give a damn about where anyone wants to place her”²

Perceptions of Enid Blyton are quite varied, yet astoundingly most literary critics agree that her stories have little artistic merit and even less literary value; they are regarded as lightweight entertainment for children and not much more. Her stories are not thought to enrich children's lives or add anything to their learning experience. Conversely, her fans love her storytelling capabilities and the impact she had on their childhood. They love her ability to take them to places they had no ability to go

² McCrum, Robert. "The class pyramid of British literature." *Guardian*. 22 March 2010: n. page. Web. 2 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2010/mar/22/class-british-literature-posh>>.snobbery>.<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/oct/15/enid-blyton-readers-beyond-grave>>.

to or even imagine. She is a master escapist but her books are not valued in literary circles.

A debate has raged for the last few years about the legitimacy of the alterations done to Blyton's books and whether they are warranted. The most compelling argument for the censorship of Enid Blyton's book is that her language has now become archaic. Children today cannot relate to, or understand, characters who say: "golly" or „oh my!“ and therefore they do not want to read her stories. As Anne McNeil, publishing director of Hodder Children's Books said in a story published in the Guardian about an update of the Famous Five series that occurred in 2009:

Children who read [the Famous Five books] need to be able to easily understand the characterizations and easily to get into the plots. If the text is revised [they're] more likely to be able to engage with them."

As the director general of the BBC said in his circulating memo, what is good about Blyton's books is that children can read them and understand them easily. Blyton herself was also an advocate of children reading for themselves. In an article for online magazine Spiked Online notes that "[t]his bullying of Blyton is jolly trying." Sharmini Brooks argues against these changes from Hodder by saying that when children encounter words they do not understand they further their vocabulary by looking said words up, widening their understanding of the world around them. Furthermore, they would be more likely to look words up if they are trying to understand an interesting story. An additional counter argument to Hodders claim that children need updated vocabulary to understand stories, would be that children actually understand and appreciate that the books were written in a different time and that people spoke differently back then. So, this argument, as most regarding the subject, (d)evolves into an argument about Enid Blyton's credentials and her respectability rather than the morality behind changing an author's work.

The arguments against censorship are mainly of the freedom of speech variety. But there is also the historical argument, i.e. that Enid Blyton wrote these books in a different era and the values of that era should be held up in the literature of the time. Sexism and racism was very prevalent in English society in Blyton's time, it was only natural for her to include those views in her books. Does it matter whether or not she was of those same views? Is it better to sweep history under the rug or push it into the spotlight? The counter argument to this is that children should be protected from the idea of racism and sexism and taught about history, not from children books but by a teacher in a class room.

There is also the argument for preservation of history, in this case cultural history. Whatever any one person or any group of people might think personally about Enid Blyton she is definitively

engraved in the cultural zeitgeist of Britain in the 1930's to 1960's. To alter her works would be to rewrite that cultural history and break any bond the children of today might be able to attain to that time. As an example of this is a blog post by a young mother on her blog, called *The Consumption Rebellion*, where she explains how she used some of Blyton's books to explain problematic cultural phenomena.

I am now trying to use these sexist/classist/racist incidents as conversation points afterwards - trying to explain the historical attitudes and asking her opinion on these... Me censoring these books completely was not allowing them to have these conversations. And with Enid Blyton books being so obviously sexist/classist/racist its been a great jumping off point in critical reading rather than the more subtle books. ...I have been surprised how much my daughter (6 and a half years old) has been able to deconstruct the messages by herself once we started talking about it. She talks about how silly George is in thinking that only boys are brave.

On the other hand, it might be unfair to expect children's adventure stories to educate children about the history and culture of their country. There are also those who would say that Enid Blyton's books portray a completely fictionalized version of Britain that has no grounds in reality. The most obvious element of that argument is the fact that a group of young children can travel to an island and get into all types of trouble without their parents knowing or questioning it. Therefore, the books should be changed because they are only meant to be enjoyed, not to represent anything.

Blyton scholar and writer of *Enid Blyton and the mystery of Children's literature*, an excavation of Blyton's work, Rudd has put the most compelling argument forth. He says that Enid Blyton should not be judged on regular literary merit but that she belongs to the oral tradition of storytelling. The oral tradition of storytelling has been around for as long as humans have been able to speak. Stories within the oral tradition have specific rules, as listed in the encyclopedia Britannica:

They use special languages and performance arenas while employing flexible patterns and structures that aid composition, retention, and reperformance. In addition, they assume an active role for the audience and fulfill a clear and important function for the societies that maintain them. (“Oral tradition”)

In the BBC radio program about Enid Blyton two children are interviewed for their views on her stories. Both children note that they were so involved with the story that they had worked out what was going on before the characters and wanted to point out to them the plot of the story. So, somehow

Enid Blyton has managed to move this oral tradition of storytelling onto the literary medium, not that she was the first (the well-known Brothers Grimm, for example, collected stories in Germany in the 1800's but they did not write their own stories). What this implies is that Enid Blyton actually has more in common with Homer than Shakespeare. What Rudd means to do is defend Enid Blyton and how simple her stories are. If Enid Blyton is of the oral tradition of storytelling then it must be okay for everyone and anyone to change her writing, or the way her story is told as long as the story itself is not changed. That is exactly what has happened.

There is one last reason behind the alterations of Blyton's books. There have been several mentions in this essay of the fact that she is one of the most popular authors of all time. Whenever her books are republished they bring in capital for the publisher. It is therefore in their gain to republish as much as possible and whenever they republish they want to revise (so there is an appearance of a motive for recirculation). So, one of the main reasons the books keep getting altered and republished has to be monetary gain. Then the publishers hide being a mask of political correctness to validate pointless alterations. The fact that the updates are mostly driven by financial reasoning decreases their validity as attempts of political correctness.

To conclude this listing of the arguments for and against the censorship of Enid Blyton, it seems that the publishers are actually right. First of all, they have the copyright so they are allowed to do whatever it is they want to do with the artistic entity that they have published. Most importantly, however, none of the minor arguments really matter, an example of a minor argument is: "Blyton was sexist because she wrote that boys are braver than girls" or "Blyton was actually commenting on sexism by having George think that boys are better than girls". They do not matter because Enid Blyton belongs to oral storytelling where change is inherent and unavoidable in the tradition. What is worrying is that the perception of Enid Blyton as a writer seems to guide these changes, and the idea that her books were not worth much in the first place anyway and therefore, changing them is fine. The thought process should be: how can we make these stories even more interesting and accessible for a new generation of readers.

The Effects of the Changes

In *Famous Five on a Treasure Island*, a lot of the changes revolve around Anne and how what she does is somehow inferior to what the boys do. When Anne meets George for the first time George makes a comment on how childish and feminine it is for Anne to play with dolls. In the new version she only has a problem because it is childish to play with “soft toys” but not because it is for girls.³ When they go swimming in the Icelandic version it is specified both that George is a better swimmer than the boys and that Anne is a worse swimmer than the boys. In the new 2010 version George is better than the boys, Anne is worse but the wording has been changed. In the new version it says that Anne will have to practice her swimming strokes.⁴ The girls then practice and Anne becomes better. The fact that Anne is not a good swimmer never comes up again in the book and it has nothing to do with the plot. It is good that it has not been completely omitted because that would diminish Anne's role as a character. It is very interesting that in the original she just was not a good swimmer and in the 2010 version the implication is that with the correct stroke anyone can be a good swimmer. The attempt is obviously to teach something to the readers but the literary effect is minimal.

The main changes in *The Island of Adventure* concern Jo-Jo who is a black character in the original text and the Icelandic translation. There is no mention of his skin color in the revised edition.⁵ The reason for this change is probably the fact that Jo-Jo proves to be an evil character and, at the beginning of the book, is also characterized as being a little stupid. At one point he sees Jack and Philip running around at night, follows them into a cave and leaves them as the tide starts to come into the cave but the boys get out of the cave through another opening. When Jo-Jo sees the boys the next morning at breakfast he concludes that he must have been seeing things instead of the more probable reason that Jack and Philip just got out of the cave somehow.⁶ The issue with that assumption is that Jo-Jo is actually a master criminal, often described as very clever. Then there must be an issue with his line of work i.e. that he is a criminal. But there are black criminals in the world just as there are white ones. Would an easier solution not have been to simply make Bill Smuggs, who is law enforcement officer working undercover to break up Jo-Jo's ring of counterfeiters, a black character as well? There are problematic descriptions in regards to Jo-Jo's race in the original English text. Those are mostly

³Blyton, *The Famous Five: Five on a Treasure Island*: 17.

⁴Blyton, *The Famous Five: Five on a Treasure Island*: 35.

⁵Blyton, *The Island of Adventure*: 25.

⁶Blyton, *The Island of Adventure*: 65.

non-existent in the Icelandic translation, probably because race, historically, has not been as much of an issue in Iceland. Obviously there are some derogatory terms for a person's skin color in Icelandic but none of them are used in the translation. The racial environment in Britain changed drastically around 1955, shortly before her books started to be changed. The racial environment in Iceland was essentially the same until 1989.⁷ Her most popular books such as the Adventure series and the Five series were republished in 1991, with no major alterations to the text except for grammar changes that had occurred in the language.

As for changes made to restore equality between the sexes in *The Island of Adventure* there are a few. The first time any of the children travel to the island the boys do not allow the girls to come with them, citing the fact that it is too dangerous to girls. Dinah, who has a very short temper, gets into an argument with her brother Phillip at one point. She slaps him in the face and he hits her back, so hard that she falls to the ground. The resolution of this disagreement is that Dinah says she is sorry that she hit Phillip but Phillip does not need to apologize. There are also several mentions of the fact that boys should not hit girls, specifically. This altercation is different in the 2000 version of the book. The siblings to get into an argument, Dinah slaps Jack and he slaps her back but not so hard that she falls down. Dinah tells Phillip that he should not hit girls and Phillip replies that he would not hit proper girls like Lucy-Ann.⁸ In the newer version the instance becomes less of a matter of sex, it is clearly wrong for a person to hit any other person. In the Icelandic version, on the other hand, Dinah got what was coming to her. Also, when Bill Smuggs and Phillip go down in the underwater tunnel to find Jack who is lost in the mines beneath the island, Dinah and Lucy-ann are forbidden to go with them and decide to go help out in the kitchen. In the 2000 version, Dinah is told to be out on a look-out for Joe in case he comes by. This seems like a fruitless endeavor for Dinah as if he came along there would not be much she could do about him. Bill and Phillip are underneath the ocean, if they yell they would not hear her. The intonation seems to be exactly the same as in the original book. Dinah is girl so she cannot come with the men to sort everything out. The difference is that she does not need to go to the kitchen and wash dishes.⁹

Why haven't the Icelandic translations been altered? The answer is very simple: popularity. The reason the books keep getting republished in England is that they still sell by the boatloads. Even if

⁷Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir and Kristín Loftsdóttir: 24.

⁸Blyton, *The Island of Adventure*: 115.

⁹Blyton, *The Island of Adventure*: 153.

Blyton was very popular in Iceland the need for new versions was not palpable, nor marketable.

To sum up, the majority of the changes are made to update archaic language that children today cannot understand. Outside of those changes there are the contextual changes, such as Anne having teddy bears instead of dolls. Those changes do not follow a specific line and seem to be almost at random to subdue the politically correct crowd that demands some changes to be made to the works of a sexist author and, of course, to make the publisher money.

A Look at the Changes Through Feminist Criticism

According to the *Encyclopedia of Feminism* by Lisa Tuttle feminist criticism started out as an exegesis of the sexual stereotyping of women. It also says that there is no one definition of feminist criticism, it is not ruled by a strict, defined theory but is more reactionary to those theories. The idea is to perceive old text through a modern lens. The *Encyclopedia of Feminism* lists the aims of feminist criticism as:

“1. to search for an underlying, consistent female tradition. 2. to uncover and interpret the symbolism specific to women's writing so that it does not seem as incomprehensible or unimportant as it might when judged by male standards and symbols. 3. to rediscover 'lost' works of the past. 4. to reassess male writers from a feminist standpoint. 5. to learn to resist the sexism in a text while admitting it may be important or valuable in other ways. 6. to become aware of the politics of style and language.” (Tuttle, 184)

There are other definitions, such as the ones found in the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* where feminist criticism is defined through Marxist criticism. There is also a definition given by a French academic called Toril Moi, she describes feminism as more of a “specific form of political discourse that is more than simply a concern for gender in literature.”¹⁰ It is integral to the process of analyzing literature through the prism of feminist analysis to adhere to the rules above as much as humanly possible, but feminism is a multi-tiered beast and belies any one definition.

Elaine Showalter's definition of feminist criticism is mostly bound to the author rather than the content. So, if something is written by a female author then it is available to feminist criticism. This leads to a slight conundrum as it concerns Enid Blyton because the changes were, for all accounts and purposes made to achieve both political correctness and some sort of equality between male and female characters in a fictional world where neither is apparent. There will be an examination of the changes made to the female characters in *Famous Five on a Treasure Island* and *The Island of Adventure* and an attempt to find out whether the changes were successful or not. Then there is the fact that these changes were made to a female author's work and on top of that changes that are made, as pointed out in the previous segment entitled “the perception of Enid Blyton“, because of lack of respect given to her as an author. The question, according to Elaine Showalter's feminist criticism, therefore becomes: would these changes have been made if Enid Blyton was male? That question is probably impossible to

¹⁰Code, Lorraine. "Marxist Feminist Literature." *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theory*. 1st ed. Cornwall: Routledge, 2000. Print.

answer in a fulfilling manner. It would prove unfruitful to point out banal arguments such as: if Enid Blyton's books were so heavily edited because she was a woman, then why have Agatha Christie's books remains untouched through the century? Or point out a male children's author of a similar era whose works have not been edited. This essay has already shone light on two relevant facts in context: that Enid Blyton's books are massively popular and a publisher owns all of the rights to her books. Therefore, the publisher will try to make as much money as possible by republishing her books for new readers. That has been done quite successfully thus far.

One of the main points Showalter makes in her article "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" is that in order for women to be portrayed in the same manner as men, or thought of in the same manner as men, there is a need for a female culture. Because even if I as a reader attempt to read any book through the eyes of a woman I am still perceiving the book through the lens of a male dominated culture. Showalter explains:

Indeed, a theory of culture incorporates ideas about women's body, language, and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The ways in which women conceptualize their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environments. The female psyche can be studied as the product or construction of cultural forces. Language, too, comes back into the picture, as we consider the social dimensions and determinants of language use, the shaping of linguistic behavior and cultural ideals. (Showalter, 17).

Even the language is really a male dominated spectrum of culture. It is much more interesting to examine the changes themselves and see whether they have accomplished anything.

(The following paragraph touches on an important point, my being as a male and not a female therefore it is imperative for me to address that situation. Thusly, I hope the reader divulges me in the usage of the first person singular.) It is important to note that doing this is not a simple undertaking for me for two reasons. Firstly, I am male and feminist criticism supposes that the critic should have a female viewpoint. However progressive as I may not perceive myself to be I am not a woman, and I cannot be a woman but I can try to imagine the female perspective nonetheless. Secondly, feminist criticism is extremely varied and I cannot possibly hope to examine all of its possibilities, as mentioned above Elaine Showalter puts forth an idea of feminist criticism which I was unable to integrate with Enid Blyton's work, or the changes made to her work. Therefore I will examine the female characters in *Five on a Treasure Island* and *The Island of Adventure* and see whether the changes have improved

their stance in the literature.

As mentioned before, a lot of the changes in *Five on a Treasure Island* revolve around the character of Anne. She is 11 years old and the youngest of the group. Her role in the series of books is usually that of domestic chores but she does take part in their adventures. She does not moan a lot and is described as being quite brave. Her older brothers are protective of her and they fear for her safety, both because she is the youngest and because she is a girl. She is also described to be the least athletic of the five and a poor swimmer (those things are rectified in the newer versions). As mentioned previously her role has largely been removed in the new version as all paragraphs or sentences describing her as weak have been removed. By removing Anne as much as the editors of the newest edition have done, they have effectively removed one female character from the stories and therefore there is one less female to identify with. It is true that she is described as weak but she is also the youngest, so it is only natural for her to have some physical limitations. It is very typical that a girl would be handling all of the chores but it is also noted that she enjoys them. That is a stark contrast to George who does not do the chores because she does not enjoy them. Feminist critics would not approve of these edits because they deprave female readers of more opportunities to connect to a female character. The fact remains though, Enid Blyton wrote the book and she made the youngest, feeblest character a girl. Feminist criticism would not want Anne to remain the way she is. Perhaps a better solution would be to change the gender of two characters, such as Anne and Dick. If the feeblest, youngest character is a boy then there is no problem.

As for George, she really exists in the remnants of the male dominated Victorian view of male-female relationships. As Showalter writes:

“In the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term 'woman's sphere' expressed the Victorian and Jacksonian vision of separate roles for men and women, with little or no overlap and with women subordinate. Woman's sphere was defined and maintained by men, but women frequently internalized its precepts in the American 'cult of true womanhood' and the English 'feminine ideal'. (Showalter, 19)

George recognizes the extreme separation between men and women in society and automatically, and perhaps correctly, sees that women are the weaker of the two. Therefore she decides that it is better to be a boy, as they can do more of the things that she wants to do. This decision is both very brave and quite despicable at the same time. It is brave because that means that she is different and that she refuses to be confined in a box labeled “woman” where she has to iron, and wash the dishes and look

after children. She is a rebel and she is fighting a similar fight that feminists fight. Her decision is despicable because she is, effectively, denying the fact that she is a woman, overall she has succumbed to defeat to the male-centered society. In her mind a woman is worthless, so she looks down on other females, like Anne. Instead of fighting the good fight and trying to equalize her situation she teams up with the “winning side” so to speak. There is of course the psychoanalytical side of her character that revolves around her need to impress her disinterested father which probably coincides with George's decision that boys are inherently better than girls.

The girls, Dinah and Lucy-ann, are incredibly stereotypical with Dinah, at the very least struggles against the male stranglehold that Jack exudes over the gang while Lucy-ann is basically the same character that Anne is in *Famous Five on a Treasure Island*. Jack makes all of the plans and all of the decisions for the gang, except for one. When Dinah, Lucy-ann and Jack have been caught by one of the money launderers, Dinah comes up with the escape plan. Jack is extremely surprised. It is almost as if he cannot believe that a girl came up with that plan.

As mentioned before, Lucy-ann is very fond of her brother. They are orphans so there might be a psychological reason for that extreme fondness. He is, effectively, her guardian so she is bound to look up to him and revere him. He is her only role model as well and since she is only 11 she has not yet begun to rebel against authority. It is very apparent that *The Islands of Adventure* takes place in male dominated society. When Jack gets a letter from his sister Dinah at the boarding school where he has to stay for summer school, she mentions that she is forced to clean the house every day even when there is nothing to clean. Those responsibilities are never leveled against Jack or Phillip. Furthermore, neither of the girls have definitive characteristics. Phillip is a keen observer of birds and has a parrot that can talk while Jack has a knack to befriend any land animal that comes his way. Neither of the girls possesses any real skills, Lucy-ann's main skill seems to be her love for her brother Jack. Dinah's main qualities are that she acts grown up for her age and that she is level headed. Those are not interesting qualities, as a matter of fact, the only real purpose the girls seem to serve as characters is that they are girls, and perhaps to be captured by the bad men at some point. In the original book the girls do not go with the Bill Smuggs and Phillip to find Jack on the island, they go back to do some work in the kitchen. That is obviously a horrible stereotype that has been rectified in the more recent editions. However, the girls have not been given a specific role, even if they are present when danger occurs. When Jack is lost in the tunnels, he finds daylight but has no means to get up the hole that the daylight emanates from. He thinks to himself that if he was a girl he would cry but because he is a boy, and boys

do not cry, he will not. There is, however, something closely resembles a tear streaking down his chin.

In summation, the changes are not effective. They do not move the female characters away from the stereotypes that plague them in the original versions of the novels. In some cases, mainly Anne's they even make matters worse. The changes have not been made to challenge stereotypes in children's books but rather to alleviate politically correct pressure. Seen from a feminist critical standpoint the alterations do not come close to achieving any sort of equality between male and female characters and the female characters in the books are still situated in male centric world, and are judged from a male perspective. That means that the changes on the whole beg questioning. Is it not more apt to simply leave the books as they are if there is no actual point to the changes besides just doing something in order to republish them? The changes as they are do not rectify old prejudice but rather build up new ones.

Conclusion

The changes to Enid Blyton's works are twofold: for linguistic updates and to emphasize political correctness. Her books have been changed from their original states for a variety of reasons. The main ones are that she was never respected as an author and her works considered trivial in comparison with most of her, equally well known, contemporaries. Because she was as blisteringly popular as she was, her books proved to be extremely important assets for publishers which is why she was published and republished as much as possible. With every round of distribution the books were altered further, moving them further away from their original states. The fact that the alterations of the books were driven by monetary gain and not to shield children from racism or sexism devalues them greatly. Furthermore, when looked at from a standpoint of feminist criticism, the changes do not hold water. Therefore, the alterations are needless and ineffective.

Anyone interested in further investigation into the censorship of Enid Blyton would firstly have to widen the scope tremendously. Going through every single edition of any given novel and noting the differences between editions, the effects thereof and choosing a set prism to examine those changes through would probably reveal even more in relation to the exaggerated censorship Blyton's works have gone through.

Both of the summaries are from the Icelandic translations.

Appendix A

Summary of The Island of Adventure:

Phillip Mannerling has to go to summer school because of his bad grades. One day as he attempts to study in the sun underneath a large tree, he hears a voice telling him to all manner of nonsensical things, like shutting the door, or combing his hair. It turns out that the voice belongs to a parrot named Kiki, whose owner is a boy of Phillip's age, Jack. They get off famously from the first time they meet. Jack and his sister Lucy-ann are orphans who have to stay with their uncle and his housekeeper. The children are not fond of their uncle and the uncle is not fond of children so Phillip invites the pair to come and visit him in Craggy Tops. Lucy-ann and Jack do trek to Craggy Tops where they meet Phillip's sister Dinah and their parents. They also meet Jo-jo the black handyman and Bill Smuggs, a mysterious loner who lives in a shack by the beach, close to the Isle of Gloom. Jack has it set in his mind that he must visit the island as it is supposed to have great bird life, in particular he wants to see the rare Great Auck. Bill Smuggs allows the children to use his boat, as long as they do not use it to sail to the island and the gang abides. Phillip, however, has a better idea. They will wait until Jo-jo goes into town to run his errands and then they will take his boat. The two boys go to the island and discover copper mines that burrow deep below the surface of the island, the boys also find discarded cans of food, indicating that there were in all probability men on the island quite recently. They go back and tell Dinah and Lucy-ann all about their discovery. The boys find that Jo-jo had returned while they were gone and that the girls locked him in the basement. Phillip lets him out. Afterwards, Dinah and Phillip get into an altercation and Dinah leaves in a fit of hot rage. She goes into her uncle's room and finds a map of the island, and the tunnels underneath the island. The children then go to the island together when Jo-jo leaves to go into town for the entire day. When all of the children get to the island they find the cans of food to be gone, but they decide to venture into the mines. Inside the mines, Lucy-ann finds a pencil that she is sure belongs to Bill Stubbs. Soon, Phillip, Dinah and Lucy-ann run into the men that have inhabited the tunnels in the island. The men take the children captive, even if Phillip attempts to reason with them and tell the men that they will not squeal. Meanwhile, Jack has gotten lost in the tunnels and is unaware that his friends are now prisoners. Dinah, Lucy-ann and Phillip are locked inside a room. Dinah gets an idea, they would feign suffocation and attempt to turn the tables on their captors. The plan works and they escape. Jack, however, is still lost in the mines with Kiki. Kiki's

screams attract the men who locked the other children up. They give chase but cannot find him.

When Lucy-ann, Phillips and Dinah come back from the island they realize that Jack has not gotten back. Phillip goes to talk to Bill Smuggs who he thinks can help. Bill agrees after speaking to someone over his radio transmitter. They go to Bill's boat to find that someone has sabotaged it, they decide to steal Jo-jo's boat.

Meanwhile, the two girls find out that there might be a secret tunnel from the sub-basement in their house all the way to the island. They find Phillip and Bill and tell them about their discovery. Bill thinks that there is a tunnel from the well into the island. Phillip and Bill go down into the well while the girls go to the kitchen to help out.

Jack, still lost in the mines, finds some copper that he digs out of the tunnel walls. Then he finds the men who locked the other children up, they are eating. He follows them into a room where they are working some sort of machinery. Jack literally stumbles onto a huge sum of money in a room and concludes that the machines must be there to manufacture currency. The men are counterfeiters. These counterfeiters eventually find Jack and try to lock him up but, by mistake, they lock Kiki up instead. Jack continues to roam the mines and runs into Phillip and Bill. He tells them about the money and the machines. Bill is ecstatic about the news. Bill is in fact with the authorities, who have been tracking this group of smugglers for a long time. When the trio of Phillip, Jack and Bill try to retrieve Kiki they are captured by none other than Jo-jo who, as it turns out, is the head of the whole counterfeiting ring. Jo-jo's plan is to collapse the mines and let the sea in, thusly killing Bill and the boys. When the sea gets into the mines, the trio lets the sea carry them up the mineshaft and to safety, on Bill's accord. Jo-jo, who is befuddled as to how Phillip, Bill and Jack are still alive, and his band are then arrested by the authorities. In the end, it is decided that Phillip and Lucy-ann will stay indefinitely with Phillip and Dinah and all is well that ends well.

Appendix B:Summary of *Famous Five on a Treasure Island*

Anne, Dick and Julian are breakfasting with their mother and father when the talk of their summer vacation comes up. Mother and father have decided to take their summer vacation by themselves, but they do not know where the children can go. After everyone racks their brains they come up with Uncle Quentin's house, where the children have cousin who is apparently the same age as Dick.

When they arrive to Uncle Quentin's house their aunt Fanny has been waiting for them. They do not meet George until the next morning. She is a weird girl, who is called Georgina but only answers to George. She agrees, reluctantly to take them down to the beach. When at the beach she tells them about Kirrin Island and the supposed shipwreck that her great-great-grandfather had as he was transporting gold. They also meet Timmy the dog that George has to hide from her parents because he chews on furniture. The children go swimming and frolic about. When they are having lunch Anne almost reveals that George is still keeping Timmy around and George kicks her to make her shut up. Fanny makes George leave the dinner table. Anny then goes after George because she is worried that she has endangered their trip to Kirrin Island. The girls make up and the children decide to sail to Kirrin Island.

They sail around, and because there is barely any wind and the sea is completely clear they can see the ship. George dives down and almost touched the ship but it is too far down for her to enter or examine in any detail. The next day, they go all the way to the island. The children canvass the island and the old, ruined castle. There is, however, a storm a brewing and try to hurry back to land but the storm is too close, they have to wait it out on the island. The storm is much worse than anyone thought and it ends up raising the wrecked ship to the surface. The five decide to explore it the next day, first thing in the morning.

Inside, the shipwreck they find a chest that they are unable to open. In order to open the chest, they take it back to the house where Anne has the idea to take the chest up to the second floor balcony and dropping it down. They do so and the chest breaks open, but Uncle Quentin hears the ruckus, comes out and sees the broken chest. Quentin takes the chest away from the children and scolds them from having gone to the wrecked ship. George is incensed and vows to get the chest back as she is sure that it contains documents that would lead them to the gold. Julian takes it on himself to sneak into his Uncle's study and retrieve the chest. As they examine the contents of the chest they find a map of the castle on the island and information about gold bars. They conclude that the gold must be buried under the castle and make a copy of the map. The next morning the newspapers are full of stories about the

shipwreck and what is worse; Uncle Quentin has sold the chest containing the map of the island. On top of that Quentin reveals that a man wants to buy the entire island and build a restaurant there. As the children do not have much time since the island will be sold in a week's time they decide to spend a couple days there, to find the treasure. The children do not have much luck to begin with until Timmy chases a rabbit down a hole and stumbles across the dungeons underneath the castle. The children eventually find the entrance through the well and go down into the dungeons where they nearly get lost. After taking a break and having supper, the children go back down into the dungeons to find the gold. They do find a door but decide to wait until the morning to break it open. As Julian lashes into the door with an axe a piece of wood flies out and into Dick's cheek, it bleeds a lot so Anne and Julian take Dick up to the surface to get some air and bandages. They leave George alone to work on the door. After tending to Dick Julian goes back to the dungeon and helps George to finally break the door down. Inside, they find stacks of gold bars. Suddenly, Tommy starts barking uncontrollably, and sure enough the men who bought the chest and the island from Uncle Quentin have followed the children's lead down into the dungeons and to the gold. The men threaten to shoot Timmy if George does not send Anne and Dick a note saying that she and Julian have found the gold and they should come down into the dungeon. George, however, signs the note "Georgina" tipping Anne and Dick off that something is not right. The brother and sister go off to see if anyone else had been to the island while they were down in the underground enclosure. They do find signs of men, and with Dick concluding that they must be the same men that bought the island and the chest he starts planning. Two of the men look for Dick and Anne but the children hide successfully. They decide to climb down the well in order to find George and Julian. They find them and all four go the same way up the well but when they get to the boat they discover that the men have taken the oars. Dick has an idea; if they lock the men up in the dungeon they can take their boat or perhaps find the oars somewhere. Dick's attempt fails as the men are able to break the door open and he barely escapes. As he returns they children all run to their boat, George finds the oars in the men's motorboat. She instructs Dick and Julian to take her boat into the water while she destroys the men's boat with the axe they used on the door in the dungeons. The children escape, leaving the men stranded on the island. They tell Aunt Fanny everything. The cops go to Kirrin Island and arrest the men, Uncle Quentin decides to keep the island and George's family becomes rich in the process.

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