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Edward Ardizzone Revisited: Lucy Brown and the Moral Editing of Art

Edward Ardizzone (1900–1979), a British painter and illustrator, authored a successful set of children's books known as the "Tim" series, which began in 1936. One of the picture books, however, Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes *(1937), went out of print and was not reissued for 33 years. This article discusses the possibility that the implications of the story line provoked controversy among American librarians in the 1930s. A comparison of the two editions includes these issues. What is a quality picture book and are they just for children? Do revisions meant to modernize a classic make it a stronger work?*

KEY WORDS: picture books; censorship; librarians.

Edward Ardizzone (1900–1979) was a British painter, illustrator, and author of children's books. Nowadays, anyone familiar with rare books knows that his first editions and manuscripts can bring up to $600 each, and his illustrated manuscripts can command prices up to $30,000 a piece. As an illustrator, he was a master at portraying human figures in local settings, and his drawings are a study in the art of accented lines, crosshatching, and chiaroscuro. He also occupies an esteemed place as an author of picture books. His first children's book, *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* (1936), had the distinction of being one of the first picture books lithographed in the United States under the imprint of Oxford University Press-New York. Not everyone, however, immediately took to his early children's books. Although *Little Tim* did well in the United States and was reprinted, its publication in England a year later met with opposition. His second book, *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes* (1937), while very similar in inspiration to the first, went out of print and was not reissued for 33 years.

There is no doubt that these two books represented high quality with regard to text and illustration. Yet, Oxford University Press launched

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them, with some risk, into an American market dominated by popular, mass-produced juvenile literature, such as the inexpensive series books by Edward Stratemeyer, the publisher of the *Bobbsey Twins*. By the 1930s, many American librarians, teachers, children's book editors, and reviewers of children's books had formed strong associations to promote better literature; it is clear from the reviews of the time that some of them delighted in Ardizzone's innovative style. So, after the success of *Little Tim* in the United States, why did *Lucy Brown* go out of print?

One possibility is that the implication of the story line provoked too much controversy. In the original, Lucy is a small orphan girl living in London with an aunt who has no time for her. When elderly Mr. Grimes greets Lucy one day in a nearby park, a friendship begins that includes visits to see him and his housekeeper, Mrs. Smawley. In the end, Mr. Grimes adopts Lucy, and she goes to live with him and Mrs. Smawley. Ardizzone, himself, declared that "silly women librarians" did not like the idea that a little girl had gone to a park and made friends with a stranger (p. 23). The implication was that little children would readily speak to strangers because the fictitious Mr. Grimes had showered Lucy with gifts and even adopted her.

Nicholas Tucker, "Edward Ardizzone"

Ardizzone did not say who these librarians were or the time period when they supposedly objected to these ideas. Did they object in the 1930s, or closer to the reissue date in 1970? His biographer and brother-in-law, Gabriel White, expressed the view that the book embarrassed American librarians "at that time," which was the late 1930s.

Gabriel White, *Edward Ardizzone*

> Though the sales [for *Little Tim*] began slowly, a second story . . . *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes* followed the next year [1937]. This, however, proved to be a near disaster. That an old man should talk to a small girl who was a stranger in a public park, which was the Paddington Recreation Ground, embarrassed the librarians of America. At that time such easy manners were regarded there as a cause of social evils threatening children, and here was a tale telling of the solid rewards that might be forthcoming from the practice. The story was re-written, and the illustrations re-drawn, in 1970 (Bodley Head) and Mr. Grimes became an old friend of Lucy's family. It was a pity, for the first version had the charm of great simplicity, and the illustrations, though in another vein, had the same merits as those for *Little Tim*. (p. 133)

Marcus Crouch, "One old, one new: A review of two books from Edward Ardizzone"

Marcus Crouch put it more bluntly, "This is the famous book that offended the Puritan heart of America in the middle Thirties—Mr. Grimes had a little girl to stay with him, and the sex-crime rate was bad enough without this encouragement" (pp. 273–274). What's more, Grace Allen Hogarth, who had been Ardizzone's editor at Oxford University Press-New York in the 1930s, wrote an obituary about

Grace Allen Hogarth, "Edward Ardizzone, 1900–1979: An editor's view"

Ardizzone in 1980 that describes a situation many people today would call censorship:

> The book, however, was not immediately successful because Lucy Brown's adventures came about through the kind offices of an old gentleman whom she met by chance one day in the park. The story was considered, perhaps rightly, an encouragement to little girls to make friends with strangers. As a result, the book was not reprinted and was hidden away in disgrace, though not entirely forgotten by its creator and by those of us who had been distressed that the story's implications had mattered more than its lovely text and pictures. (pp. 683–684)

Another possibility is that the book simply did not sell well and for that reason was not reprinted. Perhaps there was a question of cost, since photo-offset lithography was expensive at its inception in the United States. From the British perspective, a number of scholars of children's literature have pointed out that the bold style of Ardizzone's books was not popular in England when first published.

Unfortunately, many of the key people who would have known about the original book's history have died. Still, it is illuminating to look at *Little Tim*, as well as to compare the 1937 and 1970 editions of *Lucy Brown*, as we look into the above controversy. Assuming that the 1930s was the time period in which the original *Lucy Brown* caused embarrassment, what was the children's book world like in the United States then? What made *Little Tim* a quality book? What was it women librarians might have objected to in *Lucy Brown* 60 years ago? Perhaps some issues have not changed in 60 years. Do critics judge a children's book by literary and artistic value alone? Who is the audience of children's books—children, adults, or both? How are these audiences different? Is the picture book today just for small children? If *Lucy Brown* had been censored in the 1930s, would a quality picture book still be challenged today in the United States if it portrayed improper behavior? The controversy that surrounds *Lucy Brown* confirms that selecting quality books for children continues to be a challenge involving many segments of society, as well as past and present values.

Background

A sketch of Ardizzone is in order. He illustrated more than 185 books, 20 of which he authored for children. Many of these are known as the "Tim" series, begun in 1936 and based on a few well-known characters. He was already an established artist before he began his children's books; his media included pen and ink drawing, watercolor, and lithographs, for which he did his own color separations. Ardizzone's style conveys a sense of movement and local color. With regard

to character development, he used posture, especially back views of the body, to convey a character's feelings. Even when he treated somber themes, the mood he conveyed was one of humor and comfort. Critics have compared Ardizzone, in spite of his distinct style, to nineteenth-century British artists such as George Cruikshank, who illustrated the first British edition of Grimm's fairy tales. Two of the many distinctions Ardizzone received were a post as an official war artist and membership in the Royal Academy.

By the 1930s in the United States, there were many people and institutions in place whose purpose was to provide good books for children. These included children's librarians at major public libraries, school librarians, children's editors at major publishing houses and journals, the American Library Association (ALA) and its forum—the Young People's Reading Round Table (1929), and local forums such as the Round Table of Children's Librarians (Boston, 1906). Many institutions were publishing lists of worthy books: ALA, H.W. Wilson, and the *Horn Book*, the first critical publication. Also, state governments were compiling standardized book lists for public school libraries. In addition, the Newbery (1922) and Caldecott (1937) awards had been established. While many of the books on these lists were suitable, they were not necessarily outstanding or popular with children. In addition, books that did not get onto these lists might not have sold as well. Surely the criteria for books to be on one list, such as the standardized school library book list, were not the same for another, such as *Horn Book*'s list.

Evelyn Geller, *Forbidden Books in American Libraries, 1900–1939: A Study in Cultural Change*

Grace Allen Hogarth, "A publisher's perspective"

John Rowe Townsend, "An elusive border"

Women spearheaded these early institutions. Geller reports that women made up 78.5 percent of the American library profession in 1910, for example (p. 91). According to Hogarth, in publishing, work with children's books in the early 1930s was almost exclusively confined to women because men felt children's publishing had an aura of domesticity (p. 771). These women's efforts to select, evaluate, and promote good children's books were zealous. John Rowe Townsend believes the children's literature industry was not the creation of writers or publishers, but of the "band of American ladies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries who built up library work with children and started a mission that was to extend itself into the education and publishing fields" (pp. 34–35). One of these pioneering women was Bertha E. Mahony Miller, founder of the *Horn Book* and author of a knowledgeable book about illustrators of children's books. She reviewed Ardizzone's first picture books and immediately recognized their artistic quality.

It is important to add that prior to 1939, the year the Library Bill of Rights was passed, the ALA had encouraged librarians to take on the

Office for Intellectual Freedom, *Freedom of Information Manual*

role of moral censor. Even though the term *censorship* was not common in library literature before the 1930s, the articles that appeared and supported censorship "only quibbled over the degree and nature of it" (p. xvi). A debate that was published in the *Wilson Bulletin* in 1929 illustrates quite well the restrictions public librarians were putting on children's materials. A bookstore proprietor, Ernest F. Ayres, wrote an article in which he objected to a public librarian's list of children's books that should not circulate. Many of the titles on the list were from the popular series books that often showed children defying adult authority. He argued that children should first read what they enjoyed, and then later, they might choose what the librarian suggested (pp. 528–529). Another public librarian, Lillian H. Mitchell, rebutted, saying that series books were a waste of time and that children would benefit from books that a "literary-minded" adult would enjoy (p. 584).

Ernest F. Ayres, "Not to be circulated"

Lillian H. Mitchell, "Not to be circulated"

Thus, censorship was probably not uncommon among public librarians in 1937 and may have been practiced by public school librarians, who were affiliated with the public library if there was no school library (p. 35). After 1939, as worldwide authoritarian regimes imposed censorship within their countries, American librarians began to oppose censorship and joined others in fighting this oppression. Nevertheless, it is evident from library literature that by 1937, there were many influential women from libraries, schools and publishing who knew each other and who shared a zealous mission of connecting children with good books. Many of them probably read Ardizzone's first children's books, and some of them were not beyond moral judgment.

Rebecca Butler, "Contending voices: Intellectual freedom in American public school libraries, 1827–1940"

Add to the social and moral fervor of the times an aesthetic fervor over the picture book, which had become more attractive and more evocative of pleasure. The process of photo-offset lithography, for example, not only provided for the blending of text and picture, but also allowed complex works in a range of colors to be completely reproduced. The more visually effective the pictures, the fewer words needed for description in this short format that allows the beginner to "read" the illustrations. Sheila Egoff comments that people believe picture books to be powerful, and states that they are subjected to closer scrutiny and more judgment than any other type of children's book, "What is meant cannot be implied but must be shown and related in the precise, literal terms that very young children can recognize" (p. 247).

Sheila Egoff, *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature*

It is here that I believe Ardizzone's aesthetic ideas broke with the viewpoint of the librarian because he did not always show and relate his story in precise, literal terms. Instead, he used suggestiveness as an

artistic tool in the short picture book format. For example, he suggested a character's emotions by the way he or she sat or gestured. In addition, his illustrations do not always include text to reveal the conversations or interactions between characters. He leaves that to the reader's imagination. These are artistic subtleties to which I believe young children can also relate. However, adults who are looking for a precise illustration of their own values might misinterpret them.

Ardizzone's Picture Books

Truly, this volatile climate of protective, female morality and an iconoclastic art form, such as the picture book, would have been difficult for any artist. Ardizzone, though, had very distinct ideas about the qualities a picture book should have (pp. 289–298) and developed these in *Little Tim*, which was successful in the U.S. market. *Lucy Brown*, which he had actually composed first for his older daughter (p. 88), has many of the same qualities.

Edward Ardizzone, "Creation of a picture book"

Edward Ardizzone, "About Tim and Lucy"

What made *Little Tim* a quality picture book? The story is about a small boy who stows away on a boat against his parents' wishes. Although he is looking for adventure, he finds danger and fear, yet overcomes them. Ardizzone created the book for his four-year-old son, who added many details. He wanted to conserve the impression of a sketchbook, thus the original had a large size (9 × 13 ¼) and hand-lettered text. The sound of the prose was meant to capture life at sea, so there are long rolling sentences, sailor's talk, and ship terms: "When this was done the boatman said, 'Come give a shove, my lad,' and they both pushed the boat down the shingle beach into the water, clambered on board, and off they went" (Ardizzone, *Little Tim*, p. 11).

Due to the short format of the picture book, Ardizzone believed the illustrations had to create the setting, the characters, and the mood. Thus, line drawings with vivid watercolor washes give the color of the sea. Then, it is Tim's posture, not his face, that best conveys his character. There is a back view of him slumping in disappointment when his parents forbid him to go on a ship (p. 8). Yet, his back is upright and taut when he is proudly working at the ship's wheel (p. 24). Tim's face is actually nondescript. Perhaps this is because Ardizzone knew children liked to see themselves in the roles of his protagonists (Ardizzone, "About Tim and Lucy," p. 88). Also, there is humor in images where adults and children share difficulties. In one scene after the shipwreck, Tim and the captain are both tucked like children into two small beds (*Little Tim*, p. 40). Another device is to use a speech balloon to pinpoint the captain's admiration for the brave boy: "He seems to be quite a useful lad" (p. 21). Often the

words at the page breaks reflect the drama of a nearby picture and the suspense that carries on to the next page: "They stood hand in hand and waited for the end" (p. 31).

Finally, Ardizzone believed that the story had to be possible and true, and that the author-artist wrote to amuse the childish part of himself in order to avoid the cardinal error of writing and drawing down to children (Ardizzone, "Creation of a picture book," p. 292). Even if they are possible and true, Ardizzone's stories are full of improbabilities. One is that a four-year old would stow away on a boat. Yet, *Little Tim*, as well as *Lucy Brown*, is a blend of fantasy and reality. The children do face and conquer real difficulties. Through fantasy, they are acting out and trying to fulfill their wishes: For Tim, it is to have an adventure at sea; for orphan Lucy, it is to have a friend and a family.

In dealing with serious themes such as fear and death, Ardizzone uses brief colloquial phrases and images to suggest them, "We are bound for Davey Jones's locker," the captain says as the waves rise in the background (*Little Tim*, p. 31). The image of impending disaster is conveyed by showing the sharp, linear slant of the deck against the high, curved lines of the waves. Frightened Tim, holding the captain's hand, does not know what Davey Jones's locker is, but comments that he would not mind going anywhere with the captain. Ardizzone only refers to death as "the end." By using colloquialisms, images, and some humor, Ardizzone deals with the subjects, but does not overburden the small child with explanations. In spite of strong themes, there is always a sense of security based on a unique, albeit improbable, friendship that develops between an adult and a child. Under other circumstances, these children and adults might be antagonistic to one another or socially correct.

Lucy Brown was similar in style to *Little Tim*, but was a domestic tale rather than an adventure story. In the original, orphan Lucy, who lives with a busy aunt, feels lonely while playing alone in a nearby London park. She notices that an elderly, even ugly man is also alone. He would try to talk to the children, but they run away or pester him. One day he notices Lucy and speaks to her. She responds politely and in a child's way, asks for ice cream. He obliges happily, and thus begins a friendship that includes walks, and visits to have tea at Mr. Grimes's home with his housekeeper, Mrs. Smawley. Mr. Grimes falls ill, though, and time lapses before Lucy is summoned to the house to help him recuperate. Once he does, Mr. Grimes proposes a formal adoption, which Lucy's aunt accepts. He showers Lucy with gifts and then takes her and Mrs. Smawley to live in a magnificent country house. Nicholas Tucker revealed that before this original story was

published, it had already been edited so that Mr. Grimes would not die (p. 23).

Questions of Audience

One of the issues relevant to *Lucy Brown* and its possible censorship has to do with the audience of children's books. Is it children, adults, or both? I think the answer is "both." In writing for children, Ardizzone did not want to write down to them. This is not to say that he included adult terrain that children would be innocent about or issues that children would not understand. Taking their age into consideration, he credited children with understanding many things through their sense of humor. For example, he was concerned about literary and artistic elements and thought children would respond to them as long as they were fun. He was successful in capturing many of those elements in *Lucy Brown*. He created a polite dialog between the characters, which is not only kind but also comical and that has a delightful rhythm that would be fun to imitate: "Mrs. Smawley," said the doctor, "I don't like the look of our patient at all. I must have a second opinion. I will call in the eminent physicians . . ." (*Lucy Brown*, 1937, leaf 15). In addition, Ardizzone showed many nuances of character through the details in his drawings. Children love these details, and nuances are what they "read" and tally up before assigning simple traits of good or bad to characters. No matter how ugly Mr. Grimes is, for example, a bad person would never cry a puddle of tears out of loneliness, and this event occurs before he meets Lucy. Again, the tender detail is also humorous. In the story's conclusion, Lucy goes to shops and buys every object of her delight. This scene, which children could act out, offers immediate and tangible redress for all the deprivations an orphan has suffered.

Presumably the point that embarrassed American librarians was that Mr. Grimes was a stranger who spoke to a small girl in the park, that this girl reciprocated his attentions, and that she received many gifts as a result of this behavior. Perhaps the librarians even censored the book for this reason. For Ardizzone, the artist, who was trying not to write down to children, the fact that Mr. Grimes was a stranger was not significant. Even 33 years later, he still thought the criticism was silly, at least outwardly. As I said before, part of the realm of his stories was fantasy or wish fulfillment. In that realm, it would not matter if Mr. Grimes were a stranger. Mr. Grimes could be anyone Ardizzone had imagined, or someone his daughter had seen in the park. In the world of fantasy, there are no social rules that forbid elderly men from talking to little girls they do not know.

In fact, Mr. Grimes's being a stranger might have enhanced Ardizzone's treatment of serious themes such as loneliness and empathy.

If Mr. Grimes is a stranger, it increases the chances that other little readers will feel empathy for any other person they know of who is lonely. In contrast, if Mr. Grimes has to be an old family friend, the chances of identifying with him might decrease. I believe this is but another example of Ardizzone's suggestiveness. Yet, the conflict raises questions that are relevant today and still debated. Do small children need more help distinguishing between fact and fantasy? Are they likely to do whatever they see or read about in books, such as talking to strangers? No one knows exactly how children process information. However, this scenario of an adult stranger talking to a small child is a perfect example of the judgment calls authors must make as they write children's books. They may have to temper their imagination with the common-sense suggestions of adults.

Perhaps it was not just the story line that caused librarians embarrassment. In the original version, there are several illustrations with corresponding text that might have elicited a strong reaction from adults. I think the image of Mr. Grimes, for one, evokes contradictory feelings. He is not only fat and ugly, but has large hands and long, pointed, bony fingers stretching out toward the children he is following. In profile, his hat rim and shoes are low and pointed; his nose, chin, and whiskers jut out; his eyes are slanted, yet reveal a flashing, white eyeball against a dark complexion. In one picture (Illustration 1), a

Illustration 1 (© Edward Ardizzone. Permission granted by the artist's estate.)

wide-eyed girl, her braids flying, is fleeing from him (*Lucy Brown*, 1937, leaf 6). In this picture he looks sinister, and I find it hard to reconcile that particular quality with the bumbling humor and pathos I think Ardizzone intended. What would a child see though? A child probably does not know the idea of "sinister," and it is not the same as "scary." Perhaps Ardizzone was making a caricature of scariness so that the little reader would end up laughing. At any rate, the adult reaction may have been negative.

The picture of the girl fleeing is accompanied by quaint narration that again is perhaps meant to sound tender or humorous; yet, an adult might have found it overly familiar: "Now every day there used to walk in the Recreation Ground an old gentleman called Mr. Grimes . . . he was very sad because he liked to talk to the little boys and girls he met on his walk, but when he talked to the little girls they were frightened and ran away. . . ." (*Lucy Brown*, 1937, leaves 5–6).[1] Then there is the scene where Mr. Grimes talks to Lucy and takes her off for ice cream. In this view, he again has the pointed, outstretched fingers, and Lucy is leaning slightly toward him, with her dress above her knees. She looks very pert and the narrative goes,

> Mr. Grimes was going for his usual walk, he saw Lucy Brown, and she looked so pretty that he had to go and talk to her. 'How are you my little dear?' he said. 'You do look nice.' 'Thank you, sir,' said Lucy Brown 'I am very well and would like a nice ice cream.' So they went to the pavilion, and Lucy had an enormous ice, and Mr. Grimes talked to her while she ate it. Mr. Grimes was very happy because at last he had found a little girl who was not frightened of him, and he liked her so much that he asked her to tea. (*Lucy Brown*, 1937, leaves 7–9).[2]

Ethel L. Heins, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes* (1970)

This is followed by a picture without text of the two chatting at a table. Ethel L. Heins, who was the children's librarian at New York Public Library in 1938 just after the original book had come out, reviewed the revised version in 1971 and said that the expanded text left less to the imagination (p. 157).

On a deeper level, perhaps women librarians saw a flirtation between Lucy and Mr. Grimes, a situation I presume they would have found inappropriate. The fact that the characters were strangers, the pretty color pictures of Lucy in her short dress, the grotesque, dark ugliness of Mr. Grimes, dialog that created a quick familiarity between the adult and child, and the illustrations that were not fully explained by words could have had an impact. Do not forget the physical appearance of the original. It was large (9 × 13¼ in.), and each leaf was a full-color reproduction of lively pen drawings with a watercolor wash of deep tones. I think it must have caught the eye and provoked immediate reaction, both positive and negative. There is the possibility that Ardizzone had indeed suggested a flirtation but thought nothing

of it. As he said, his aim was to avoid writing down to children. This again raises the question of what children see in a book. Are they not capable of perceiving of flirtation as a type of game that is quite common and often funny?

In examining the original, I am plagued by the biases of my own modern, adult, female mind. Can I look at the book objectively and as a whole? Is this a good book even if I do not like the content or the idiosyncrasies of the artist's style? This leads me to observe that the situation today is not so different from what it was 60 years ago. If critics would evaluate children's literature by aesthetic criteria, just as they do adult literature, there might be a fairer basis of comparison. Perhaps this book was censored 60 years ago because it defied some prominent social or moral idea of the time. Perhaps, too, it was censored because librarians had overt authority to do so in 1937. Nowadays, even with ample artistic freedom, books in the United States still face challenges for some of the same things they did years ago—principally sexuality and morality. An example is the picture book, *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989) by Lesléa Newman. Since its publication, challenges related to its depiction of sexuality and homosexuality have continuously been reported to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom through 1999 (p. 131). The irony of the original *Lucy Brown* is that, taken as a whole, it shows a high moral value, which is empathy.

Office for Intellectual Freedom, "Nampa, Idaho"

In the revision of 1970, Ardizzone turned Mr. Grimes into an old family friend, whom both boys and girls pester. It is Lucy who approaches and mentions her aunt. In addition, there are changes that obviously make the book conform to Ardizzone's more modern style. It is smaller in size and has pen drawings and crosshatching that alternate with the color lithographs. However, it is revealing that there are other small changes. Lucy's aunt looks less masculine. The appearance of Mr. Grimes is less garish and pointed. Lucy's dress is longer. Everyone knows exactly what Lucy and Mr. Grimes talk about at the ice cream table, and Mrs. Smawley changes from a voluptuous figure to a slender one.

What Happened to *Lucy Brown*?

Lucy Brown was published in late 1937 in the United States, yet, the first mention I could locate of a problem with the book was by Marcus Crouch in 1962, twenty-five years after the book was published. "*Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes* (which encountered opposition in the States on grounds of morality!) was a quieter story [than *Little Tim*] but showed as firm an understanding of children" (p. 58). It was not until 1970, when the revised, redrawn book was published, that

Marcus Crouch, *Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in Britain, 1900–1960*

Illustration 2 (© Edward Ardizzone. Permission granted by the artist's estate.)

Ardizzone gave an interview to Nicholas Tucker, and the subject of possible censorship became widely known. Ardizzone recounted how Mr. Grimes had to be turned into an old family friend. When Tucker asked Ardizzone what he thought of that, he replied, "Absolute nonsense, of course" (Tucker, pp. 23–24). With regard to evidence from reasonably accessible library literature, there was simply no mention in *Library Journal*, the *ALA Bulletin*, or the *Horn Book* of a censorship problem related to *Lucy Brown* in the decades from 1937 to 1970.[3]

While trade reviews are often slanted toward sales, it is interesting to note that those of 1937 demonstrated some awareness of the artistic quality of the book. H. E. Bates, in *New Statesman and Nation*, said he had tried the book out on children and that they liked it: " Mr. Ardizzone's pictures are first rate, and his pictures of Mr. Grimes are . . . quite masterly in their colouring and comic untidiness. . . . the book is altogether a winner" (p. 934). Ann Eaton of the *New York Times Book Review* wrote, "The pictures have all the characteristics best loved by children, lively action, plenty of detail, and bright color" (p. 4). The children's book editor for the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote, "The pictures . . . are all invested with that horrible and delightful realism which children appreciate" (p. 836). In addition, the children's book editor of *Library Journal* put the book under the heading, "Distinguished" and called it important (p. 808).

H. E. Bates, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*

Ann Eaton, *New York Times*, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*

Times Literary Supplement, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*

Library Journal, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*

Eulalie Steinmetz Ross, *The Spirited Life: Bertha Mahony Miller and Children's Books*

The *Horn Book* editors, who at the time were Bertha E. Mahony Miller and Assistant Editor, Elinor Whitney, reviewed *Lucy Brown*. According to her biographer, Mahony was one of the first people to see the handmade book. "Bertha was so moved by the beauty of the 'manuscript book,' as she called the dummy, and the tender story it told, that she promptly gave the name 'Lucy Brown' to the doll she had bought at Liberty's for five-year old Nancy Dean" (p. 174). *Horn Book* policy of the time stated that any book on its list had already been deemed worthy of buying for the home library. Nevertheless,

Bertha E., Mahony Miller and Elinor Whitney, *Horn Book*, review of *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*

the review was not entirely favorable, "The artist's pictures glorify a commonplace, materialistic story of a little girl who befriends a lonely old gentleman. . . . The artist's earlier book, *Little Tim* . . . is a classic, but even Ardizzone pictures cannot make *Lucy Brown* important" (pp. 36–37). Still, the review does not mention any uproar over the content of *Lucy Brown.*

Nicholas Tucker does not believe *Lucy Brown* was forced from a reprint solely because of the content. He believes that at the time, the large size and bold, innovative style were not popular.[4] Frank Eyre affirms that there was much initial opposition in England to this style:

Frank Eyre, *British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century*

> The Ardizzone books were almost the only modern British picture books to be as successful in the United States as in this country. They were, indeed, initially more successful in America, for Ardizzone's slightly sophisticated use of colour was often disliked by conventional parents in this country, many of whom denied themselves the pleasure of watching the delighted enjoyment with which children, whose sense of colour and design is uninhibited, absorb them. (pp. 42–43)

There were also delicate financial considerations, and Grace Allen Hogarth offered some insights into the publishing world of the time. Photo-offset lithography was very expensive. Picture books could not be printed in very large editions, and it was difficult to get buyers to pay much when the product went to children with sticky fingers. In the early stages of lithographic reproductions, a picture book published in the United States by a foreign author had to sell well in the United States as well as in other countries to warrant a reprint in the United States. She mentions the additional complication of American sensitivity to certain topics:

Grace Allen Hogarth, "The artist and his editor"

> Cooperation between countries, however, can be as difficult as that between author and artist. There is more of what one can label "moral"editing in the United States than in England. A picture book, in which . . . a hiccuping hippo is cured by laughter when he meets a beautiful girl hippo who suffers from the same complaint is considered by the American editor to be "suggestive" and the girl must become, alas, a friend of unspecified sex. . . . With a world-wide edition, moreover, difficulties of negotiation can lead to disaster, and while a first printing may be achieved successfully, the reprint can prove impossi-

ble. . . . Since the whole operation is geared to a large printing and a low per-copy price, plans can break down and end by forcing the book out of print. (p. 52)

If Americans had had any moral qualms about the book, surely that would not have helped. In addition, if the British were not initially fond of Ardizzone's style, it may not have done well in England, either.

In the end, then, there is no conclusive evidence that women librarians in the United States censored *Lucy Brown*, and that this alone prevented a reprint. Most likely it did not sell well due to factors such as its cost or its lack of inclusion on a standardized school library list, and then went out of print. I would not be surprised, however, if some librarians, as described at the beginning of this essay, had strong moral objections to the book as well as the influence and connections to censor it.

Conclusion

Modern critics have established Ardizzone as an illustrator and writer who was very much in touch with children's visual, auditory, and emotional needs. Nevertheless, some of the issues surrounding *Lucy Brown* remain unresolved. First, there is still no single standard by which to evaluate children's literature. Egoff, for one, does not believe that literary and artistic criteria can be the sole basis of evaluation since children require direction from adults and are much more open to influence. She believes they require strong moral and social values (p. 2). More recently, Miriam Martinez and Marcia Nash report that the authors of children's literature textbooks have "repeatedly recommended the use of literary and academic criteria as the basis for making decisions. . . .Yet the issues that have surrounded children's books belie the consistency of these recommendations" (p. 6). They mention increasing use in recent decades of even more diverse criteria stemming from child development, psychology, and cultural pluralism.

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Ardizzone did not want to shelter children from the harder facts of life. This sounds like the realistic fiction that is common today. However, his picture books were for young children, and he focused on a simple plot, simple style, and illustrations that suited the text and enhanced it—all within a 32-page format. In addition, emotional issues such as loneliness and illness had a clear resolution. In contrast, recent children's literature textbooks state that picture books are for all ages. What's more, they deal with incredibly varied topics such as alcoholism (*Uncle James*, Marc Harshman, 1993) or apartheid (*At the Crossroads*, Rachel Isadora, 1994). This range includes formerly taboo topics such as sex and death. There is still much debate about whether or not young children should be protected from these situa-

tions. Some recent criticism refers to a lack of moral stance in these picture books, as well as to a lack of social or historical context. Proponents believe even young children mature from sharing in a real, emotional world (Martinez and Nash, p. 10). Thus, there is much controversy over the changes in subject matter in picture books.

Would the original *Lucy Brown* still be challenged today in the United States? I think it would. Ardizzone, of course, meant for *Lucy Brown* to be read more as a fantasy than real-life drama. Could small children read it as fantasy without any guidance from adults? Surely they could. Nevertheless, artistic works in which authors try to externalize sensitive themes through bold or innovative techniques often *do* provoke questions from children. Adults should be available to discuss these questions, and children's librarians should continue to make as many different viewpoints as possible available so children can have this important dialog.

Do the changes, then, in the revised edition make it a stronger or weaker book? If the definition of strength has to do with the book's appeal to the widest number of readers, then some of the changes do address reasonable concerns adults have about protecting children, and thereby strengthen it. From this viewpoint, it is common sense that Mr. Grimes should not be a stranger. In addition, the original picture of him with bony, clutching fingers and a girl running away did not bolster his image as a kindly old man deserving of children's friendship, except that he was ugly. The redrawn picture focuses on his vulnerability. However, the changes Ardizzone made (or was persuaded to make) in order to clean up any hints of flirtation or to clarify what the characters are chatting about, do not strengthen the book artistically. They talk down to children and take away from the spontaneity he desired in trying to recreate a sketchbook that had evolved out of his and his daughter's imaginations. Part of that spontaneity was the nostalgic portrayal of an earlier time and place; yet, the effort to make the book look and sound more modern has dissipated that effect. Despite these changes, Ardizzone still managed to keep his masterful characterization, theme of empathy, and comic tone intact. This is the plight of children's authors, though. They must decide whether or not to give up some artistic license in exchange for getting their message across to as many potential readers as possible. When taken as a whole, artistic works for adults become interesting and vibrant through the skillful application of qualities such as suggestiveness and understatement. The same should be true of children's literature.

The ultimate test of a book, of course, is whether or not children like it and want to read it. In that sense, the high-quality picture book,

Lucy Brown, and the inexpensive series book, *The Bobbsey Twins*, had something in common for their time besides possible scorn. Both were imaginative, fun and hopeful and had strong protagonists who resolved their problems. Children said they liked the books. As artistic works they may not be comparable with regard to a crafted development and integration of all the elements of a story. Yet, they both have a place as children's books. That leads to the point that children's literature is not free from the influences of society and its complex web of values. It merely reflects the trends of the times, and the battles that still rage.

Notes

1. Compare with *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes* (rev. and redrawn, London: Bodley Head, 1970), 10–11.
2. *Ibid*., 13–16.
3. I had no access to the bulletins of specific large public libraries and regional round tables from the time period (1937–1970). Neither the *Horn Book* nor O.U.P. returned my queries about possible archival material on *Lucy Brown*.
4. In a letter of reply from Tucker to Rebecca Martin dated 9/1/98 he expressed this comment.

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