

# 人間の世界で生き延びる〈他者〉

— The Mennymys の〈生きた〉布人形達の闘い —

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## 要旨

イギリスの児童文学作家 Sylvia Waugh (1935-) にとって出版された初めての作品となった「メニム一家」の物語は、1994年にガーディアン賞を受けた *The Mennymys* (1993) とその続編、*Mennymys in the Wilderness* (1994), *Mennymys Under Siege* (1995), *Mennymys Alone* (1996), *Mennymys Alive* (1996) という5冊からなるシリーズである。このシリーズに登場する等身大の布人形一家は、創作者 Kate Penshaw の死後〈命〉を得て〈生きた〉人形となり、電話や手紙を駆使して Brocklehurst Grove 5番地にそのまま住む権利を得る。すなわち、人間の世界に見た目はまったく普通の家と変わらない人形の家が出現することになる。但し、メニム達は人間達に正体を知られないように細心の注意を払って生活しているため、近隣の人々は誰もこの一家が実は人形だとは知らない。

本論では、人間の中で存続する〈生きた〉布人形一家について、現代児童文学作品におけるゴシック的要素、〈他者〉が生き延びるための闘い、および必要に迫られて〈生きた〉人形達が接する人間達との関係などの分析を通して、本作品に示唆されるメニム一家という被造物の謎を考察する。屋根裏に長年放置されていた人形が、一家の中の母親によって完成された後〈命〉を得るようになるという、第1巻に描かれる場面や、異種族に囲まれ脅威を感じ苦悩しながら生きる〈他者〉である人形達が、実は人間達の好意によって何度か救われることから推察されるように、メニム一家が〈生きた〉人形となった経緯には、創作者が一心に傾けた愛情が関与していると考えられよう。

## Others Surviving in the Human World: The Struggle of the Life-sized Rag Dolls in *The Mennymys*

Hiroko Sasada

## Abstract

*The Mennymys* series, written by Sylvia Waugh, consists of five books: *The Mennymys* (1993), *Mennymys in the Wilderness* (1994), *Mennymys Under Siege* (1995), *Mennymys Alone* (1996), and *Mennymys Alive* (1996). The first volume won *The Guardian* 27th Children's Fiction Award in 1994. The protagonists of these books are life-sized rag dolls that come to life after their creator's death. They legally obtain the house at number 5, Brocklehurst Grove, and it becomes a dolls' house in the human world. In this article, through the analysis of several significant aspects in the series, such as the Gothic in modern children's fiction, the struggle of the animated dolls living as others surrounded by people totally different from them, and their inevitable contacts with human beings, I shall consider the mystery of the Mennymys; that is,

how the origin of their lives seems to be deeply concerned with the creator's affection towards these dolls.

## Introduction

*The Mennymys* (1993), the first work in print for Sylvia Waugh (1935–), won *The Guardian* 27th Children's Fiction Award in 1994. When this book was first published, *The Mennymys* was praised by numerous reviewers, particularly because of its originality.<sup>1</sup> The protagonists of *The Mennymys* series, which consists of five books (*The Mennymys* (1993), *Mennymys in the Wilderness* (1994), *Mennymys Under Siege* (1995), *Mennymys Alone* (1996), and *Mennymys Alive* (1996)), are living life-sized rag dolls. They live in an ordinary human house in the human world. Although they successfully keep it secret that they are actually not human beings but animated dolls, the Mennym family is always exposed to the danger of being discovered. They are doomed to survive as others in the human world as a result of coming to life one day without any particular reason. In this article, I shall consider the struggle of the Mennymys in order to clarify what the animation of these mysterious life-sized rag dolls designates.

### 1. The Dolls' House in the Human World

In the first nine pages of *The Mennymys*, there is no information about the fact that the Mennymys, composed of the following members: Grandfather (Sir Magnus), Grandmother (Tulip), Father (Joshua), Mother (Vinetta), a sixteen-year-old boy (Soobie), a fifteen-year-old girl (Appleby), ten-year-old twins (Poopie and Wimpey), and a baby (Googles), are not an ordinary human family. It can be argued that the more ordinary the setting is the more effective the introduction to the extraordinary becomes, as Brian Attebery has claimed. He writes that fantasy works are usually expected to violate ordinariness and suggest 'some element of the *impossible* and *supernatural*' on the assumption that there is a common sense about what is possible or natural.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the possible and natural setting of this story needs to be effectively subverted to reveal aspects of fantasy.

The story starts from a letter, which seems to have been sent from an Australian relative to a family living in the house at number 5, Brocklehurst Grove,<sup>3</sup> in England, from Albert Pond to Sir Magnus Mennym. This letter causes a fuss among his family because no one from the Mennymys has ever tried to make contact with, in their words, 'outsiders'. After these descriptions, the astonishing fact is suddenly revealed<sup>4</sup> as follows:

They were not human, you see – at least not in the normal sense of the word. They were not made of flesh and blood. They were just a whole, lovely family of life-size rag dolls. They were living and walking and talking and breathing, but they were made of cloth and kapok. They each had a little voice box, like the sort they put in teddy-bears to make them growl realistically. Their frameworks were strong but pliable. Their respiration kept their bodies supplied with oxygen that was life to the kapok and sound to the voices.<sup>5</sup>

Although this factual revelation is nothing short of astonishing, no more information or explanation is added, except for the name of the talented creator of these rag dolls, Kate Penshaw, and another fact that they came alive after their creator's funeral.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the reason why these dolls have come to be living things remains a mystery.

Although the Mennymys pretend to be strange people, who have almost no dealings with their neighbourhood and keep indoors, this house appears to be a haunted mansion that others inhabit secretly. As Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis point out, the Gothic is the mainstream of contemporary children's books, which are considered popular works rather than literary ones. These works, employing 'formulaic landscapes and (an) often humorous approach to psychic horrors,' are familiar to young readers. Since some changes are constantly being introduced, the conception of the Gothic in children's literature has been expanded.<sup>7</sup> *The Mennymys* series, which describes animated non-living things, namely others concealing themselves in an everyday human world, is possibly regarded as a Gothic work for children. However, these living rag dolls demand not to be threatened by, or to cause threats to, human beings. Even though their existence appears to be uncanny or even macabre, the Mennymys make a lot of efforts in trying to hide their true selves. Therefore, they can be regarded as far different from monsters or creatures in conventional literary works, which easily violate or jeopardize the lives of human beings. Such a difference might be caused by some changes added to the Gothic in children's fiction.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the animated life-sized rag dolls, another Gothic aspect is employed in this fiction. A ghost frequently appears in the second and third volumes of *The Mennymys* series; the ghost of the creator of these dolls, Kate Penshaw. Kate turns out mainly to help the Mennymys, though she shows some limitations as a ghost, such as the fact that she cannot touch things in the world any more unless she asks someone who is alive to do so. For instance, at an impending crisis in Brocklehurst Grove in the beginning of the second volume, Kate Penshaw asks a human youth, who is one of her relatives, to lend a hand to the rag doll family.<sup>9</sup> Kate acts as a bridge between this young man and the Mennymys until all the

problems are resolved. Even some of the Mennymys have an opportunity to make contact with her. The ghost of Kate Penshaw functions to empower the powerless and helpless rag doll family living among humans as others.<sup>10</sup> Arguably, both the existence of the living life-sized rag dolls and the frequent appearance of their dead creator in this fiction emphasise impenetrability, which is essential for remarkable ghost stories.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, in the first volume, *The Mennymys*, three episodes are described in detail to clarify that these rag dolls are originally merely non-living things; and thus, their lives can be easily threatened at any time. The first is the discovery of Pilbeam, who was apparently being made as a twin of Soobie, but has been left unfinished in the chest in the attic for forty years. When Soobie happens to find her with 'Nuova Pilbeam' written on a name card, he is shocked and frightened with his discovery because there are exact parts of a rag doll just as his own:

... when Soobie raised the lid he was startled to see, first of all, two pink legs wearing black patent leather shoes on their feet. Feeling just a little but squeamish, he lifted them out carefully and put them on the floor. Next came two arms twined together ... Next there was the headless torso.<sup>12</sup>

At this moment, the doll does not seem to be alive because 'where the eyes should have been there was a blank, unseeing space.'<sup>13</sup> However, this unfinished rag doll also comes alive when it does get eyes. After Soobie finds her beautiful, black, beady eyes and puts them into the two holes on her face, he realises that he is being looked up at by her 'dazed and fearful' black eyes.<sup>14</sup>

Just as with Pilbeam forgotten in the attic for such a long while, there is another doll neglected in the house at number 5, Brocklehurst Grove; namely, Miss Quigley, who has lived in the hall cupboard for forty years. She pretends to live in her own house at Trevethick Street and regularly visits Vinetta at tea time. Everyone in the Mennymys politely ignores her when she comes out from the cupboard and goes out from the back door to go to the front door through the garden and rings the doorbell.<sup>15</sup> Whenever Miss Quigley visits her best friend, she and Vinetta pretend to enjoy invisible tea. However, except for this regular visit, Miss Quigley stays silently in the dark and narrow cupboard, as if she is not a living thing.

The third is the detailed description of the soaking wet Appleby. This talented young Mennym makes up the existence of an Australian landowner and fabricates a letter from him to surprise the whole family just because she is in fact bored with the constant fifteenth

birthday party held for her only. She has remained at the age of fifteen for forty years since the Mennymys came to life because rag dolls cannot age. The revelation of her naughty fabrication leads her to run away from home. As a result of staying outside in the rain, Appleby is turned into a lifeless thing, just like an enormous, greyish, wet, and dirty rag bag. She reaches a crisis and wants to be dead:

Her beautiful red hair was matted with mud and looked no colour at all. Her sweatshirt and jeans were caked with dirt . . . Her green eyes looked unseeing and lustreless. They were obviously nothing but green buttons, sewn in place by Kate forty years ago. Whatever magic had turned them into functioning eyes had gone. Only the mouth remained alive, turned down at the edges and quivering.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Appleby is saved after she is taken into the bath several times, though none of the Mennymys has ever had a bath, and dried in the airing cupboard.

These three parts describing three dolls, who experience crises as non-human beings, represent the fact that they can be easily transformed into lifeless things at any time. Moreover, these three episodes interact with each other. However, the fuss caused by a problematic teenager functions to add two more members to their household: Pilbeam becomes a good companion for Appleby as her elder sister, and Miss Quigley is given her own room in the house as a new nurse taking care of Googles.

Although they live always perilous lives, the Mennymys successfully disguise themselves as a recluse human family and keep living in the human world in strict accordance with the rule that the fact they are animated dolls should not be known by human beings. Whenever they go outside, namely into the world dominated by human beings, all of the Mennymys put on gloves, hats or caps, and sunglasses to hide their skin, hair, and eyes, which are not real.

It might be their independence that makes their survival so successful. Unlike the borrowers or the Plantaganets, the Mennymys do not have to rely on human beings.<sup>17</sup> As can be recognised from the fact that they legally obtain the house after the death of their creator by means of a telephone call and a letter, they are completely independent. The gifted adult rag dolls earn their living: Sir Magnus is a professional writer as well as a scholar, Tulip contracts with Harrods to sell her beautifully crafted knitting, and Vinetta gains some jobs whereby she can make full use of her sewing skills.

## 2. The Only Blue Rag Doll

Even though their disguise as human beings is perfect, going out is quite a hard task for Soobie Mennym, who is the only blue rag doll in the family. Nobody knows why he was created with such a unique existence. Even Soobie has to accept such arbitrariness of life:

“I would say I’m different, but that is not fair. Everyone is different from everybody else. Kate must have had her own reasons for giving me a blue face. But here I am, the blue Mennym, who thinks too much.”<sup>18</sup>

The particularity of his appearance leads him to have some specific traits different from the other members of his family. He denies any sort of pretending, prefers to be isolated, and always spends his time reading. In addition, he is the only rag doll who recites prayers when he is in great trouble. While he is looking for his younger sister, who strays outside the security of home, Soobie happens to come to a church, enters, and says his first prayer inside:

“I do not know who made the part of me that thinks. I do not know who I really am or what I really am. I am never satisfied to pretend. I cannot pretend that you are listening to me. I can only give you the benefit of the doubt. And it is a massive doubt, I can tell you. I do not know whether I believe in you, and, what is worse, you might not believe in me. But I need help and there is nowhere else to turn. The flesh-and-blood people who come here have something they call faith. Please, if you are listening to a rag doll with a blue face, let the faith of those others be enough for you to help me. I must find my sister, or my mother will be the first of us to die. Dear God, I don’t even know what that means!”<sup>19</sup>

In fact, it is Soobie’s first journey outside. He breaks his own rule of staying inside as the only blue rag doll just to look for the missing Appleby. As if his honest prayers and sincere search are rewarded, Soobie soon finds Appleby, who is soaking wet on a bench in the park.<sup>20</sup>

Soobie’s particularity causes him to have the strongest will power among the family. As a result, he becomes the only Mennym to catch a glimpse of the origin of their lives. Another prayer, which seems more likely to be a rant, is described in a more serious situation. In the fourth volume, when the Mennymys are about to lose their lives, he prefers to be isolated in the attic; and thus, only Soobie stays alive, though he cannot move or speak any more.

Finally, after months of patience, he becomes furious and shouts his wish with all of his strength of mind not to God but to the creator of the Mennymys:

His heart cried out savagely to its maker, insisting upon being heard.

“If I must live,” it said, “and live and live, you cannot leave me. You cannot leave *us!*”

“If I must live,” it said, “and live forever, so must you.”

“Either restore us all to life,” it said, “or teach me to die.”

This was no self-pitying prayer. It was a howl of indignation, as if some creature bound hand and foot were rattling its chains. The whole house groaned, and the sighing of it was heard within the halls of Heaven.<sup>21</sup>

His concentration is not inferior to the dolls’ wish in Godden,<sup>22</sup> and his earnest prayer, which is almost like a rant, is granted: all of the Mennymys come to life again in the beginning of the fifth volume. Soobie is convinced he has spoken to the creator of the Mennymys and seems to be concerned with the light behind the ‘forbidden door’ in the attic. This mysterious light becomes the cause of Appleby’s death. Just like another human creation gains its life because of the light of a candle, the lives of the Mennymys are presumably brought about by the light.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from acquiring a supernatural power, Soobie cannot help feeling more isolation and having more horrible experiences than the other members of his family as the only blue Mennym. Soobie, who always anguishes over his isolation and demands a way out, goes out one night on an old motorbike he finds in the Comus House. This small adventure results in an accident, and his bike narrowly misses a farm truck. Although the human driver clearly sees Soobie’s cloth leg from the ripped left trouser leg, he simply thinks that Soobie is such an odd boy wearing blue underwear.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Soobie comes back home safely, but he is depressed.

In addition, while he shuts himself off from others due to his depression, he eavesdrops on the conversation between Tulip and Vinetta. Tulip, who has just quarrelled with Soobie and is still angry with his impolite speech, calls him ‘a freak,’ which deeply hurts Soobie.<sup>25</sup> After that, he starts staying alone in the library without reading and just lies on the sofa day in day out. His great depression later causes a further disaster.

### 3. The Struggle as Others

To survive in the human world, the Mennymys have to struggle to overcome frequent crises. As Lois Rostow Kuznets points out, beings created by humans are 'the embodiment of personal and racial fears for survival on earth,' and the Mennymys are entirely human-created beings.<sup>26</sup>

Joshua, who is not as gifted as the other adult members of the family, has to go out to work among human beings. He makes a great effort to find a part-time job, such as playing the part of Santa Claus at a department store during the Christmas season, or as a nightwatchman at Sydenham's Electrical Warehouse. Although the latter is his favourite job, one day he experiences a disaster: his leg is bitten by a rat. Going back home in the morning dragging the tattered cloth leg is such a fearful experience for a living doll who longs to hide his true self:

Rag dolls feel no pain. The wound, if you could call it that, did not hurt him. But he was, after all, a living being. Pain is of the flesh, but fear is of the mind. Joshua looked at his tattered knee and was terrified.<sup>27</sup>

After the Mennymys move into Comus House, no one can be very fond of life in the countryside. Appleby, who is always irritated, one day makes up her mind to escape by motorbike from such a boring life to the former house at Brocklehurst Grove. Her journey takes place at night, and she has a dangerous experience when she stops to take a rest on the way. A strange man approaches her and seizes her by the shoulder, and she deliberately takes off her goggles and reveals her beady eyes. She is presented with the chance to leave him because he is scared of her true face, which is far different from that of a human being's. He thinks that he has met a freak, such as a 'zombie, a corpse, a ghost, or a woman without a face.'<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, Pilbeam makes close contact with a stranger. When she first goes to the theatre to watch *The Merchant of Venice*, Pilbeam is spoken to by the nosy neighbour Anthea Fryer, and at the moment the secret is about to be revealed, she is saved by Soobie, who is jogging at night, engaging in his new hobby.<sup>29</sup> After they safely escape together to their house, all of the members of the family are forbidden to go out, in accordance with Sir Magnus's judgement, until they are out of danger.

When the family is staying at Comus House, Soobie experiences more dangerous encounters with human beings. While he is staying alone in the library, Soobie is found by



naughty Joe Dorward and his younger playmate, Billy Maugham, who live nearby. Joe regards Soobie as an ordinary, big, old, blue rag doll and plans to steal him and use him as a Guy to be burnt on the night of Guy Fawkes. When four kids, including Joe and Billy, break in, Soobie pretends to be dead because he thinks that his family would be in great danger if these kids ever knew he is a living rag doll. Therefore, he stays motionless to save his family:

*It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people . . .*

The words came to Soobie's mind unbidden, a memory of past reading, but in a moment he took them to his heart and resolved to save *his* people, no matter what the cost. If these intruders, whoever they were, should find out that the house was home to a whole family of living rag dolls, there would be no end to the misery it would cause. Soobie remembered only too sharply how his grandmother had called him a freak. All Mennymys are freaks, he thought. For what is a freak but someone or something outside the norm?<sup>30</sup>

Soobie's internal monologue denotes the possibility that the existence of the Mennymys is merely a challenge to established common sense. In other words, they are others in the human world just because rag dolls are supposed not to be subjects but objects. According to Jackson, fantastic fiction deletes the gap between the signifier and signified because it introduces absences in the realistic order. The Mennymys can be regarded as one of such, in Jackson's words, 'thingless names.'<sup>31</sup>

When he runs away from the kids, Soobie tries to act as a haunted doll.

He gathered himself for the effort. He leapt. and he ran!

The boys let go of the barrow and screamed in terror.

"It's haunted," yelled Billy.

"It's a devil," shouted Joe.

They stared after the retreating figure. Yells turned to silent gaps.

Then Soobie tripped up and fell.

"He's fallen," said Joe. Devils don't fall and ghosts don't fall.<sup>32</sup>

Joe dares to regard Soobie as a robot in order not to elevate his fear of him. The boys finally realise that this robot can even speak. As Soobie threatens them, "Give over . . . Lay one finger on me and I'll crush your bones," they give up and run away from this frightening

object as soon as possible.<sup>33</sup> These scenes suggest both a scary sight for the two boys and success for a living rag doll at pretending to be a monster; and thus, frightening as well as humorous. Soobie's perilous experience as an other is, as Julie Cross discusses, relieved through the technique of 'comic relief' in fearful fiction.<sup>34</sup>

Appleby's death is surely the most serious and fearful in the Mennymys series, which indicates an end to the Mennymys, who are supposed to survive forever, in the future. Appleby, who has been attracted by the 'forbidden door' in the attic, one day tries to open it because she cannot overcome temptation:

The brass knob turned in her hand almost of its own accord. She made no attempt either to open the door or to keep it closed. It moved. Very, very, slowly, very, very, slightly.

Through the narrow opening came a thin stream of liquid light, magical, milk-white, honey-sweet and fresh as Spring. It was enough to captivate, to make anyone want to fling wide the door and enter.<sup>35</sup>

However, the mysterious light scares Appleby, and she yells for help. And though Vinetta hastily comes to help Appleby and together they succeed in closing the door again, Appleby loses her life. She is 'slouched against the door, limp and unmoving.' She does not reply to Vinetta any more.<sup>36</sup>

Because none of the Mennymys can eat or drink anything, pretending is a necessary activity. However, for these living rag dolls, pretending is not merely a make-believe game but an essential element for living. They need to pretend to survive as others in the human world, just as pretend tea or meals are necessary to make them relax. When she realises that Appleby will never be alive again, Vinetta raises an inner voice with a great sorrow:

Vinetta left the attic, shutting the door gently behind her. She went down the stairs, holding firmly onto the handrail for support. The shock she had suffered was so great that she needed somehow to contain it and make it manageable. *Pretend, pretend, pretend, pretend, pretend.* If reality is too painful to bear, shut it out. And pretend!<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Contact with Human Beings

From the very first, the Mennymys cannot exist without the human lady, Kate Penshaw, who created them during her lifetime. Apart from their creator, these living rag dolls cannot

help but make contact with human beings in order to survive amongst them.

As mentioned above, when their house is threatened by town-planning in the second volume, Albert Pond, who is not a made-up Australian but a real, young Englishman who teaches at a university, is led to the Mennymys by the ghost of Kate Penschaw to lend a hand to these rag dolls. Although he at first troubles himself with how to make contact with the living rag dolls, he soon becomes familiar to every Mennym, as if he is a real family relative. He becomes friends with the teenagers and falls in love with Pilbeam. Likewise, in the third volume, for a while Appleby secretly exchanges letters with Tony Barras, who is living at number 2, Brocklehurst Grove. Because they are of the same generation, Appleby and Tony soon come to feel a sense of goodwill to each other.

In spite of the fact that they are non-human, some of the Mennymys successfully establish a good relationship with human beings. For example, the relationship between Tulip and Mr Dobb, who is an attorney for the Mennymys, is ideal. Mr Dobb, not for the sake of business but for trust, establishes a bond between his client and himself for more than forty years.

Even Soobie has some warm memories with human beings, such as Albert Pond, who temporarily becomes his friend, and Billy Maugham. After being stolen, Soobie is taken to Billy's loft. Since he is a considerate boy, Billy feels sympathy with this clouty doll while he keeps it prisoner and serves it with pretend meals:

. . . something about the clouty doll touched Billy's heart. The boy's grey eyes misted. This blue doll could be a friend of his. And they were going to burn him on Friday. Billy rested one hand on the doll's shoulder. Soobie felt a wave of sympathy and experienced a glimmer of hope.<sup>38</sup>

Soobie is saved by Albert, who is driving around to find him because of Billy, who tries to let Soobie escape and secretly takes him outside at night.

In the fourth volume, the Mennymys temporarily lose their lives. For several months when they are in a state of death, the Mennymys can not survive without the help of human beings, however gifted they are. It seems that a short letter they wrote before their death to the next owner of their house, using the signature of Kate Penschaw, functions to save them. It says, *'The dolls in this room . . . are my people. Work of my hands and of my heart. Please, love them.'*<sup>39</sup> Because of the word 'love,' the human couple asked by the next owner tries hard to find somebody who can love these people of Kate's. Albert Pond and his young wife Lorina take this role because Albert's stepmother is the next owner of the house at number 5, Brocklehurst Grove. They finally find a suitable person, Daisy Maughan, who is the owner

of an antique shop named, 'L & P Waggons.' Albert immediately perceives that this elder lady is the very person he was looking for because she treasures two not-for-sale Betty dolls, Lily and Polly Waggons, which are displayed in the front of the store window.<sup>40</sup> Daisy accepts Albert's favour and purchases the whole rag doll family. She prepares a small dolls' house for the Mennymys using the first and second floors of her shop. An affectionate relationship is established between the Mennymys and Daisy.

In addition, Billy, who is a relative of Daisy, happens to go upstairs when he visits her to see the dolls Daisy has recently acquired and encounters Soobie again. Since he is still frightened of the blue Mennym, he makes a short-term friendship with Poopie and enjoys playing with him. As Sigmund Freud argues in 'The Uncanny,' children tend to welcome animated toys rather than being annoyed by them because such phenomena usually occur in their play.<sup>41</sup>

## 5. The Unshakable Boundary

Even if they have been saved by human beings on several occasions, relationships between the Mennymys and human beings cannot last forever. The second volume, which begins with the poetry of William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), describes the tragic love story of Pilbeam and Albert. When Appleby points out that Albert is in love with her, Pilbeam simply replies, 'Don't talk rot . . . He is a human being. I am a rag doll.'<sup>42</sup> Although she never forgets him, Albert totally forgets Pilbeam as well as the Mennymys at the moment he leaves number 5, Brocklehurst Grove. It's as if he has awoken from a dream, as is told in Yeats' poetry, though he encounters Lorina, a human girl who is quite similar to Pilbeam, and later marries her.

Appleby also hurt Tony's feelings, though she is very fond of him. When they go to a disco together, Appleby goes back secretly to leave him alone because she realises that Tony, who touches her hand, begins to wonder why he could not notice that Appleby is wearing a pair of gloves. Appleby's conviction is first shaken, though she has been confident to hide herself completely even among human beings because her appearance is rather similar to theirs than that of a rag doll's. When she safely arrives home, Appleby speaks her mind to Pilbeam:

. . . "it was awful. I was having the best time of my life when suddenly being a rag doll mattered. I could stay there no longer without being found out. So I ran away. And I felt so confused I went down the wrong street coming home and almost managed to

get lost. I don't like being a rag doll, Pilbeam. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it.<sup>43</sup>

After meeting Soobie again, Billy tells Daisy his secret story about the blue clouty doll he stole from Comus House, and Daisy first discovers that these rag dolls are possibly alive. However, Daisy prefers to observe a rule of the game played between the Mennymys and herself; that is, she tries not to notice the fact. She asks them not to tell her anything and pretends they are inanimate. The dolls, who became fond of her, grant her wish and pretend that they are ordinary, lifeless dolls because of their gratitude towards Daisy:

“Do we speak to her?” said Pilbeam. “Do we make friends as we did with Albert Pond?”

“I think not,” said Joshua. “That is a woman who knows how to stay within bounds. No games, she said, but we will play by her rules all the same.”<sup>44</sup>

Joshua's words indicate the unbreachable boundary between the Mennymys and human beings, however affective their relationship is.

## Conclusion

The Mennymys finally find the Manse, which is surrounded by a graveyard, to be the home in which they can live peacefully. This is every bit the ideal house for them because no human beings seem to live nearby.<sup>45</sup> Their final decision is secretly coexisting in the human world as others. Their farewell letter to Daisy is as simple as the former one: ‘*Dear Daisy, Thank you for helping us when our need was greatest . . . Thank you for the pact. And, above all, bless you for loving Kate's People.*’ In addition, they wrote their wish on the envelope; that is, ‘*We are safe and need not be sought.*’<sup>46</sup>

Some of the Mennymys agonise over why they exist and what they are. In Kuznets' accounts, narratives of human-created living things reveal the dilemma of objects that become self-conscious and ‘acquire an unanticipated right to control (their) own subjectivity.’<sup>47</sup> It is only the teenage Mennymys who are annoyed with such a question of identity, much like human adolescents. As Ursula Le Guin points out, if fantasy can be a guide for teenagers who need to find out their own way to reach the truth,<sup>48</sup> these living rag dolls can function likewise. Although their agony does not reach any clear answer, some indications seem to be described concerning the animation of the Mennymys.

The inevitable contacts with human beings explore the way that it is possible for the

Mennymys to establish affectionate relationships with human beings, which is reminiscent of Mr. Plantaganet's blame for Marchpane, who hates playing with human children: "Not like to be played with? Then what is she for? Why was she made? I should sooner be broken . . . You are not a doll . . . You are a thing."<sup>49</sup> Arguably, just like the Plantaganets, the point is that the Mennymys can be affectionate with human beings.

Soobie points out that eternal life is not always a joy, using as examples the 'Wandering Jew' or the 'Flying Dutchman,' when he talks with Billy about this topic.<sup>50</sup> However, the Mennymys seem to stay alive forever. As Soobie unconsciously mentions, if they are the remains of Kate Penschaw, it is something their creator desires to exist that causes them to come to life.

The reason why Kate Penschaw created the Mennymys will be explored in a sequel of *The Mennymys* sequence; *The Maker of the Mennymys*, the book Sylvia Waugh has been planning to write since her first book was published. And the mystery of the Mennymys remains unaccountable within the five books;<sup>51</sup> how a rag doll comes to life is described in the first volume. Pilbeam is gradually animated through her mother's reading aloud; that is, from a mother's affection towards her daughter. The following scene is reminiscent of *Amy's Eyes*, in which reading the Bible aloud results in the animation of a doll<sup>52</sup>:

The rocking chair was rocking gently back and forward. All Soobie could see was the back of it as he stood in the attic doorway. Vinetta's voice was somewhere, reading a story he recognised about some children on a flying carpet looking for the end of the rainbow.<sup>53</sup>

Soobie realises that Vinetta spends all of her spare time finishing Pilbeam and that she reads stories to her every day.

It can be presumed that it is Kate Penschaw's affection towards these life-sized rag dolls she created with her hands and her heart that gives the Mennymys life, just as Vinetta's constant affection towards Pilbeam results in giving her life.

## Notes

- 1 This book has been highly assessed in book reviews in some well-known papers, such as *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Bookseller*, and *The Times*.
- 2 Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), p. 54.
- 3 This probable place name is fictional, as well as others, such as Castledean, Comus House, and Rimstead, whereas real proper nouns such as Peachum and Boots are also employed in this fiction.
- 4 As David Lodge mentions in *The Art of Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), the postponed revelation of

the surprising fact functions to elevate suspense effectively.

- 5 Sylvia Waugh, *The Mennynms* (London: Red Fox, 1994), p. 10.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis (eds), *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–8. The Gothic in contemporary children's books seems to be found not only in *The Saga of Darren Shan* or *The Bartimaeus Trilogy* but also in the *Harry Potter* series and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.
- 8 In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1993), M. H. Abrams explains the original denotation of the word 'Gothic,' which stems from a German tribe, The Goths, includes 'Germanic' or 'medieval.' The signification of the term 'Gothic' is gradually 'extended to a type of fiction that lacks a medieval setting but develops a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror, represents events which are uncanny or macabre or melodramatically violent, and often deals with aberrant psychological states.' (78) Some famous literary works in the 19th century, such as Mary Shelley's (1797–1851) *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's (1818–48) *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's (1816–55) *Jane Eyre* (1847), or Charles Dickens' (1812–70) *Bleak House* (1853), are exemplified as representative works of extended Gothic. *Bleak House* is the book Pilbeam Mennym enjoys reading in the attic while she waits for several days for the moment when she is introduced to all the family members in *The Mennynms*. (151)
- 9 Sylvia Waugh, *Mennynms in the Wilderness* (London: Red Fox, 1995), p. 13.
- 10 In *The Gothic in Children's Literature*, Laurie N. Taylor argues that the role of ghosts in children's fiction is to lend a hand to the weak and that this strongly appeals to young readers, who are less powerful than adults. (196–7)
- 11 Ceri Sullivan and Barbara White (eds), *Writing and Fantasy* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 208–9.
- 12 Waugh, *The Mennynms*, p. 95.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 97. The relationship between the animation of non-living things and eyesight is discussed in detail in my previous article titled, 'A Psychoanalytic Criticism on Toy Fantasies: The Function of Animated Toys in Children's Literature' (1996), which is a summary of my MA dissertation. In this article, in terms of the argument in Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1993), 'the power of the *look*, through the eye' is emphasised as essential to the animation of dolls, which acquire subjectivity, just like human beings, with the power of gaze.
- 15 Waugh, *The Mennynms*, pp. 36–9.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- 17 The borrowers, who appear in the series of *The Borrowers* (1952–82) by Mary Norton (1903–92), are the little people who need to 'borrow' necessities of life from human beings. The Plantaganets, the dolls in *The Dolls' House* (1947) by Rumer Godden (1907–98), cannot do anything themselves and are obliged to depend on human children because they are ordinary toys without the power of speech, which is necessary to make contact with human beings, unlike the Mennynms.
- 18 Waugh, *The Mennynms*, p. 154.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 186–7.
- 21 Sylvia Waugh, *Mennynms Alone* (London: Red Fox, 1997), p. 205.
- 22 In Godden's *The Dolls' House*, all the dolls wish with all of their strength whenever they demand to convey their thoughts to human children because, for them, it is the only way to communicate with human beings.
- 23 In *Frankenstein*, the monster created by Victor Frankenstein sees the light of a candle when it first opens its eyes:

It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was

nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; . . . (2003 58)

- 24 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, pp. 113–4.
- 25 *Ibid*, pp. 117–8.
- 26 Lois Rostow Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive* (London: Yale UP, 1994), p. 203.
- 27 Waugh, *The Mennymys*, p. 19.
- 28 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, p. 150.
- 29 Waugh, *Mennymys Under Siege*, pp. 36–7.
- 30 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, pp. 177–8. Emphasis is added.
- 31 Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 67–9. The detailed analysis that *The Mennymys* as one of the fantastic narratives is suggested in ‘A Psychoanalytic Criticism on Toy Fantasies.’
- 32 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, p. 194.
- 33 *Ibid*, p. 198.
- 34 Jackson, Coats, and McGillis (eds), *The Gothic in Children’s Literature*, pp. 58–9.
- 35 Sylvia Waugh, *Mennymys Under Siege* (London: Red Fox, 1996), p. 177.
- 36 *Ibid*, pp. 188–9.
- 37 *Ibid*, p. 190. Emphasis is added.
- 38 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, p. 180.
- 39 Waugh, *Mennymys Alone*, p. 129.
- 40 *Ibid*, pp. 155–8.
- 41 Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 354–5.
- 42 Waugh, *Mennymys in the Wilderness*, p. 239.
- 43 Waugh, *Mennymys Under Siege*, p. 93.
- 44 Waugh, *Mennymys Alive*, p. 113. Emphasis is added.
- 45 The surroundings of this new house suggest another aspect of the Gothic.
- 46 Waugh, *Mennymys Alive*, pp. 191–2.
- 47 Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive*, p. 193.
- 48 Ursula Le Guin, *Cheek by Jowl*, p. 179.
- 49 Rumer Godden, *The Dolls’ House* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 111. Emphasis is added.
- 50 Waugh, *Mennymys Alive*, pp. 164–5.
- 51 In *The Fantastic*, Tzvetan Todorov points out that it is the end of the fantastic if the supernatural is explained to interrupt the reader’s hesitation because the fantastic should be ambiguous, namely unexplained.
- 52 In *Amy’s Eyes*, human beings and dolls are transformed in turn. Thus, a human being can be a doll any time and vice versa.
- 53 Waugh, *The Mennymys*, p. 118. This storybook seems to be Edith Nesbit’s *The Phoenix and the Carpet*.

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