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Terrified Girls and Furious Boys: Does the Discourse around *face* and *eyes* in British Children's Fiction Reinforce Gender Stereotypes?

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Abstract

Language in context frequently reflects conscious or unconscious gender stereotypes. With children's literature, this may contribute to the development of a stereotypical gender identity. This study examines the linguistic context of two body parts, face and eyes, in two corpora of British children's fiction: adventure books aimed at 'boys and girls', and school and family stories aimed at girls only. Both corpora comprise texts from the mid-twentieth century, which is regarded as a period of strong gender polarisation, and specifically popular rather than prizewinning texts. Analysis employed LancsBox 6.0 corpus software. Faces and eyes may both be used to express emotion, and particular emotions have been associated with traditional binary gender stereotypes. It was hypothesised that these corpora would demonstrate such binary stereotyping. The study found considerable overlap between the two genres, but some distinctions suggesting that the literature for girls was somewhat less stereotyped than that aimed at a mixed readership. The expression of some emotions, such as fear and anger, tended to suggest stereotypical linking of these emotions with a particular gender, although less strongly than has been found in some other studies. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to our understanding of how a child's developing gender identity may be influenced.

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Introduction

Stephens (2002) argues that children's literature may reinforce cultural models and ideologies, while Nodelmann (2008) goes further, claiming that it is one of the primary functions of such literature to teach gender roles to children. A strong view of the relationship between language and gender would hold that the sociocultural concept of gender is partially created by language (Talbot 2010). At the least, children's literature is perceived as playing a major role in socialisation generally (Hunt 2011; Tsao 2020), which includes the development of

gender identity and understanding of gender roles.

In the past few decades, there have been a number of studies of works aimed at children using corpus linguistics or other linguistic tools. For example, Turner-Bowker's (1996) study of the adjectives used to describe female and male characters in thirty prizewinning picture books found that although the genders were distinct, females seemed to be more positively evaluated than males (contrary to expectation). Thompson and Sealey (2007) in a comparison of three subcorpora of the British National Corpus, namely children's literature, adult literature and newspaper texts respectively, found both features common to the two literature corpora and also fine distinctions between them. Čermáková and Mahlberg's (2021) comparison of a nineteenth-century with a contemporary corpus, while still noting some gender polarisation, did indicate a possible growing female independence.

Corpus linguistics provides a tool for exploring texts in ways that are scarcely possible by hand and eye alone. For example, Pearce's (2008) study of the collocations with lemmas MAN and WOMAN in the British National Corpus (of 100 million words) found a distinction in some of the verbs describing speech or other vocalisations. Men, for instance, were more likely to be represented using 'bad' language (*swear, curse*), being loud (*shout, yell*) and aggressive (*snarl, growl*). Women were represented as more emotional (*weep, cry, sob*) and also more likely to pester (*berate, nag*). This, as he points out, fits the folklinguistic view of the sexes.

Studies of collocations of selected words, and of the concordance lines around those words, may reveal discourse prosodies (Stubbs 2001; Baker 2014) of genderstereotypical behaviour. A discourse prosody may be defined as the collocation with a target word (e.g. *girl, woman*) of words and phrases in a particular semantic field across a text or a whole corpus of texts. For example, Baker (2014) found such words as 'axe-grinding', 'battle-cry', 'blame', 'irk', 'militant' and 'outraged' in collocation with *feminist* in the British National Corpus, with the implication that feminists are regarded as belligerent. Such a prosody associated with one gender across a range of texts may be below the level of conscious noticing yet still impact the reader, contributing to "the gradual accumulation of a set of norms" (Hunt, 2015 p. 282).

Such prosodies may have a particularly strong impact on children. As McCabe et al. (2011 p.199) argue, '[c]hildhood is central to the development of gender identity and schemas'. If we wish to encourage gender neutral attitudes, it is important first to identify where these are not being demonstrated. A number of recent studies suggest that this continues to be a problem (e.g. Dinella and Weisgram 2018; Coffey-Glover and Mackenzie 2022). Hall, Borba and Hiramoto (2021 p. 8) believe that "although patriarchy may be challenged ... it keeps reinventing itself".

Hunt (2011) used corpus linguistics to explore collocations with body parts in relation to gender in the Narnia books as compared with Harry Potter, and later extended this to look at a total of seven series aimed at eleven-year-olds over the past century (Hunt, 2019). Her findings suggested continuing gender polarisation in such texts. One major area, namely displays of emotion, she found to be particularly associated with the face and eyes. In the Narnia texts the expression of emotion was the primary use of the face for female characters (Hunt, 2011), and a major use in the Harry Potter texts, while for males, this function was less frequent and the emotions expressed were 'overwhelmingly negative' (Hunt, 2011, p. 159). A similar pattern was found for eyes, and this was confirmed in her 2019 work, where, notably, happiness and tears were more frequently associated with female eyes, anger with male.

Emotion is one area of human behaviour which is often linked to gender stereotyping, with certain emotions being regarded as more typically 'female' or 'male'. For example, Yu, Hao and Dhillon (2022) found that in film dialogue, more positive emotions tended to be associated with feminine stereotypes, and more negative emotions such as anger, with masculine. Looking at Large Language Models

(LLMs), Plaza-del-Arco et al. (2024) found that five 'state-of'the-art' such models reproduced society's gender stereotypes as regards emotion. That is to say, artificial intelligence is mimicking (and therefore, arguably, reinforcing) the gender stereotypes we have created.

Working with two corpora of texts from the mid-twentieth century, this study aims to examine two body parts found by Hunt to be particularly associated with the expression of emotion, namely faces and eyes. In order to explore how widespread the gender stereotyping found by Hunt was, this study extends her work to other authors, and compares two different genres, adventure fiction (with a target readership of girls and boys) and fiction explicitly aimed at girls.

Children's adventure fiction typically includes a group of girls and boys, frequently siblings or cousins, who during the school holidays become involved in an adventure. This may range from Arthur Ransome's characters sailing and camping, occasionally getting lost in a fog or nearly shipwrecked, to Blyton's children outwitting smugglers or gunrunners. The focus in these texts is on action. Girls' books are frequently set in boarding schools though sometimes there is a family setting with school playing a smaller part, and the focus is on character development.

In order to give some context to more recent works, it is helpful to look at gender representation in earlier fiction. If we only look at recent works and find, as usually happens, gender stereotyping still extant, it is difficult to know whether there has nonetheless been some progress without a standard of comparison. This study focuses on mainstream children's fiction from the mid-twentieth century (approximately 1930 to 1970), a period of great social change yet also strong pressure to put women back into a domestic sphere (Friedan 1963; Marwick 2003). While small, these corpora comprise texts by authors who were widely read at the time, and some of whom continue in print today. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Are the discourse prosodies related to female and male faces and eyes similar in both genres of fiction, as represented by these two corpora?
2. To what extent does the discourse prosody related to female and male faces and eyes appear to reinforce gender stereotypes?

Methodology

This study uses two digital corpora previously created for explorations of keywords, collocations and reporting verbs in relation to gender. The larger, primary corpus consists of eighteen texts, amounting to 1,232,832 running words (tokens), by seven authors, three male and four female, in the adventure genre, generally aimed at a mixed readership of girls and boys. It will hereafter be referred to as Adventure. The smaller, comparison corpus (hereafter Girls) consists of eight texts (484,309 tokens) in the genre girls' fiction, that is school and family stories explicitly aimed at girl readers. The target readership can be seen in the blurb on the back of the books. Three of the four authors represented in Girls are also in Adventure, and the fourth is a major writer of girls' fiction from the period, added to increase the size and range of the corpus. The authors were selected because they were very popular at the time (1930 to 1970), most were very prolific, and in some cases continue to be published till this day, the aim being to study popular rather than prize-winning books.

Owing to the constraints of the researcher's context, the texts were digitised by manual scanning to which Optical Character Recognition software (Adobe) was applied, and the results then read through to check for errors. This was time-consuming and limited the possible size of the corpora. The Girls corpus was further limited by the need to use texts with both female and male characters, since many works in this genre have no males, or only incidental ones such as bus drivers and gardeners.

For the purposes of this study two body parts, namely 'eye' and 'face' were tagged as F, M or neutral, with separate tags for singular and plural. The neutral terms included those which referred to an animal, or occasionally an inanimate object which was being anthropomorphised, or were generic or, in the

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plural, referred to a mixed-gender group. These specific body parts were chosen because Hunt (2011; 2019) had found that they tended to be particularly associated with emotions, and this is an area where traditional gender distinctions may frequently be found. The neutral categories were not included in the analysis, except in the frequency counts.

The tagging enabled automatic frequency counts, using the sofware LancsBox 6.0 (Brezina et al., 2020), which had been used for previous studies. Further work entailed close reading of concordance lines for each category. Hunt (2011) divided collocations with EYE and FACE (note capitals denote the lemma, that is both singular and plural forms) into those which were descriptive (identifying features) and those which expressed emotion. This study found a third category, which I have termed 'action', where for example eyes were involved in looking, glancing etc. and faces were turned to or away from something. Each of these broad divisions was then subdivided into specific categories such as 'description: positive'; 'emotion: anger', and these were then compared both between the two corpora and, within each corpus, between female and male. When creating categories of emotion no distinction was drawn between powerful and weak emotions in the same general field, so for instance *anxious, alarmed*, *apprehensive* and *terrified* were all categorised as 'fear' (see appendix for details). A sentence such as 'He stared with horrified eyes', was put into two categories, *stared* into action and *horrified* into emotion.

It is worth noting here that this study faces a problem common to much research on gender, namely that the data are analysed using gender binaries, while the researcher at the same time advocates anti-essentialist theories. Holmes (2007, pp. 56-7) raised this question and argued for a kind of "strategic essentialism": "If we wish to make political progress, it makes strategic sense to acknowledge that the world continues to treat 'women' and 'men', 'female' and 'male' as fundamental social categories". The world may have begun to change since she wrote this, but for the texts in this study, it was clearly the case. Moreover, the study is attempting to build on Hunt's (2011, 2019) work, and her analysis used gender binaries.

Results and Discussion

Overall, both faces and eyes were used in similar ways: to describe or identify characters; in actions such as wiping (the face), opening (the eyes); and to express emotions, and the emotions expressed were largely the same for the two body parts and for the two corpora. There were however some significant differences between the genders, which largely but not entirely correspond to traditional stereotypes. There were also distinctions between the two corpora.

1. *Face*

The total count of FACE in Adventure is 804, and in Girls 408, reflecting the smaller size of the latter corpus. In Adventure, the relative frequency (per 10,000 words) of female FACE is less than that for male FACE, but this is reasonably in proportion with the ratio of s*he* to *he* in that corpus, and we have the reverse situation in Girls, which has many more female characters (see table 1). There are in fact in Adventure rather more references to male faces than to males in general, while the reverse is true for Girls.

Table 1. Ratio of female and male examples of lemma FACE compared with ratio s*he* to *he*

Adventure				**Girls**			
FACE F rel freq	2.08	FACE M freq	3.40	FACE F rel freq	6.52	FACE M freq	0.95
F/M ratio	1:1.64			F/M ratio	6.87:1		
she rel freq	91.28	*he* rel freq	137.40	*she* rel freq	186.65	*he* rel freq	39.10

Adventure		Girls	
F/M ratio	1:1.51	F/M ratio	4.77:1

Table 2 shows that in general, faces are used to express emotions more than anything else. The exception is the plural *faces* referring to males. The expression of emotions seems to be more prominent in Girls, and actions and even description less so, the latter being surprising as a casual impression would suggest that physical appearance is very important in girls' fiction. The nature of the three categories and how they may relate to gender stereotypes is discussed below.

Table 2. Proportion of the three categories of FACE in the two corpora
(Note that some examples fall into two categories so numbers may not total 100%.)

	Adventure				Girls			
	F sing	F pl	M sing	M pl	F sing	F pl	M sing	M pl
description %	23.73	0	23.98	23.53	19.62	0	11.57	0
action %	23.25	25	27.10	41.18	12.38	12.50	15.22	100
emotion %	52.92	75	48.92	35.29	67.49	87.50	65.22	0

a. Description

The descriptions related to *face* were divided into four subcategories (see fig 1): those relating to beauty (e.g. *lovely; delicate*), general positive descriptions (e.g. *keen and alert*), neutral descriptions (*oval; lined*) and negative ones (*a spot on her face*). The biggest proportion for both genders in both corpora was neutral. However, immediately noticeable was the fact that in Adventure, 'positive: beauty' only had female examples (example concordance lines 1 and 2) and 'general positive' only male (examples 3 and 4).

1) *of open admiration at her cousin's lovely* ***face****. 'It is so much more suitable.' 'We're*
2) *time he could see her clearly. Her* ***face****, moulded on classic lines, and very beautiful,*
3) *the neck. He had a red, jolly* ***face****, twinkling eyes, and head that was*
4) *firm chin. It was a type of* ***face*** *one instinctively trusted. "Now," he resumed, when*

Moreover, there were almost four times as many references to female beauty as there were positive descriptions of male faces, or if viewed as a percentage of the total female and total male examples respectively (*faceF* and *faceM*), rather than a percentage of the whole, six times. This is in line with work on collocations in these corpora (Poynter, 2024), which also identified an association of females with prettiness, and with many other studies with similar findings (e.g. Pearce, 2008; Moon, 2014). It is a sad fact that in most societies it is considered more important for a female to be beautiful than for a male, and this is frequently reflected in texts. Male *face* had four times as many negative collocations as female *face* (though there were very few of either). This is likely because the villains in Adventure are largely male, and there is a tendency in children's literature to portray those with an evil character as physically ugly (examples 5 and 6).

5) *other, but he didn't like the ape-like* ***face*** *and the enormous, burly figure. Meier's hawk-like*
6) *secondly, because of his outstanding ugliness. His* ***face*** *might have been that of a heathen*

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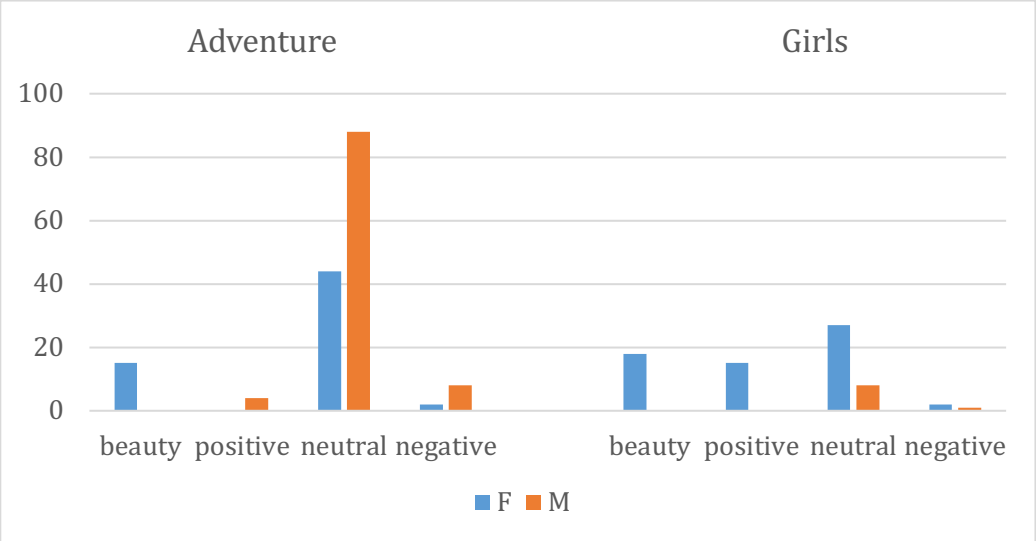
Figure 1. Types of *face* description in the two corpora (no. of tokens)



Girls showed a different pattern, with both 'general positive' and 'positive: beauty' having female examples (examples 7 and 8 respectively), while there were no positive descriptions of males at all.

7) *with a strong and comforting kind of **face**. This Matron was thin and sour-looking. She*
8) *with the memory of the exquisite little **face**, framed in its short thick crop of*

The likely explanation of this is that there is more focus on showing a range of female characters (so some are pretty, but some are not) and there are more adult females than in most of the adventure texts. Physical beauty may be less important than having a 'strong, comforting' face in the case of a female teacher, school matron or indeed mother. However, there are actually more examples of 'positive: beauty' in Girls than in Adventure, even though it is a smaller corpus. The small number of male characters means that many subcategories in the study had no examples for males in Girls; the lack of positive male description may be pure chance.

b. Action

This category was subdivided into situations where the face was performing the action, such as 'his face turned to ...'; situations where things were acting on the face, such as hair blowing across it, rain falling on it; and those where people were acting upon it, whether the owner of the face or someone else.

Table 3 shows that, although in both corpora there were more instances in this category for males than females, when these numbers were calculated as a percentage of the total number of *face* examples for females and males respectively, the percentages were not enormously different. The most salient distinction came in the subcategory of people acting upon the face.

This last category included a great many examples of looking at or watching someone's face, and a smaller number of faces being wiped or washed, and being buried, hidden or covered. However, there were also instances of faces being slapped, struck, scratched and so on. Hunt (2011) found that male body parts in her corpora were more vulnerable to injury than those of females. In Adventure, these were nearly all male faces (example 9). The two instances of females being struck in the face, and some of the male examples, consist of a protagonist being struck by a villain (and the female protagonist is notably struck by a female, not a male; the two examples represent one incident in one book). Villains were also sometimes struck by protagonists, including sometimes by female protagonists (example 10).

9) *stepped forward and slapped Philip across the **face**. Lucy Ann stopped crying, in greater fright*

10) *able to do more than smack his **face** with a crack that almost drowned the*

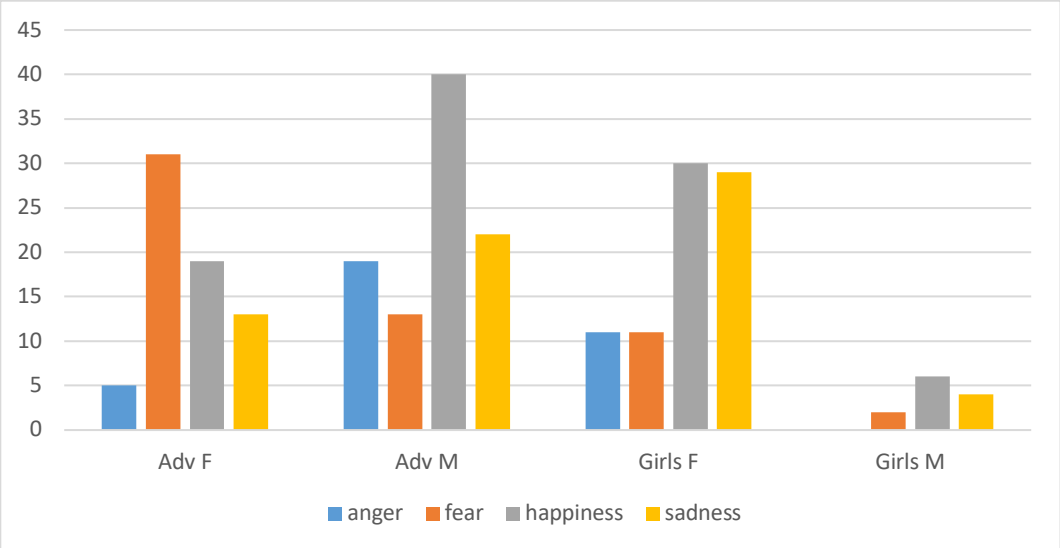
Table 3. Acting on the *face*

	Adventure		Girls	
	F	**M**	**F**	**M**
total number	54	91	35	6
% of total *face* F+M	8.00	13.48	9.67	1.66
% of *face* F or M respectively	21.09	21.72	11.08	13.04
number of *slap, scratch, strike* etc.	**2**	**11**	**4**	**0**

c. Emotion

Altogether, nineteen different subcategories of emotion were identified, including a 'miscellaneous' category for emotions which were only mentioned once, or were unspecified (such as mention of 'the expression in' someone's eyes), and of these seventeen appeared in both corpora. The four most important of these were: anger (e.g. *fierce, furious*); fear (e.g. *anxious, alarmed, apprehensive*); happiness (e.g. *pleased, excited, satisfied*); and sadness (e.g. *sad, disappointed, clouded*). The patterns of these four emotions for females and males in the two corpora can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2. Four key emotions with *face* in the two corpora



There are clear distinctions here both between the two corpora and between the genders. For the two corpora as a whole, happiness is the primary emotion expressed, followed in Adventure by fear, then sadness then anger, and in Girls by sadness, with fear and anger a long way behind. In Adventure, females are significantly more often portrayed as afraid than males (4.59% of the total compared with 1.93%, and 12.11% of *faceF* compared with 3.10% of *faceM*), while males are significantly more often shown expressing anger (2.81% compared with 0.74%, or 4.53% compared with 1.95%). This means that the proportion of all references to *faceF* which express fear is nearly four times that of *faceM*, and of those which express anger less than half as many, which supports both Hunt's (2011;

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2019) findings and popular stereotypes. It should be noted that a great many more instances of *anxious, worried, troubled* etc. are found than of *terrified, scared absolutely stiff*, for both females and males and particularly the former. Females are also actually frequently afraid for others rather than for themselves (examples 11 and 12).

11) *"Roy! They've got Roy!" Helen exclaimed, her **face** going white. "Yes, but he kept his*
12) *Jenny's eyes were wide in her white **face**. "They wouldn't torture them or anything, would*

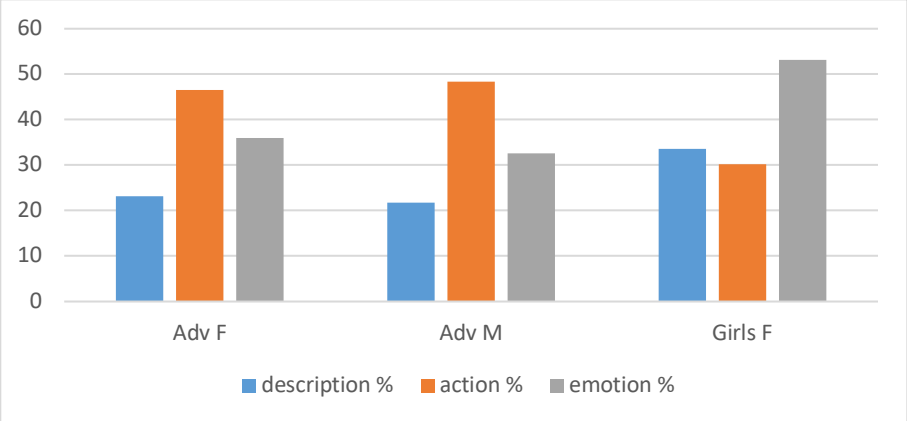
As regards Girls, the small number of male examples makes generalisations about gender problematic, but for females, it is notable that the proportion of expressions of fear is much lower than for females in Adventure, while the other emotions, including anger, are much stronger. Again, anxiety overshadows terror, and indeed the three examples of strong fear comprise that for another character who is very ill, a girl who has a secret and is terrified of being found out, plus another who is afraid of spiders, which is mocked by the other characters. Thus, in both genres, fear tends to be portrayed as justifiable, and often on account of another, but nonetheless seems to be more acceptably expressed by female faces than male. The fact that anger is much more commonly expressed by females in Girls than in Adventure may be in line with other studies of these and similar texts (e.g. Auchmuty, 1992), which found a wide array of different female personalities and an emphasis on leadership ability, which might lead to aggression. However, anger and sulks are not, unlike leadership skills, portrayed positively; rather, girls may struggle with quick or bad tempers and their learning to control themselves is often part of the story. This is not, therefore, an example of counter-stereotyping.

2. Eye

The total counts for EYE are 1056 for Adventure (where there is a smaller difference in frequency between female and male) and 491 for Girls. Uses fall into the same three categories as those of FACE. However, as figure 3 demonstrates, females in Adventure use their eyes to express emotion more than males, and emotion is the chief use for females in Girls, where description is also rather more important than action.

Description largely relates to colour of the eyes, though this is often combined with emotion, e.g. 'her dark eyes were dancing with suppressed mirth' (Brent-Dyer, 1956 p.59). Action is mostly limited to opening, closing, rubbing etc. and does not include any such interesting points as striking the face. Although the subcategories of emotion closely match those for FACE, the proportions are not necessarily the same. While FACE occurs mostly in the singular, the opposite is true for EYE, and the analysis below therefore relates to *eyes* rather than *eye*.

Figure 3. Profile of the three main categories with *eyes*



a. Description

Although as stated above, the vast majority of these examples are about colour, it is also notable that female eyes, but not male ones, are quite often described as large (table 4). Since large eyes are generally considered to be beautiful, this may be linked to the emphasis on female faces as lovely or beautiful. It is also notable that in Adventure, while over three times as many *eyesF* express positive personality traits than negative, with males, almost twice as many are negative as positive. This may be partly because many more of the villains are male than female. In Girls, positive descriptions outweigh negative in both cases, though as mentioned above, the numbers for males are very small. When it came to determining positive or negative character, context was taken into account. Thus, *keen* was counted as positive for heroes as it is employed to demonstrate intelligence, but negative for villains when their keen, piercing eyes are associated with cruelty.

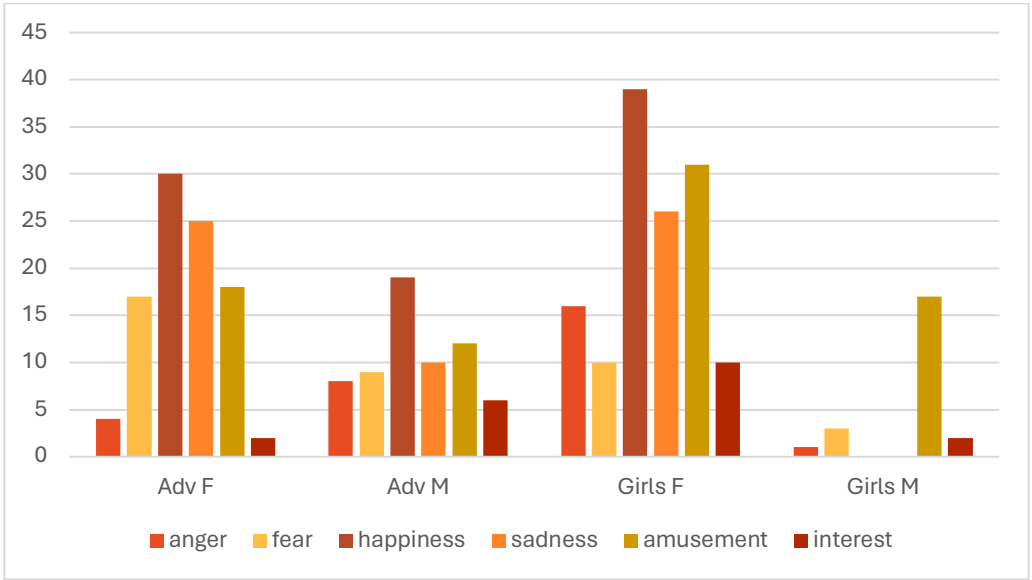
Table 4. Subcategories of description with *eyes*
(Note that neutral examples such as 'her eyes' are not included.)

	Adventure		Girls	
	F	**M**	**F**	**M**
'description' total tokens	88	87	123	8
colour	67	46	75	3
size	9	0	11	2
positive character	17	10	30	2
negative character	5	19	1	1

b. Emotion

In addition to the four key emotions expressed by faces (anger, fear, happiness and sadness) eyes express amusement far more often than faces do, and although not large, a subcategory which occurs for *eyes* but not *face* is interest or fascination. Amusement expressed by faces was sometimes mockery, while that by eyes is more often either mischief or a kind of affection (*twinkling*). Figure 4 shows the total numbers of examples of these emotions, demonstrating that the pattern is rather different from that with *face*.

Figure 4. Distribution of key emotions with *eyes* in the two corpora



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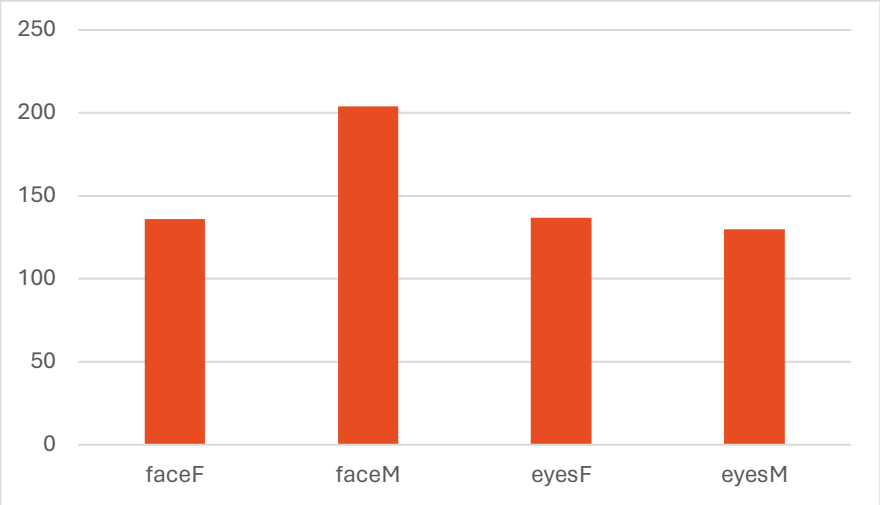
It is still the case that happiness is in most cases the most frequently expressed emotion, and that females express more fear and less anger than males in Adventure, while in Girl's female expression of anger is notably more frequent. However, sadness is a much stronger subcategory for *eyes* than for *face*, and this is because it includes tears. Hunt (2019) found that female eyes were around four times more likely than male ones to fill with tears, even though 78% of all human eyes in her corpora were male, and this study entirely supports that. Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) also found that *with tears in her eyes* was a common cluster in both the nineteenth and twenty-first century corpora of children's literature they compared. Table 5 shows that in fact, most of the examples of sadness, for both female and male characters and in both corpora, entailed tears, although there were also a small number of tears expressing other emotions (anger, laughter).

Table 5. Sadness and tears

	Adventure				**Girls**			
	F		**M**		**F**		**M**	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
sad (including tears)	25	18.25	10	7.69	26	13.33	0	0
tears (including anger, laughter)	24	17.52	9	6.92	24	12.31	0	0

What is less explicable is that male faces seem to express emotion more than female ones in Adventure, but the reverse is true for eyes. Figure 5 shows the total numbers. When it is borne in mind that there are actually around half as many again male as female characters in the Adventure corpus, the difference as regards *face* disappears, but that in use of eyes is quite striking. This corresponds to Hunt's (2011) findings, whereby in one of her corpora (the Narnia books) males tended to use their eyes to express emotion much less than females did, although it does not explain why this should be so.

Figure 5. Faces and eyes expressing emotion in Adventure



As regards amusement, while it is clear that eyes express this more frequently than do faces, it is interesting that the total number of examples of this is much larger in Girls despite the much smaller size of the corpus. It seems likely that laughter, especially affectionate laughter, and mischief and teasing, are features of this genre (example 13).

13) *while an amused gleam came into his **eyes**. "And you gave her a good chance*

It seems, looking at the number of examples, that the expression of emotion in general is more a feature of girls' fiction than of adventure books, which tend to focus more on action.

Another subcategory of interest is surprise. There was a gender difference in Adventure for the use of *face* to express surprise, with more males than females showing surprise (including amazement and incredulity), but on the other hand slightly more female than male expressions of shock or horror; however, the total number of examples of these emotions was much smaller than for *eyes* (table 6). The idea that males are more prone to surprise or incredulity and females to horror does not seem to match traditional gender stereotypes particularly, except females may be perceived as more gullible (Bem, 1974), which would perhaps imply that males are more unbelieving. However, the numbers for *eyes* in Girls are quite different, with a great deal of surprise and very little shock for female characters; overall this remains an oddity rather than a clear indication of gender stereotyping.

Table 6. Expressions of surprise and shock

		Adventure		Girls	
		F	**M**	**F**	**M**
face	surprise, incredulity	3	10	4	0
	shock, horror	8	7	6	1
eyes	surprise, incredulity	21	31	27	0
	shock, horror	4	2	1	0

Returning to the research questions then, this study has found considerable similarities between the two genres in relation to *face* and *eyes*. In both, these features are used for the same general purposes, and in both, the expression of emotions is the primary function, although this function is more important in girls' than in adventure fiction. The importance of beauty for females, noted by many other studies (e.g. Moon, 2014) is confirmed here.

However, the distribution of emotions is rather different between the two genres, which may be due to their different functions: for an adventure story to be successful, it may be important for the protagonists to feel fear, explaining the greater prominence of this emotion in Adventure than in Girls. Females in Girls are more prone to anger than those in Adventure, perhaps reflecting the wider range of female personalities typical of this genre. Overall, the adventure texts demonstrate rather more stereotyping than the girls' texts.

Conclusion

The discourse prosody related to body parts may be part of the gender polarisation which was and still is embedded in many texts, contributing to the continuing polarisation of gender in society. Hunt's (2011, 2019) studies of the Narnia, Harry Potter and other series of children's fiction identified a number of such prosodies, including a greater use by females of body parts for the expression of emotions, more tears in the eyes of females than males and more anger in those of males than females. This study of two corpora of mid-twentieth century children's fiction has generally supported her findings. However, the gender distinctions in this study were less pronounced, and the female characters in the texts written for girls appeared less stereotypical than the female characters in texts written for girls and boys. This is interesting; strong lively females have been the heroines of numerous books for girls, beginning at least as early as *Little Women*, and many women have identified with these characters only to find that when they grow up, the characters have nowhere to go but marriage and motherhood (Watson, 2009). The apparent greater variety of roles and identities offered by the girls' books may therefore be merely a continuation of this trend.

A limitation of this study is that it relates to two quite small corpora, although they were

created to be representative of their genre and period. Moreover it is possible that the overlap of authors between the two genres has contributed to the considerable similarities between the two corpora. The expectation was that there would be more differences between them, and these would then not have been readily attributable to differences in authorial style, but in fact the opposite proved to be the case.

However, while it might be fruitful to look at a wider range of authors for that time, it would probably be more valuable to compare these corpora with more recently published works. There have been many social changes since 1970, the end point of this study. These findings provide a baseline of the types of gender-related prosodies encountered by children two and three generations ago; it is important to examine more recent works to see if progress has been made. Hunt's diachronic (2019) research did not suggest that this was the case, but other studies of gender in children's literature indicate limited improvements (e.g. Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021). The more aware children's writers are of the often unconscious stereotyping which may be embedded in discourse, the more chance that this can be overcome.

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Appendix

FACE expressing emotion in Adventure
(bolded rows indicate significant gender differences, * indicates an emotion which occurs in only one corpus)

	F sing	% total	% *face*F	F pl	M sing	% total	% *face*M	M pl
cheerful/ pleasant/ kind	**6**	**0.85**	**2.34**		**5**	**0.71**	**1.19**	
excited / happy / pleased	**19**	**2.70**	**7.42**		**40**	**5.67**	**9.55**	**1**
angry	**5**	**0.71**	**1.95**		**19**	**2.70**	**4.53**	
unpleasant, scowling, sullen, hatred	2	0.28	0.78		1	0.14	0.24	1
anxious / alarmed / frightened	**31**	**4.40**	**12.11**	**2**	**13**	**1.84**	**3.10**	**2**
disappointed / sad / tears	13	1.84	5.08	1	22	3.12	5.25	1
tired / ill / nauseous / pain	2	0.28	0.78		6	0.85	1.43	
amused / mocking / laughing	6	0.85	2.34		5	0.71	1.19	
***tense (before action) / strained (after action)**					**3**	**0.43**	**0.72**	
surprised	**3**	**0.43**	**1.17**		**10**	**1.42**	**2.39**	
shocked/ horrified	**8**	**1.13**	**3.13**		**7**	**0.99**	**1.67**	
lack of emotion	8	1.13	3.13		9	1.28	2.15	
sudden understanding / relief	2	0.28	0.78		3	0.43	0.72	
embarrassed	5	0.71	1.95		6	0.85	1.43	
puzzled / confused	2	0.28	0.78	1	4	0.57	0.95	
determined, grim, implacable	5	0.71	1.95		9	1.28	2.15	
grave / serious	3	0.43	1.17		8	1.13	1.91	1
*cruel	2	0.28	0.78		1	0.14	0.24	
miscellaneous	**13**	**1.84**	**5.08**	**2**	**33**	**4.68**	**7.88**	**6**

FACE expressing emotion in Girls

	F sing	% total	% *face*F	F pl	M sing	% total	% *face*M	M pl
cheerful/ pleasant/ kind	17	4.64	5.38	1	3	0.82	6.52	
excited / pleased / happy	30	8.20	9.49	2	6	1.64	13.04	
angry	**11**	**3.01**	**3.48**	**1**				
sullen, sulky, scowling	**8**	**2.19**	**2.53**					
afraid / anxious	11	3.01	3.48	6	2	0.55	4.35	
disappointed / sad / tears	29	7.92	9.18	5	4	1.09	8.70	
tired / ill / nauseous / pain	**6**	**1.64**	**1.90**		**6**	**1.64**	**13.04**	
amused / mocking	5	1.37	1.58		2	0.55	4.35	

surprised	4	1.09	1.27	2				
shocked / horrified	6	1.64	1.90	2	1	0.27	2.17	
lack of emotion				1	1	0.27	2.17	
***sincere, candid**	**12**	**3.28**	**3.80**					
sudden understanding/ relief	7	1.91	2.22		1	0.27	2.17	
embarrassed	13	3.55	4.11					
puzzled / confused	2	0.55	0.63					
determined, grim, implacable	**2**	**0.55**	**0.63**	**1**	**1**	**0.27**	**2.17**	
grave, serious	8	2.19	2.53	1	1	0.27	2.17	
miscellaneous	**41**	**11.20**	**12.97**	**6**	**2**	**0.55**	**4.35**	