

HOW THE SQUIRREL BECAME A SQUGG:  
THE LONG HISTORY OF A CHILDREN'S BOOK

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Captions:

Figure 1

An early Johnson edition of *Evenings at Home* (2nd edition, 1794-98).

Figure 2

The one-syllable edition of *Evenings at Home* published by Routledge in 1869, and edited by Lucy Aikin.

Figure 3

The 'Shilling Entertaining Library' edition of *Evenings at Home* published by Longman in 1863, and edited by J. S. Laurie.

## **How the squirrel became a squgg: the long history of a children's book**

Historians of children's books are usually concerned with the production of new books, and with their authors or publishers. Remarkably little attention has been paid to the fact that old books were often reprinted, and competed with the new books. The 'classic' reprints of out-of-copyright works for adults which appeared in the 1820s and 1830s had the advantage of selling at perhaps 5s. or 6s. rather than the 10s. of a new title. This phenomenon became particularly significant after mid-century, when the cheap reprint trade took off in children's as well as adult books. Cheap reprints of old children's books became available at 2s., while new books were three times that price. In the 1850s and 1860s, old children's books appeared cheaply in publishers' libraries, and sold in numbers far greater than anything they had previously managed, even when new. Historians of children's books have occasionally noted in passing that the older works did not completely disappear, but they have rarely given the matter much attention.<sup>1</sup> Thus they have not considered how or why these old books survived. The 'why' is largely tied up in the development of a mass market for cheap books, and the role of out-of-copyright works as sources for publishers. In this article, I intend to discuss 'how', or in what form, these books survived, for it comes as no surprise to learn that a book being reprinted under the title *Evenings at Home* in 1892 was not the same as the one originally published under that title in 1792.

*Evenings at Home; or the juvenile budget opened, consisting of a variety of miscellaneous pieces for the instruction and amusement of youth* (6 volumes, 1792-96) was written by two well-known literary Unitarians, John Aikin (1747-1822) and his sister Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825), and published by the Unitarian publisher, Joseph Johnson (1738-1809). It embodied a specifically Unitarian approach to the methods and subjects of education, and for that reason, its early readers were mainly confined to learned Dissenting circles. During the nineteenth century, *Evenings at Home* underwent two major revisions, and was frequently repackaged by publishers seeking different markets. Its enormously long publishing history, spanning the technological and social changes of the entire nineteenth century, makes this work a particularly useful subject for a long history. In addition, the ways in which it was altered to fit changing educational theories and methodologies make it an interesting example. In this article, I will examine some of the changes in the text and format which gradually turned the Unitarian children's book of the 1790s into a classic of the Victorian nursery. After sketching the publishing history of *Evenings at Home*, I will explain the salient features of the original work, so that the later alterations can be distinguished. The term 'edition' will

refer to each batch of newly printed copies issued by a publisher; ‘version’ will refer to an edition which is markedly different in some way from preceding editions. Thus, the first twelve editions were all of the first, or original, version, while the revised 13<sup>th</sup> edition was the second, or revised, version.

## 1.

The first twelve editions of *Evenings at Home* were published during the period of copyright protection by Joseph Johnson and his successor Rowland Hunter.<sup>2</sup> As Hunter got into financial trouble, he sold off shares in his copyrights, including *Evenings at Home* and the works of Maria Edgeworth. Editions after 1815 were printed by Hunter and several share-holders. When copyright protection on the first version ended (between 1820 and 1824), the share-holders secured a new copyright by asking the Aikin family to produce a revised version. This appeared in 1823, and was rearranged for the next edition in 1826. The second version was protected until 1851, and was printed in gradually decreasing numbers by the group of share-holders until then (4,000 in 1826; 3,000 in 1836; 1,500 in 1846).<sup>3</sup> They printed three more editions after 1851, but the majority of copies of *Evenings at Home* printed after this date came from the house of George Routledge.

In the early 1850s, Routledge was building up his business of cheap reprint series, producing old British works and foreign works of dubious copyright status at 3s. 6d. or less each.<sup>4</sup> One of his earliest productions was a newly revised version of *Evenings at Home* (1851), and other old children’s books followed shortly. Routledge quite legally used the text, arrangement and corrections of the second version, but by adding further corrections and revisions, he had produced a new copyright. Any potential competitors, including the original share-holders, would have to use one of the older versions, or else pay for a revision of their own, and meanwhile, Routledge’s version was the most up-to-date on the market, and sold 4,000 in its first three years.<sup>5</sup> The shareholders had barely sold that number in the previous fifteen years.<sup>6</sup> Routledge’s success in the reprint market encouraged other publishers to emulate him, and by the 1860s, *Evenings at Home* was being published by six other publishers, most of whom used the original version. Later years also saw two versions of *Evenings at Home* in words of one syllable (including one which ‘translated’ *squirrel* as *squgg*), and a shorthand version, based on one of the one-syllable versions.<sup>7</sup> The final edition was a reprint of the shorthand version in 1915, while the last full edition had been printed by Routledge a decade earlier.

The original version of *Evenings at Home* consisted of ninety-nine short pieces, divided into thirty chapters called ‘evenings’, and contained in six volumes which appeared over the course of four years (see Figure 1). The pieces included dialogues, narrative stories, fables,

poetry and riddles, and their subjects ranged from manners and morals, through botany and astronomy, to an ant's-eye view of the world. As befitted a book which claimed to be both instructive and amusing, each story or poem had a moral or practical lesson, a combination which contemporary reviewers praised highly, and which many early nineteenth-century books tried to imitate. The *Monthly Review*, in 1793, believed that the collection was calculated to 'engage the attention of the young, to awaken the growing mind to inquiry and the use of its reasoning powers, and to inspire it with sentiments of humanity, virtue, and piety'.<sup>8</sup> Despite this suggestion of piety, one of the characteristically Unitarian features of the work was the almost complete absence of religion. Scientific subjects were not explicitly placed in a theology of nature, as they were in some contemporary works, such as those by the Church of England author Sarah Trimmer.<sup>9</sup> Nor were the moral lessons based on a religious creed, but rather on rational principles on which all men should, theoretically, be able to agree. In the decades immediately after the French Revolution, this attitude to religion was regarded as dangerously radical by critics like Trimmer, but by the 1840s Elizabeth Rigby could regard the 'deistical morality' merely as an unfortunate deficiency in a beautifully-written book.<sup>10</sup>

For the authors and their circle of friends, which included Richard and Maria Edgeworth, Erasmus Darwin, and Joseph Priestley, the moral and scientific lessons were taught for practical reasons. Children had to learn the good conduct which would enable them to take their places as adult citizens, while scientific knowledge might prove useful to some boys in their professional careers, but would provide mental training and a source of future rational entertainment for all children. Unitarians acknowledged that girls would have different roles to play in later life, but believed that they should receive an education in useful skills (like writing, languages, and arithmetic) as well as being provided with the basic knowledge to amuse themselves instructively in later life. Accomplishments like music and drawing were not banned, but came at the end of the list of subjects to be learned.<sup>11</sup>

The stories in *Evenings at Home* were arranged in an apparently random order. As Lucy Aikin later acknowledged, 'the plan was confessedly that of a miscellany,' as was immediately apparent from the introduction, which 'explained' how the book came to be.<sup>12</sup> There was a middle-class family with 'numerous progeny... of both sexes', and friends of the family used to write little stories for the children, which were kept in a locked box till all the children were at home from school.

One of the youngest children was sent to the box, and putting in its little hand, drew out whatever paper came first, and brought it back to the parlour. This was then read out distinctly by one of the elder ones; and after it had undergone

sufficient consideration, another little messenger was dispatched for a fresh supply of entertainment; and so on, till as much time had been spent in this way as the parents thought proper.<sup>13</sup>

The order of the pieces in the printed book was supposed to resemble the random order of the pieces chosen from the box, and this random order was beneficial because it helped to keep the attention of the children, both fictional and actual. The short length of the stories, and their various subjects and genres, was also part of the attempt to keep the readers interested. Both Aikin and Barbauld, and their friends the Edgeworths, believed that children learned better when they were interested in the subject matter, and that short and varied lessons were essential to maintaining interest.<sup>14</sup>

A final feature of the original version is that critics universally agreed that it was very well written. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, critics have assumed that their favourite passages were written by Barbauld, who had retained a reputation as a great children's writer, while the colder, scientific material (which 'will scarce find a voluntary reader'<sup>15</sup>) was written by her brother. In fact, Barbauld contributed only fourteen stories, almost all of which appeared in the first two volumes, while Aikin wrote two-thirds of the first two volumes, and almost all of the later volumes. Thus, when Elizabeth Rigby commented in 1844 that there was 'a classic beauty and simple gravity in this lady's writing', she was more likely to be appreciating some of Aikin's writing.<sup>16</sup> Whoever wrote *Evenings at Home*, Charlotte Yonge was also 'struck by the perfect precision and polish of language... [which] contrast with the slovenly writing of the present day'.<sup>17</sup> Despite the consensus on the excellence of the writing, however, by the late nineteenth century, such 'instructive and amusing' books were seen as old-fashioned. New children's books were written to amuse children, while instruction was left to the schoolroom. Yonge concluded of *Evenings at Home* that 'somehow there was little to love in these well-written books; they had a certain bright coldness which extends to all Aikinism.'<sup>18</sup>

Having explained the format of the original version of *Evenings at Home*, I would now like to turn to the way this was altered in later years. Firstly, I will consider the changes made in 1823 and 1851 to produce new copyrights. I will then examine the rearranged edition of 1826 and consider how these children's books were expected to be used. This discussion will be extended by the example of the one-syllable books from 1869. Finally, I want to consider the fate of the 'instructive and amusing' book, particularly by looking at the appearance of *Evenings at Home* in 'Laurie's Entertaining Library' in 1863.

## 2.

Copyright law with regard to revised editions was not clearly defined in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> As well as the statutes of 1710, 1814 and 1842, there was a large body of sometimes conflicting case law. Additions or alterations made to a subsequent edition of a book were covered by copyright, but there was no easy definition of ‘additions or alterations’.<sup>20</sup> Discussing the body of case law, a Victorian lawyer concluded that ‘Copyright may exist in... recent corrections and additions to an old work’ and that ‘If there be some new arrangement of classification of the subject, or the copy be at all varied, then a copyright may exist in it, provided the variation be not merely colourable.’<sup>21</sup> Whether the variations were colourable or not would be a matter for a jury to decide, if a case was brought. For the publishers, this presumably meant that some substantial changes, be they alterations, additions, or new arrangements, were needed to ensure a new copyright. However, the editors of the 1823 and 1851 editions approached their task in rather different manners.

In the early 1820s, the original publisher of *Evenings at Home* and his partners were looking for a way to extend the period of copyright protection on a book which was still selling well. They asked John Aikin to produce a revised version, but, as Aikin was seriously ill, the revisions were carried out in two stages by his children, Arthur and Lucy. Arthur, a chemist and scientific writer, made corrections to the text, and up-dated some of the scientific material. Two new stories by the authors were also added to the collection.<sup>22</sup> For the 1826 edition, Lucy, an author of children’s and historical works, completely rearranged the stories. For their efforts, the Aikins received £150 and two copies, a substantial amount which increased the cost of the impression by half as much again.<sup>23</sup>

As the son of the author, as well as someone who was going to receive a substantial amount of money for the work, Arthur Aikin set out to make a careful revision.<sup>24</sup> He modernised some of the spelling and word usage (‘bason’ became ‘basin’; ‘durst not’ became ‘dare not’; ‘dying’ became ‘dyeing’; ‘tygers’ became ‘tigers’ etc.), and introduced quotation marks around direct speech. He also paid particular attention to the scientific material, in which he shared his father’s interest. Some examples from the opening conversation on the oak tree will demonstrate the sort of changes he made. This conversation included a discussion of whether men had ever eaten acorns.<sup>25</sup> Where the original version had mildly suggested that acorns were eaten, ‘I believe..., in some countries’ where they ‘probably became sweeter and better-flavoured’, Arthur was more exact and definite, stating that acorns ‘are eaten in Spain and Greece, and in some other of the southern countries of Europe’ where they ‘are sweeter and better-flavoured, and are produced by a different species of oak’. Arthur also up-dated the section on ship-building to recognise that it was no longer true that ‘all our ships’ were

built of oak, though he did not discuss what the other ships were built of. Arthur's changes generally made the text more up to date, sometimes by explicitly referring to recent advances, but usually by giving more scientific details, or explaining them more carefully than his father had done. With the non-scientific stories and conversations, Arthur made few material changes, correcting only the spelling and some archaic sentence structures.

When Routledge wanted to produce a revised edition in 1851, he could have turned to Arthur and Lucy Aikin, both of whom were still alive. However, Routledge's concern was to produce cheap books, which he believed he could sell in large numbers. His first impression of 2,000 copies cost £176 before editing costs were taken into account. Clearly, if he approached the Aikins, and paid them anything like the sum they had received for the last revised version, the cost of the edition would almost have doubled. Instead, Routledge asked Cecil Hartley to edit the work, and paid him a mere £7 for it. Although described on the title-page as 'Cecil Hartley, MA, editor of the *Circle of the Sciences*', I have been unable to discover anything more about Hartley, except that he edited other works for Routledge, including the edition of *Sandford and Merton* which came out shortly after that of *Evenings at Home*. As someone who was presumably an employee, rather than the next-of-kin of the authors, Hartley could be paid substantially less. It also seems that Routledge's aim was primarily for the new version to secure copyright, rather than to produce a completely modernised text. Indeed, although Hartley's edition uses the arrangement of stories imposed by Lucy Aikin, as well as the two new stories added by Arthur, it incorporates few of Arthur's careful revisions. Hartley modernised more of the spelling and punctuation than Arthur, but where the scientific material was concerned, his revisions were far less substantial. He completely ignored Arthur's corrections to the passage about the edibility of acorns, and those made to clarify the subsequent passage on the use of oak bark in tanning, leaving both passages as they were written eighty years earlier. In the passage on dyeing, which followed that on tanning, Hartley simply modernised the spelling of 'dying', and referred to 'a sort of cloth called fustian' rather than simply 'fustians'.

This concern that his youthful readers of the 1850s might not understand some old-fashioned concepts was behind Hartley's most significant alteration. A story called 'Travellers' Wonders' described the habits and manners of the British people as they might be seen by an outsider. With reference to hair-styles, the original narrator said that the hair 'is all matted and stiffened with the fat of swine and other animals, mixed up with powders of various colours and ingredients'.<sup>26</sup> Hartley allowed this to stand to preserve the mystery of the story, but inserted an editorial note at the end to explain that this referred to 'the period when ladies – and gentlemen also – used vast quantities of powder, pomatum, &c. in their head-dress.

Happily, for cleanliness, beauty, and good taste, those times are past, never, it is hoped, to return.<sup>27</sup> Hartley added three other notes (discussing the use of iron in ship-building, machinery in paper-making and the difference between reason and instinct in insects) and rewrote one of the stories which had been added in 1823, whose sentiments might not have appealed to late Victorian parents.<sup>28</sup> The preface to Hartley's edition claimed that due to 'the advance of time, and the consequent advance of literature, science, and the arts' it had been necessary to 'modernise or polish' the 'obsolete and rugged expressions', and that 'wherever it may have been judged necessary, new and useful information has been inserted'.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, the spelling was modernised, but only four insertions were made, while most of Arthur's contributions to scientific detail were omitted. The resulting impression is that Hartley's 'careful revisions' were mostly cosmetic, with the few significant changes being made to demonstrate to any legal inquirers that it was indeed a revised version.

### 3.

Perhaps the most significant changes made to the revised version in the 1820s were those made by Lucy Aikin. The 101 stories of the revised version were divided into thirty-one chapters, and four volumes. The original version had professedly had a random arrangement, intended to maintain the interest of the reader, although some progression in the difficulty of the scientific lessons can be detected. Lucy's collection retained the use of 'randomness' as far as genre and subject matter was concerned, but arranged the stories in order of difficulty for the reader, both in terms of the language used and the lesson being taught. The first volume contained relatively simple stories, mostly about animals ('Adventures of a cat', 'The discontented squirrel'), while the more complicated scientific dialogues ('The compound-flowered plants', 'On metals') appeared mostly in the third volume, and those relating to human nature ('The cost of a war', 'Master and slave', 'Perseverance against fortune') were in the final volume.

Lucy made these changes for practical reasons related to the way the book would be used in the family circle. The new order would 'conduct the young reader, in a gentle progress, from the easier pieces to the more difficult', but also, it meant that the four individual volumes were adapted 'to different ages, by which the inconvenience might be avoided of either putting the whole set into the hands of a child, whilst one portion of its contents would not be intelligible to him, or of withholding the whole until another portion should have ceased to be interesting'.<sup>30</sup> She was quite specifically thinking of a situation where there were several children in the family, each of whom could have their own volume of *Evenings at Home*. This is a distinctly different view of family reading practices from that suggested by her father in the introduction to the original version. That family also had several children, but the

stories were read aloud in the family circle and discussed by everyone. The discussion of reading material, like the instructive conversations which the book taught its readers to engage in, was central to the rational Dissenting plan of education, by which children were to learn to reason for themselves, rather than to accept what an authority figure told them.<sup>31</sup> The children who read the revised version were expected to read only those parts of it which were suited to their age, and to do so in the order prescribed by the editor.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that they would be doing so individually and silently.

The set of four volumes could also be considered as a series of graded readers to help children become proficient in reading. As early as 1797, *Evenings at Home* had been recommended as a book for children who were learning, or had just learnt, to read, and it continued to appear in this guise throughout the nineteenth century, despite changes in the methods used to teach reading. The original *Evenings at Home* was judged by Maria Edgeworth to be suitable for seven to ten year olds, and Erasmus Darwin recommended it for girls who were learning to read.<sup>33</sup> They saw no tension between this usage, and the fact that the book contained words like ‘astringent’ and ‘umbelliferous’. Both also recommended Barbauld’s *Lessons for Children* (1778), one of the few sets of graded readers available in the 1790s. At this time most children who learned to read did so from whatever books were in the house, which, of course, tended to be books written for adults. Lucy Aikin’s rearrangement of *Evenings at Home* in the 1820s reflects the beginning of an awareness that children would be happier with reading if led gradually to the more difficult texts, rather than being dropped straight in.

Changes in teaching methods occurred not just in middle-class families, but also in the National, and British and Foreign schools, where increasing numbers of poorer children were being made literate. Teaching in these schools, as David Vincent has shown, was originally based on methods which had barely changed in the last four centuries, and involved learning to recognise and pronounce meaningless combinations of letters (‘ba, be, bi, bo, bu’), starting with monosyllables and building up to the seven syllable words needed to read the Bible.<sup>34</sup> While there was a gradual increase in complexity, coherent sentences, let alone stories, were not introduced till the very end of the course, so there was little encouragement for the child to learn his strings of syllables. By mid-century, educationalists began to realise that the displacement of all that was familiar and comprehensible from the experience of learning to read at school was hindering children’s literacy. The ‘Look and Say’ method of teaching reading was used from the 1850s, and emphasised the importance of using familiar words in a familiar context, which the child was to be able to recognise before learning how the words were constructed. This system relied upon simple stories written in simple, often monosyllabic words, from which the child could progress to more complicated stories. These

changes clearly created a need for new reading books, and were given renewed impetus in the 1860s, when the Revised Code stated that the primary role of schools was to teach the three Rs. This meant that religion was no longer the main aim of reading, and hence school readers need no longer be exclusively religious. One set of graded readers was produced by the National School Society, and among the stories they chose were two of the most popular from *Evenings at Home*.<sup>35</sup>

In the late 1860s, both Cassell and Routledge produced a series of one-syllable adaptations of popular children's books. Given the coloured cloth binding, gilt edges, and price of 3s. 6d., these were not school books, but more likely reward or gift books, for children who had just learned to read. Routledge's one-syllable versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Swiss Family Robinson* and *Evenings at Home* were adapted by 'Mary Godolphin', a pseudonym for Lucy Aikin. Cassell's adaptations of *Evenings at Home* and *Sandford and Merton* were done by 'Uncle John', who was the author of several other children's books on the Cassell list. Producing a truly monosyllabic work necessitated adapting some of the stories with great freedom. While Aikin seems to have been happy doing this with a text written by her father, which she had already revised once, 'Uncle John' took fewer liberties, and left his version full of words like 'squir-rel', 'tor-toise' and 'her-on'. Aikin apologised in her preface for having to leave in one word which was not monosyllabic (King 'Alfred').<sup>36</sup> In Aikin's version, some of the stories are completely transformed, with the tale of the 'Swallow and Tortoise' becoming that of the 'Swift and Snail', and the squirrel that troubled Uncle John becoming an unidentified pet called Squgg (see Figure 2). These versions were the final stage in the transformation of *Evenings at Home* from a complicated book for young readers of the late eighteenth century, to a simple book to teach reading to late nineteenth-century children.

The editions of *Evenings at Home* during the nineteenth century display several advances in book design, particularly in the illustrations and binding. But one feature remained relatively unchanged throughout the century: the small size of the print. The quality of the print improved greatly, as did the paper it was printed on, but if anything, the typeface became smaller rather than larger (compare Figures 1 and 3). Despite the calls of Mrs. Barbauld, among others, in the 1770s, for larger type in books aimed at young children, publishers continued to produce small books with small type for small children.<sup>37</sup> Unsurprisingly, the exceptions to this rule are the one-syllable versions, both of which used a larger type-face, with more space between lines, to help their young readers.

The choice of *Evenings at Home* as a text for learners was not restricted to those teaching young British children to read their own language. It was chosen by a German publisher in

the mid-1860s as a school reader for children learning English in the middle and lower classes of school, and by Isaac Pitman (1813-97) as one of the texts with which to teach his phonetic system of shorthand.<sup>38</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, Pitman's had become the most widely used system in the world, not least due to his determination to promote it, and the wide range of material he published for learners. The one-syllable version (by Uncle John) of *Evenings at Home* was in the exalted company of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, and Thomas More's *Utopia*, as well as *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and several works by Charles Dickens and Washington Irving.

#### 4.

I have already explained how *Evenings at Home* was praised for combining instruction with amusement in the 1790s. Indeed, although many such claims were being made, the *Monthly Magazine* judged *Evenings at Home* to be the best of the ones that had appeared.<sup>39</sup> However, from the early 1800s, there was a 'backlash' against this determination to combine amusement with instruction. Commentators like Coleridge and Lamb argued that young minds were being deprived of all opportunity to use their imagination, and that fairy tales and stories with less didacticism should be reintroduced.<sup>40</sup> Over the early years of the nineteenth century, there were indeed more imaginative and fictitious stories for children, including translations of fairy tales by Perrault and Grimm. By the 1840s, William Thackeray could look back at the 'Abominable attempts [that] were made in those days to make useful books for children, and cram science down their throats as calomel used to be administered under the pretence of a spoonful of currant-jelly.'<sup>41</sup> There were still plenty of didactic books, but they no longer received widespread critical acclaim, and were often regarded as more suitable for schoolrooms. Sales of *Evenings at Home* had been falling off, and Elizabeth Rigby was a lone voice in claiming that the older books had 'been superseded in circulation by works bearing no comparison with them in value'.<sup>42</sup>

Routledge's editions of *Evenings at Home* included all the original stories, plus the two added in the 1820s. However, many of his competitors selected at will from the collection, as the miscellaneous nature of *Evenings at Home* meant that omissions or rearrangements were less fatal than to *Robinson Crusoe*. Several of these selections appear to have been intended solely to produce a book of a particular length to fit into a publisher's 'standard' library. For similar reasons, two editions even gained material to fill up space.<sup>43</sup> These selective omissions often changed the balance between 'instructive' and 'amusing', usually in favour of the 'amusing' stories, and thus created a text with a rather different aim from the original work. The most striking edition with regard to selective omissions was the 1863 edition

which appeared in 'Laurie's Entertaining Library' published by Longman at 9d. or 1s. (see Figure 3).

Laurie's version was intended for 'generally speaking, the less educated portion of the community', by which he meant children and the working classes.<sup>44</sup> For Laurie, two features of the work made it suitable for this group. The first was the low price of the edition, although by the 1860s, books was available to the working man more cheaply than ever before, reducing the appeal of children's works. The second is a feature of Laurie's selection, rather than of the original work. Laurie believed that neither children nor working men were being supplied with the right type of reading material.

In undertakings of this kind too little allowance has been made for what may almost be termed the repulsiveness of a book to the untutored mind. Children freed from irksome tasks, and working men wearied with a hard day's toil, cannot possibly be induced to read until they find out what a wealth of entertainment is concealed under the hard, ungraceful forms of typography. Nothing appears more certain than that they will not read at all, unless materials are placed before them which are calculated to arouse their interest and enchain their attention.<sup>45</sup>

Laurie stressed the importance of 'entertainment'. Aikin and Barbauld had certainly been concerned with catching their reader's attention, keeping their interest, and providing entertainment, but for them and for many subsequent writers for both children and working men, entertainment had to be mingled with serious material. The first edition was quite explicitly subtitled 'for the instruction and amusement of youth', while Laurie's subtitle, in contrast, keeps 'the juvenile budget of miscellanies', but makes no mention of instruction. Laurie selected forty-eight of the stories from *Evenings at Home*, and although he did not order them according to reading difficulty as Lucy Aikin had done, it is striking that over two-thirds of the stories were those which she had placed in her first two volumes as being suitable to younger (or less experienced) readers. Although all the stories in *Evenings at Home* had lessons, some of them were more clearly didactic than others, and most of these were omitted by Laurie. The result was a collection of amusing stories which were relatively simple to read.

Laurie's version is thus illustrative of a change in attitude to the reading needs of working-class children and adults. From the late eighteenth century onwards, working-class reading had been seen by middle-class educators as a means to an end. Schools taught children how to read the Bible, while in the Mechanics' Institutes, reading was a method of instruction in

secular subjects. Middle-class children might read books which combined instruction with amusement, such as the original *Evenings at Home* and its kind, but the working classes, both adults and children were unlikely to have any sugar added to their pill of instruction. This view began to change from mid-century, for a number of reasons. Mechanics' Institute libraries began to admit fiction (and politics) onto their shelves, where previously only approved non-fiction had been permitted. This was an attempt to increase attendance figures, but it was also an admission that some compromise had to be reached between the reading material deemed suitable by the middle-class sponsors, and the material which the working men actually wanted to read.<sup>46</sup> From the late 1840s onwards, there were so many new cheap magazines and journals which made entertaining reading available to working men that institutions like the Mechanics' Institutes had to change to survive. Similar shifts were gradually taking place in schools, and were consolidated by the Revised Code mentioned earlier. New books which prioritised amusement over instruction were written for schools, nurseries, and working-class homes, but Laurie's version demonstrates the well-known publishing fact that using an old classic is frequently cheaper than producing a new book.

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In this article, I have shown that children's books do not have the single, static identity that might be assumed from the histories which deal only with the appearance of the first edition. Although the original version may have been the 'true' version, as sanctioned by the authors, later editors and publishers revised, amended and selected from the work to produce different and equally valid versions to meet the perceived needs of their different markets. The range of later appropriations of *Evenings at Home* illustrates the need to consider the role of these reprinted editions alongside the discussions of new titles and first editions which dominate the children's literature field.

The actual changes made to the text in the 1823 and 1851 revisions were less important than the changes in the selection and arrangement of the stories. Lucy Aikin's rearrangement was intended for a new mode of family reading that was individual and silent, rather than aloud in a group. In both her 1826 rearrangement and her 1869 one-syllable version, she demonstrated an awareness of current ideas on teaching reading. First, *Evenings at Home* became a series of graded readers for children with some literacy, and later it was adapted to a monosyllabic version for the very young. The 'instructive and amusing' genre fell from favour in the nineteenth century, as did the practice of supplying only instructive reading material to the working classes. Reading outside the school room came to be seen as a source of pleasure and amusement, and while this usually involved producing a new generation of children's books, older books could be, and were, selected or adapted to fit the purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary F. Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure in Reading: an introduction to the history of children's books in England from the invention of printing to 1914 with an outline of some developments in other countries* (London, 1972, 2nd edn.), 93; and Alec Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature* (Oxford, 1968), 69.

<sup>2</sup> See Leslie F. Chard, 'Joseph Johnson: father of the book trade', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, **79** (1975), 51-82; *Idem*, 'Bookseller to publisher: Joseph Johnson and the English book trade, 1760-1810', *The Library*, **5th series**, **32** (1977), 138-54; and Gerald P. Tyson, *Joseph Johnson: a liberal publisher* (Iowa City, 1979) for Johnson.

<sup>3</sup> Share-holder figures from 1823 can be found in the Longman Archives, available on microfilm from Chadwyck-Healey.

<sup>4</sup> On dubious foreign copyrights, see James J Barnes, *Authors, Publishers and Politicians: the quest for an Anglo-American copyright agreement* (London, 1974), and Simon Nowell-Smith, *International copyright law and the publisher in the reign of Queen Victoria* (Oxford, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> Routledge Publication Books, 1850-58, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Longman Impression Books, H12, 221 and H14, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Aikin, *Evenings at Home in words of one syllable* (London, 1869); Uncle John, *Evenings at Home in words of one syllable* (London, 1869); and Isaac Pitman, ed., *Easy readings in Phonography, selected from Evenings at Home in words of one syllable, and printed in the learners' style of phonography* (London, 1888).

<sup>8</sup> 'Evenings at Home (review)', *Monthly Review*, **12** (1793), 355.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Sarah Trimmer, *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature, and Reading the Holy Scriptures, adapted to the capacities of children* [1780] (London, 1793, 8th edn.).

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Trimmer, 'Review of Evenings at Home', *Guardian of Education*, **2** (1803), 352 and passim; Elizabeth Rigby, 'Children's books', *Quarterly Review*, **74** (1844), 9.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Lucy Aikin, *Memoir of John Aikin, M.D., with a selection of his miscellaneous pieces, biographical, moral and critical* (2 vols., London, 1823), 169-70; John Aikin, and Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Evenings at Home; or the Juvenile Budget opened: consisting of a variety of miscellaneous pieces for the instruction and amusement of youth* (6 vols., London, 1792-96, 1st edn.), i, 84-98; Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools* (London, 1797), 17-45. Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: reading as social practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994), 167-85 discusses women's education in the late eighteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> L. Aikin, preface to Aikin, *Evenings at Home* (1826), iv.

<sup>13</sup> Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, **1**, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to his Son, on various topics, relative to literature and the conduct of life* (2 vols., London, 1796-1800, 3rd edn.), i, 1; Maria Edgeworth, and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Essays on Practical Education* [1797] (2 vols., London, 1815), i, 68, and 435 (where *Evenings at Home* is commended for this).

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- <sup>15</sup> Rigby, 'Children's books', 20.
- <sup>16</sup> Rigby, 'Children's books', 20.
- <sup>17</sup> Charlotte Yonge, 'Children's literature of the last century', *Macmillan's Magazine*, **20** (1869), 233.
- <sup>18</sup> Yonge, 'Children's literature', 233.
- <sup>19</sup> Copyright as it affected publishers is discussed in John Feather, *Publishing, piracy and politics* (1995); its effects on authors in Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: the invention of copyright* (London, 1993); and the complexity of the laws in Walter Arthur Copinger, *The law of copyright in works of literature and art* (London, 1870) and Nowell-Smith, *International copyright law*.
- <sup>20</sup> 54 Geo. III, cap. 156, section 3; 5&6 Vict., cap. 45, section 6.
- <sup>21</sup> Copinger, *Copyright*, 21, 23.
- <sup>22</sup> Barbauld's 'Live Dolls' and Aikin's 'A Secret Character Unveiled'.
- <sup>23</sup> Total cost of 3,000 copies was £475, Longman H10, 214.
- <sup>24</sup> I have carried out a detailed collation of four of the stories. For the rest, I have noted only major changes.
- <sup>25</sup> Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, **1**, 3-18.
- <sup>26</sup> Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, **1**, 29.
- <sup>27</sup> Cecil Hartley, ed., *Evenings at Home; or the Juvenile Budget opened: consisting of a variety of miscellaneous pieces for the instruction and amusement of youth, by Dr Aikin and Mrs Barbauld, carefully revised and corrected throughout, and with some additional pieces, by the authors, the whole newly arranged in four volumes* (1 vols., London, 1875), 12.
- <sup>28</sup> Hartley, *Evenings at Home* (1875), 70, 165, 170, 40-44. The original story advocated letting young girls set up sewing clubs to make clothes for the children of poor families, Aikin, *Evenings at Home* (1826), 84-96.
- <sup>29</sup> Hartley, *Evenings at Home* (1875), preface, iii.
- <sup>30</sup> L. Aikin, preface to Aikin, *Evenings at Home* (1826), iv.
- <sup>31</sup> For example, Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, ii, 131, and Aikin, *Letters from a Father*, ii, 304.
- <sup>32</sup> The first edition would almost certainly have been read in its printed order, but, given the emphasis on miscellany and random choice, it encouraged 'dipping in'.
- <sup>33</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, i, 434-5; Darwin, *Female Education*, 13, 119.
- <sup>34</sup> David Vincent, *Literacy and popular culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), 73-92.
- <sup>35</sup> Yonge, 'Children's literature', 233.
- <sup>36</sup> Aikin, *Evenings at Home* (1869), preface.
- <sup>37</sup> Barbauld's views on the printing of children's books are expressed in her letter to John Aikin, 19 Jan 1778, in Lucy Aikin, ed., *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with a memoir* (2 vols., London, 1825), ii, 19.
- <sup>38</sup> J.A. Lohmann, ed., *Evenings at Home: Englisches Lesebuch fuer Schueler und Schuelerinnen unterer und mittlerer Klassen. Mit einem vollstaentigen Woerterbuche, welche zugleich die noethigen Erlaeuterungen enthaelt* (1 vols., Quedlingburg, 1865); Pitman, *Evenings at Home* (1888).

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<sup>39</sup> 'Literary intelligence - education', *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1796), 488. However, the literary editor of the *Monthly Magazine* at this time was John Aikin!

<sup>40</sup> See Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, Ch. 3, and M.V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic: children's literature in England from its beginnings to 1839* (Aldershot, 1989), Ch. 9.

<sup>41</sup> 'On some illustrated children's books', 1846, quoted in Marjorie Moon, *John Harris's Books for Youth 1801-1843: a checklist* (Folkestone, 1992, Revised edn.), 182.

<sup>42</sup> Rigby, 'Children's books', 19.

<sup>43</sup> Cornish's (1853), and Ward, Lock's (1879) editions.

<sup>44</sup> J.S. Laurie, ed., *Evenings at Home: or the juvenile budget of miscellanies* (London, 1863), v.

<sup>45</sup> Laurie, *Evenings at Home* (1863), v-vi.

<sup>46</sup> D.A. Hinton, 'Popular Science in England, 1830-1870' (Ph.D. thesis, Bath, 1979), Ch. 7, analyses the contents of Mechanics' Institute libraries.