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Validating the veracity: narrative voice and the construction of authentic histories in joan o'neill's daisy *chain war*

Pádraic Whyte

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Abstract

By reconsidering recent debates in relation to the construction of history and memory in literature, I examine the use of the first-person narrative structure in historical fiction for children. I propose that in certain texts a pseudo-autobiography or 'memoir-style' of fiction is constituted for the implied child reader, where the position of the narrative voice is used to validate the veracity of both the childhood experience and the historical period that is documented in the novel. Focussing on Joan O'Neill's best-selling *Daisy Chain War* (1990), a tale of growing up in Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s, I analyse the use of child protagonist Lizzie Doyle as narrator. Theories employed include Foucault's idea of 'history of the present'. I also draw upon debates surrounding the writing and revising of history in 1990s Ireland (R. F. Foster's idea of the

commodification of Irish childhood through memoirs) and the position of O'Neill's work within this cultural framework.

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