"*Jakers!* Children's Cartoons and the Construction of a Hyphenated Identity Matrix"

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The most effective way a society has of communicating its identity matrix and values to its members is through its myths and fairytales. The role of language, and by extension literature, is to impose a meaning or pattern on reality that makes it easier for members of society to navigate their way through it. Myths and fairytales are constructed to communicate a number of universal "truths" to its members about their identities and social status. In other words, they function as important agents of socialization. This essay will examine the role that television increasingly plays as the main creator and transmitter of cultural values, including both personal and social identities. It will argue that this role is particularly important for minority social groups, such as diasporas, who find themselves in need of a structured identity matrix that will bridge the gap between the traditions of the homeland and the requirements of the host society in which they now find themselves living. The essay will explore the extent to which cartoons can play a critical role in teaching the children of diasporas the inherited behaviours and identity of their cultural group. Cartoons are considered a particularly effective way of communicating cultural messages in such a way that they are understood and accepted by children. Recent studies have focused on the use of cartoons by minority groups to negotiate a compound identity that both draws on and resists hegemonic values. The essay will conclude by examining the identity matrix constructed by one Irish-American cartoon series, *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks* (2003-8). Aimed at the children of the Irish diaspora, the series teaches its viewers lessons about Irish traditions and values that they are then encouraged to apply to their own lives in contemporary America. In so doing, the programme suggests a hyphenated identity that negotiates between traditional Irish and more contemporary American mythological constructs. What is significant about *Jakers!* as a cultural text is that it highlights the learned, performative nature of diasporic identity: in order to achieve a truly hyphenated identity Irish-American children must be taught how to actively engage with and bridge the differences between the twin strands of their inherited cultures.

Every society is built on a number of shared norms and values. A society's members must learn about and obey these norms and values if the society is to function harmoniously. Benedict Anderson's oft-cited description of the nation as an "imagined community" draws attention to the shared values and history that link an otherwise disparate group of people together in a cooperating collective[i]. The nation, in other words, is none other than a kind of cultural metanarrative or ideological framework within which a group of people experiences a sense of unity. A country's culture is, according to this formulation, the glue that binds its inhabitants together and marks them as a distinct ethnic group. Members of this group must work together to create a *social* identity, which they use to perform their distinct national character into being[ii]. The function of this social identity is to promote certain values, norms and behaviours considered central to the stability of the society, and reward those who adhere to these values. By extension, those who cannot or will not subscribe to the socially-sanctioned values are marginalized and othered. Because of the increasingly globalized nature of our world, cultural differences are no longer as clearly delineated as they were in the past. It is for this reason that holding on to at least some sense of their shared history and heritage is of such central importance to diaspora groups.

This socialization process is perhaps most evident when examining the means by which a child becomes a member of his society. Anthony Giddens describes socialization as the process whereby, through contact with other human beings: "(T)he helpless infant

gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which he or she is born[iii]. Culture, which Giddens describes as pertaining "to those aspects of society which are learned, rather than inherited" (Giddens 2004, 27), is the set of behaviours and values that is transmitted down through the generations and binds members of a society together. When a child learns these elements of his inherited culture, he assumes a social identity which runs alongside and supports his individual identity: "Social identities….involve a collective dimension. They mark ways that individuals are 'the same' as others" (Giddens 2004, 29). What is significant is that the shared identity and values the child is encouraged to learn are rigidly structured along the lines of the dominant social ideology. The culture inherited by the child thus encourages him to adopt the worldview of his society: "(T)he life-world the newborn enters contains more than objects and social institutions. It is also characterized by a complex of legitimations which explain and integrate the various actions patterns of a group….In short, the individual has acquired a set or mode for interpreting the world meaningfully; he perceives it in an ordered and subjectively understandable frame of reference"[iv].

Clearly a child has to be taught to understand these underlying social myths and to accept the visions of order and legitimation that they propose. A society's cultural texts and practices play an important role in transmitting these rules to its members and persuading them to internalize them. Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests that all cultural practices are to some extent structuring processes, developed in order to organize and thus make sense of the world. This is particularly apparent, he claims, when we examine a society's myths and legends which operate to reduce social anxieties by resolving contradictions and oppositions: "Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution"[v]. In so doing, a myth reinforces a sense of social order amongst its members. Bruno Bettelheim argues that mythological tales are particularly well suited to teaching these cultural messages to children because they enable each individual child to interpret the story in a way that is most suitable to his own personal experience: "As with all great art, the fairy tale's deepest meaning will be different for each person, and different for the same person at various moments in his life. The child will extract different meanings from the same fairy tale, depending on his interests and the needs of the moment"[vi]. Bettelheim regards fairy tales as a means for a society to teach its shared values and norms to children in a way that makes them easy to understand and internalise. Most importantly, fairy tales enable the child to confront his deepest fears and resolve them in a constructive, socially acceptable, way: "Just because his life is often bewildering to him, the child needs even more to be given the chance to understand himself in this complex world with which he must learn to cope….This is exactly the message that fairy tales get across to the child in manifold form: that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence – but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious" (Bettelheim 1991, 5, 8). The function of a society's myths is thus to enable members to confront and overcome any difficulties that they encounter on the journey through life. For children, myths play an invaluable role in enabling them to face up to their deepest fears and learn the values and behaviours needed to truly become valuable members of their society.

There is little doubt that the media, television in particular, have assumed a leading role in structuring contemporary social and cultural ideas. Research into the central role of television in American society suggests that it now constitutes the major agent of socialization. The authors of a large-scale report into television viewing and its effects on human development and behaviour concluded that: "In additional to socialization, television influences how people think about the world around them or what is sometimes called their conceptions of 'social reality'"[vii]. In other words, viewers tend to accept and internalize the

attitudes, values and behaviours portrayed on broadcast television[viii]. To a large extent, they then use these learned ideas to structure their perceptions of the surrounding environment. Emphasizing the integral role television plays in forming people's worldview, Steven DeMaio states that: "People's conceptions of social reality involve not only what they view as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, what they value and what they believe others value, how they stereotype others, and what kind of a world, in general, they think they live in, but are also a kind of lens through which they view others, events in the world, and ultimately themselves – the glass, as it were, through which we see darkly. Television, too, is a lens through which we view the world. The average American spends 6 hours a day watching television. It is the major source of information for most Americans as well. It is important, therefore, to examine both the social reality being presented to us through broadcast television, and how we make meanings from that presentation"[ix].

It is widely accepted that no viewers are as vulnerable to the influence of television as children, primarily because as new members of a society they are less likely to test what they learn from television against any real life experience they have gathered: "Television provides all people with a window on the larger world, but the view through that window has a far greater influence on children's sense of it, simply because their individual worlds are so constricted, their experience so limited, and their perception of social reality so plastic" (Swan 1998, 87). Sonia Livingstone explains that studying how young children engage with television is instructive in rendering overt the kinds of interpretative activity that adults undertake automatically and unconsciously: "(R)esearch into children's understanding of television in particular has served to counter the notion of television viewing as an effortless experience. Many of young children's experiences of television show vividly the kinds of work that experienced viewers do in making sense of television"[x]. The role of television as an enforcer of socially prescribed behaviours has long been a concern of media theorists. Early models of media effects focused on the ideological consequences of exposure to the content of programmes, and saw audiences as an uneducated mass unable to do anything other than passively absorb the messages being transmitted to them[xi]. More recent studies have moved away from these simplistic, one-directional models of media effects and have focused more on trying to understand exactly how and for what ends media audiences use television programmes. Reception theory, for example, emphasises the active role played by viewers in negotiating the meanings of television programmes by relating them to their own experiences[xii]. However, many theorists continue to view audience interpretations as inherently structured by a deeply embedded network of underlying social ideologies. David Morley, for example, insists that an audience will always interpret a television programme through the lens of their own cultural, social and educational backgrounds: "(T)he 'meaning' of a programme or a 'message' depends upon the interpretative code which the audience brings to the decoding situation"[xiii].

In the context of what Lévi-Strauss argues about the structuring role of mythology, it is important that we understand television as a mode of ideological communication that it is deeply embedded within the matrix of a society's socializing institutions. Closely echoing Lévi-Strauss, Grant Noble argues that television has essentially replaced traditional forms of storytelling to become the primary socializing agent today: "For better or worse television provides the folklore of today….(T)elevision today does guide viewers along the path of life. It gives some folklore which is representative of society's mores; it provides examples of appropriate behaviours for social settings beyond the viewer's direct experience, and it exposes viewers to people, places and events from the wider society. Such knowledge marks membership of the society"[xiv]. What is crucial is that the media do not operate in isolation, but rather in collusion with the family and other primary agents of socialization: "Television is obviously not the only teacher of values, attitudes and norms. It interacts and 'competes'

with a number of other socialization agents, including parents, extended family, peers, school, churches, other media and so on"[xv]. The ideology transmitted by the media is thus rendered invisible because it is so effectively embedded within the other social institutions in the environment. This, obviously, is not the case when we examine the use of the media by diaspora groups. In their bid to both accommodate and challenge the culture of the host society, diasporic television programmes often make visible the ideological tensions that mainstream media products prefer to ignore and even deny.

The extent to which diaspora groups are increasingly using the media to construct a new hybridised sense of shared identity has been the focus of numerous recent studies. Robin Cohen argues that transnational networks of media and communication are undoubtedly sustaining diaspora formations and enhancing a sense of diaspora consciousness[xvi]. Marie Gillespie agrees that: "Diaspora identifications and connections are greatly strengthened by modern communications technologies", explaining that the proliferation of ethnic movies and television series now available to viewers all over the world have diminished some of cultural differences that existed in the past between diasporas and their ethnic kin who stayed in the homeland[xvii]. She cautions, however, that the environment in which diasporas watch the media products of their homelands has a crucial impact on the ways in which messages are interpreted and ideas about identity constructed. Taking the cinema of the Indian diaspora as an example, she notes that amongst the diaspora traditional themes and morals are significantly altered when they come into contact with the more liberal social values of the western world. For this reason, she argues, it is important to regard television viewing amongst diasporas as an activity with two distinct functions: it celebrates the shared values and history of the homeland while simultaneously transforming these values to make them relevant to life in the host society: "A diaspora perspective is also important because it acknowledges the ways in which identities have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction. The globalization of media and culture is deeply implicated in this process" (Gillespie 2003, 150). Taking a broad overview of the research, there are a number of findings that are particularly relevant to the theme of this essay.

Stuart Hall argues that television viewing must be seen as a social, rather than an individual activity, and that viewers make sense of what they see by actively relating it to their own experiences: "Television viewing has to be seen less and less as an isolated and individual, more and more as a social, even a collective, activity….People don't passively absorb subliminal 'inputs' from the screen. They discursively 'make sense' of or produce 'readings' of what they see. Moreover, the 'sense' they make is related to a pattern of choices about what and when to view which is constructed within a set of relationships constituted by the domestic and familial settings in which it is taking place"[xviii]. Michael K. Saenz emphasizes the structured nature of the meanings derived from television programmes, and suggests that this act of meaning production is a political act in which audiences engage in a type of "social performance" which enables them to "construct peculiarly collective memories and associations".[xix] A common theme in many of the studies of diasporic media practices is the extent to which communities gather together to watch television programmes. Gillespie's study of the British-Asian diaspora in London notes that: "If the imagined community of the nation became possible because of the advent of newspapers, then this is still more true of the contemporary regulation of simultaneous experience through broadcast media schedules" (Gillespie 2003, 148). Through the development of satellite and more recently web-based television broadcasts, the diaspora can now watch the same programmes being transmitted in he homeland. This participation in a shared viewing experience transcends geographical distance and enables members of the diaspora to feel as though they were "at home" again, at least for the duration of the programme: "Time and again families

told me that, apart from the pleasures of the serial itself, they enjoyed each episode because, when they were watching it, they felt such a close connection to the relatives back home" (Gillespie 2003, 154). A participant in Yu Shi's study of media usage among members of the Chinese diaspora in America puts it succinctly when pondering on the value that watching old Chinese historical series has for her: "I feel, in these stories, the history, the spirit of Chinese people, and the root of the culture that is so deep that it gives me a sense of confidence and security that I have never experienced after coming here"[xx].

As well as drawing comfort and a sense of shared identity from the content of television programmes, many theorists note that the very act of watching has a different function among diasporas. Diasporic television is often described as a ritualistic activity, through which members of a family or society perform and renew their sense of unity and commonality. This form of media communication, for James Carey, is thus "(N)ot directed towards the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs"[xxi]. In his study of the Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles, Hamid Naficy discovers that it is common for members to watch programmes from the homeland in public settings, like restaurants, and that watching them as a community enables them to work together to reinforce the often tenuous links that bind them together as members of a specific ethnic group. The role of a ritual is to reintroduce order and a sense of stability into a disordered, chaotic environment. By reiterating the values of the homeland and providing viewers with its symbolic representation, ritualised television programmes reassert the separate social space of the diaspora. To fulfil this ritualistic function, the television programmes consumed by diaspora groups tend to be heavy on repetition, clichés, romantic iconography of the homeland and strongly narrativized[xxii]: "Rituals gain additional prominence when the actual social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or weakened. Communal celebrations….occupy a prominent place in the cultural repertoire of the exiles, and commercially driven exilic television as a ritual functions in parallel with these social rituals to maintain individual, communal and national boundaries. It introduces a sense of order and control into the life of the viewers"[xxiii].

In spite of his assessment of the ritualised and highly constructed nature of the representations offered to the diaspora by their television viewing, Naficy is adamant that the identity thus created differs significantly from that on offer in the homeland. Like Gillespie's comments on the significantly more liberalised subject matters explored by filmmakers of the Indian diaspora, Naficy notes that many of the programmes enjoyed by the Iranian community in Los Angeles would never be allowed in the religiously and sexually conservative homeland: "Their Iran is not Iran as it is: it's an imaginary Iran cleansed of the culture and politics of the current Islamic theocracy" (Naficy 1993, 537). In spite of the importance of these television texts as ritualistic enactments of the homeland, therefore, it is clear that the identity they offer to their viewers is a hybridized mix of new and old, contemporary and traditional. Hall's conception of diasporic identity is grounded in this very celebration of multiplicity: "The diaspora experience as I intend it here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and not through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference"[xxiv]. This active negotiation and renegotiation of the identity messages transmitted through media texts was apparent to Gillespie who noted that the young British-Asians in her study effortlessly mixed elements from their ethnic and host environments together to create a dynamic culture mix that was relevant to their everyday needs: "The key argument is that young people who are part of the South Asian diaspora make shared use of the increasingly transnational array of TV

programmes and video films available to them, not only to lubricate their daily social interactions, but also to compare and contrast, judge and evaluate the culturally different social worlds that appear on their TV screens. TV talk, though seemingly trivial and inconsequential, is enacted in a variety of private and public arenas, and in some cases constitutes an embryonic public sphere. It is both a form of self-narration, and a forum in which different vantage points and identities are experimented with and performed" (Gillespie 2003, 146). What is evident throughout the studies cited above is that it is the younger members of the diaspora who are most active in negotiating these hybridised identities from the range of cultural texts available to them. Resolute in their bid to integrate into their adopted homelands while still retaining elements of their inherited ethnic traditions, they seek new cultural mythologies on which they can construct their flexible but coherent identity matrix.

Jakers! is a cartoon series aimed at the children of the Irish diaspora. It was first broadcast in the United States on PBS Kids (2003-8) and has since been sold to television networks around the world. As a way of integrating research into the central role played by a society's socializing myths and the role played by media texts in fulfilling the specific needs of diaspora groups, this essay will conclude by analyzing the ways in which *Jakers!* functions as an example of a social mythology which aims to reduce the anxieties of children who find themselves torn between two competing narratives of place and identity. Its representation of the mythical homeland and ritualised presentation of Irish history and traditions is embedded within a structure that promotes contemporary American values of hybridity and multiplicity in a way that encourages its young viewers to actively engage in the shared construction and celebration of their identities as Irish-Americans.

The action and storylines in *Jakers!* span two time periods. The frame story takes place in contemporary America, where the main character and narrator Piggley Winks, an Irish immigrant, lives with his daughter Ciara and three Americanized grandchildren Meg, Seán and Séamus. Piggley Winks' innate Irish character is suggested by his accent, his use of words and phrases synonymous with Irish brogue (the "jakers" of the title is used frequently alongside other expressions like "janey mac") and his clothes, which consist of a tweed cap and Aran sweater. His grandchildren, by contrast, are dressed in American football jerseys and baseball caps. Each episode begins and ends in the present. An argument or dilemma involving the grandchildren is the cue for Piggley Winks to begin relating a story from his own past, when he lived on Raloo Farm in Ireland in the 1950s. The viewer is transported back to the idyllic Irish countryside where Piggley Winks and his friends Danann the Duck and Ferny the Bull had their many adventures. The Ireland of Piggley Winks' childhood is the familiar Ireland of the Hollywood movie – lush green fields, stone walls, thatched cottages, ruined castles, and so on. The programme thus uses clear and well-known signifiers to represent the dual spaces inhabited by the characters. In addition, the stories make frequent references to Irish myths and traditions, explaining them in way that will make sense to American children. In an episode entitled "The Creepy Cabbages of Galway", Seán and Séamus tell their grandfather of their plans to skip the school Hallowe'en party and instead visit a haunted house with some older friends. Piggley Winks tells them a story of a time he too disobeyed his parents and listened to a horror radio programme meant only for adults, with the result that he suffered terrible nightmares and was forced to admit that he should have listened to his parents. As well as teaching his grandchildren the importance of being guided by their parents, the episode also explains the origins of the Irish tradition of Hallowe'en to its American viewers. In another episode entitled "The Salmon of Knowledge", Seán and Séamus pretend to clean their room when told to do so by their mother. Piggley Winks tells them of a time when instead of studying for a school test, he decided to catch the mythical Salmon of Knowledge which he believed would give him all

the right answers. When his plan failed miserably, he was forced to concede that there is no substitute for hard work. Seán and Séamus are similarly inspired to immediately clean their room properly. This episode, as well as teaching children the importance of honest hard work, also recounts the Irish legend of the Salmon of Knowledge. Irish myths and cultural traditions are thus made relevant to the lives of contemporary Irish-American children.

Decades of research into the role of cartoons as socializing texts has concluded that they are the most effective means of storytelling for young children: "(C)hildren are more likely to be able to follow cartoon stories than those of other programs, hence, they are more likely to internalize the social realities depicted in them" (Swan 1998, 88). One of the reasons for this is that the world depicted by animation is superficial, non-specific and thus void of any potentially problematic or divisive representations: race, for example, tends not to be an issue in cartoons where the main characters (as in the case of *Jakers!*) are anthropomorphized animals. As Swan notes: "Iconic images simplify reality. They strip what they represent to their essential qualities, making these easier, not harder to assimilate. In addition, iconic images invite participation; their very lack of specificity encourages viewers to identify with carton characters. It can be argued, therefore, that the derived formal reality of….cartoons is especially well constructed for children to begin learning about the larger society in which they find themselves, and to begin developing notions of their place in it" (Swan 1998, 90). Shalom M. Fisch suggests that there are two inherent qualities in cartoons that makes them particularly effective in communicating cultural messages to children. Firstly, they do not take the form of didactic lectures, rather the educational and social content is embedded within the narrative of the episode. Secondly, children learn the intended lessons by observing the interactions between the characters. This is most effective when they are persuaded to identify with the characters: "Various theories have proposed that viewers' learning of social behaviour arises through their observing the behaviour of on-screen characters and listening to their conversations"[xxv]. This identification happens at two levels in *Jakers!* Children identify first and foremost with the young Piggley Winks, who spends his days having adventures with his friends on Raloo Farm. Whenever he disobeys his parents or schoolteacher, overhears information unsuitable for his young ears, fails to study for a test, falls out with his friends, etc., Piggley Winks undergoes a crisis which he has to work to resolve. By the end of each episode, he has acknowledged the inappropriateness of his behaviour and is a wiser and better child as a result. The young viewers undergo Piggley Winks' trauma alongside him and learn lessons from his plight that they can then apply to their own lives. These lessons are then reiterated in the framing story, in which a now elderly Piggley Winks is recalling his boyhood adventures to his grandchildren. Without lecturing to them, his stories clearly indicate the error of their ways and the episodes end with the grandchildren rushing off to right whatever wrong has led to their plight. The grandchildren obviously function as the on-screen representatives of the young viewers. An interesting feature of *Jakers* is that the accents of the grandchildren are the only elements of the programme that change when transmitted in different cultural contexts. Whereas the grandchildren in the original America series thus speak in American accents, in the version transmitted on British television, the grandchildren have British accents. Whereas the accent and childhood home of Piggley Winks may thus be unfamiliar to them, the young viewers can always relate to the grandchildren.

Jakers! is an excellent example of what is known as a "prosocial television programme", which is defined by The Children's Television Act of 1990 as carrying content that will: "(F)urther the positive development of the child in any respect, including the child's cognitive/intellectual or emotional/social needs"[xxvi]. In other words, it has been created with the aim of teaching children the values and behaviours of their society. The desire of its makers to fulfil this responsibility for the development of its viewers' social identities is

underlined by its comprehensive website, which offers supporting activities for teachers and parents. Summaries of each episode, for example, highlight the social values and lessons embedded within it. For example, the summary of "The Creepy Cabbages of Galway" highlights that the social values transmitted by the story are "imagination, honesty, family", while the lesson is "Rules are there for a reason"[xxvii]. Explaining that the programme was created "in consultation with educational advisor Iris Sroka, Ph.D., a developmental psychologist who has worked on numerous award-winning properties for young children", the website outlines the key aims of the series, which include the following:

> To foster intergenerational communication: The storytelling tradition binds generations together emotionally and creates many opportunities for deep and rewarding cross-generational interaction. Children can learn family stories and help initiate new ones; cultural traditions and heritage can be explored; and values can be reinforced.
>
> To help children develop their social skills: Episode storylines emphasize such essential skills and values as responsibility, honesty, respect for feelings and property, good citizenship and friendship, cooperation, self-esteem and more.
>
> To harness the power of imagination by helping children consider inventive and constructive solutions to everyday situations: Many of the stories involve problem solving through creative thinking. The characters employ the cognitive tools of ingenuity, exploration and investigation, adaptation, risk-taking, and the acceptance of new ideas and relationships[xxviii].

The second and third of these aims clearly refer to the socialization required to enable children to become members of their society and culture. In stating these as explicit aims of the series, the programme makers are linking *Jakers!* with the general ethos of a body of children's cartoons generically known as "Saturday morning programming", due to their collective transmission at this time. Summarizing the social messages imparted by these programmes, Swan notes they tend to be conservative, always supporting the status quo and marginalizing any behaviour likely to lead to its disruption: "Most often, all these situational stories revolved around primary themes of friendship, loyalty, and cooperation – group values. We also found a variety of what might be called *secondary themes* in the cartoons we examined. One recurrent secondary theme concerned the importance of education; another involved careful thinking….Other secondary themes we discerned included good sportsmanship, courage, kindness, responsibility, self-worth, persistence, and concern for the environment….In any case, the overwhelming message, the ubiquitous moral in the Saturday morning programming we examined was that acting with the group is good, acting on your own is evil" (Swan 1998, 100-4). This summation closely echoes Bettelheim's assessment of the role of folk and fairytales as texts that encourage children to think creatively about ways of overcoming the obstacles and dilemmas they confront.

The first of the stated aims is particularly interesting, suggesting as it does that one of the main lessons learned from *Jakers!* is the importance of intergenerational communication – the grandchildren have a lot to learn from their grandfather who afterall also had to learn to become a responsible member of society. However, there is more to this relationship than intergenerational contact because, in the case of *Jakers!*, this contact also bridges the divide between the ethnic homeland of the grandfather and the adopted homeland of his descendents. This conceit of using a multigenerational family to represent the act of migration is commonly employed in diasporic texts as a means of both illustrating the ruptures that inevitably follow an act of migration and enabling such themes to be explored in a safe, contained manner. Patricia Pisters and Wim Staat suggest that the prevalence of the family narrative in migration texts indicates the capacity of the trope of family to simultaneously represent tradition and modernity: " 'Shooting the family' has a double meaning. On the one hand, we claim that the family is under pressure and being altered by

the forces of globalization and migration….On the other hand, family members of all kinds, pertaining both to reinforcements and radical reconfigurations of traditional family values, are increasingly constructed and refigured in a mediated form: the 'reel' family….has become an important medium for intercultural affairs"[xxix]. Sonja de Leeuw states that the very notion of a stable identity is often a casualty of migration, because the act of displacement often results in an irreversible fissure in the family narrative. Cultural texts that try to bridge the distance between past and present, traditional homeland and adopted land are thus invaluable in providing a sense of an ongoing narrative for the migrant family. She suggests that diasporic media texts have a particular responsibility to articulate narratives of history in such a way that the acts of dislocation are explained and a means to integrate past and present suggested. The children of migrant families, moreover, are often the pioneers in this process of formulating a new, inclusive and hybrid sense of identity: "Children in migrant families first and foremost become mediators between private and public spaces, as they are often called upon to represent the entire family in the public sphere. They experience specific responsibilities precisely in the area where the old and the new world interact. Cultural identity as a result becomes the children's site of negotiation and reconstruction"[xxx]. Interestingly, de Leeuw suggests that animation offers the best medium through which to broach potentially difficult subjects such as dislocation and loss with children as it can: "(S)timulate the children's fantasies and visual thinking; it also enabled the discussions of personal experiences without being too confrontational" (de Leeuw 2005, 52).

The central argument of this essay is that society is, to quote Anderson, an "imagined community", whose members have to agree to abide by a set of shared values and norms of behaviour in order to promote a feeling of solidarity. The function of culture is to bind the members of a society together in an historical narrative that links past and present generations through a series of inherited texts and practices. The most effective way to promote this sense of a shared identity is through a series of myths, which suggest an underlying and framing ideology for all of the activities and beliefs that comprise a society's worldview. As new members of society, children have to actively learn and internalise these myths in order to assume their identities as social beings. Where once this function belonged to folk and fairytales, passed down through the generations to reconcile life's contradictions and obstacles, traditions of oral storytelling have long given way to the media, the contemporary mythmaker *par excellence*. The role of television in transmitting socializing myths is particularly interesting when applied to minority communities, such as diasporas, which have specific requirements of the medium. Most pressing is their need to construct an identity matrix that bridges the divisions between the ethnic homeland they have left but retain a cultural allegiance to, and the adopted homeland whose values they must now adopt. The essay suggests that children's television cartoons such as *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks* offer an insight into the mechanisms through which the children of diasporas are invited to view their dual heritage as a negotiable, integrative set of values, with which they can actively engage and thus perform a truly hyphenated identity into being.

[i] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso, 2003, 6.

[ii] See Tajfel, Henri. *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981; and Jenkins, Richard. *Social Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

[iii] Giddens, Anthony. *Sociology* (4th edition). UK: Polity Press, 2004, 1989, 27.

[iv] Rafky, David. "Phenomenology and socialization: some comments on the assumptions underlying socialization theories", in Dreitzel, Hans Peter, ed. *Recent Sociology*, no. 5. London: Macmillan, 1973, 43.

[v] Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*, 224.

[vi] Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1991, 1975, 12.

[vii] Swan, Karen. "Social Learning from Saturday Morning Cartoons", in Swan, Karen, Carla Meskill and Steven DeMaio, eds. *Social Learning from Broadcast Television*. New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1998, 87.

[viii] For a comprehensive outline of research into the influence of television on viewers' conceptions of reality, see Pecora, Norma, John P. Murray and Ellen Ann Wartella, eds. *Children and Television: Fifty Years of Research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2007.

[ix] DeMaio, Steven. "Introduction", in Swan, Karen et al, eds., 1998, 2.

[x] Livingstone, Sonia. "Television and the Active Audience", in Fleming, Dan, ed. *Formations: A 21st Century Media Studies Textbook*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, 175.

[xi] For a comprehensive outline of the development of models of media audience behaviour, see Haralambos, Michael, et al. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (5th ed). London: HarperCollins Publishers Limited, 2000, 1980, 944-950.

[xii] See Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding", in Hall, Stuart et al, eds. *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-9*. London: Hutchinson, 131.

[xiii] Morley, David. *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1992, 112.

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[xxv] Fisch, Shalom M. *Children's Learning from Educational Television: Sesame Street and Beyond*. New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004, 180.

[xxvi] For more information see the Federal Communications Commission http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/childtv.html

[xxvii] See http://www.jakers.co.uk/parentsteachers/program/episode.html

[xxviii] See http://www.jakers.co.uk/parentsteachers/program/philosophy.html

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[xxx] De Leeuw, Sonja. "Migrant Children Mediating Family Relations", in Pisters and Staat, eds. 2005, 51. For a discussion of the central role of the family drama in Irish-American cultural texts, see Rains, Stephanie. "Irish Roots: Genealogy and the Performance of Irishness", in Negra, Diane, ed., 2006.