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“Honourable” or
“Highly-sexed”

*Adjectival Descriptions of Male and
Female Characters in Victorian and
Contemporary Children’s Fiction*



UPPSALA
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Abstract

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This corpus-based study examines adjectives and adjectival expressions used to describe characters in British children's fiction. The focus is on diachronic variation, by comparing Victorian (19th-century) and contemporary (late 20th-century) children's fiction, and on gender variation, by comparing the descriptions of female and male characters. I adopt a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach, and consider factors such as lexical diversity, adjectival density, collocation patterns, evaluative meaning, syntactic function and distribution across semantic domains. Most findings are related to a dichotomy set up between an idealistic and a realistic portrayal of characters. The study shows that an idealistic portrayal of characters is typical of the Victorian material and a realistic portrayal of characters typical of the contemporary material. Further, gender differences are much more pronounced, and reflect traditional gender role patterns more in the Victorian material than in the contemporary material. For instance, a pleasant appearance is typically described for Victorian female characters and social position for Victorian male characters. Moreover, descriptions of mental properties of Victorian female characters are conspicuously rare. Such gendered patterns are less distinct in the contemporary material, although appearance is still more extensively described for female than male characters. As regards how the qualities are attributed to characters, the descriptions of Victorian female characters were found to be the most formulaic compared to the descriptions of Victorian male, contemporary female and contemporary male characters.

Key words: 19th-century English, adjectives, attributive, British National Corpus, characters, children's fiction, contemporary, corpus linguistics, description, evaluative meaning, female, gender, male, part description, predicative, semantic domains, syntactic function, Victorian

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To my family

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	15
1 Introduction.....	17
1.1 Aim and hypotheses	17
1.2 The adjectival category	20
1.2.1 Definition of adjectives.....	20
1.2.2 Lexical relationships between adjectives and nouns	22
1.2.3 Adjectives in characterisation.....	22
1.3 Previous research on gender-based characterisation in children’s literature	23
1.4 Definitions, conventions and outline of the study.....	25
1.4.1 Definitions and distinctions	25
1.4.2 The use of statistics and typographical conventions.....	26
1.4.3 Outline of the study	27
2 Material.....	29
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 Historical background	30
2.2.1 Victorian children’s fiction.....	30
2.2.2 Contemporary children’s fiction.....	31
2.3 Themes	33
2.4 The corpora	34
2.5 Summary	37
3 Analytical framework and methodology.....	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Retrieval: using words referring to characters as gateways	40
3.2.1 Initial remarks	40
3.2.2 Central, kinship and epicene terms.....	41
3.2.3 Personal pronouns and proper names	44
3.2.4 Nouns referring to parts of characters.....	48
3.3 Screening the data: syntactic grounds	49
3.3.1 Syntactic functions of adjectives	49
3.3.2 Participles: adjectives or verbs?.....	51
3.4 Classification of adjectival descriptions of characters	54
3.4.1 Semantic domains.....	54

3.4.2 Evaluative meaning and permanence	58
3.5 Summary	60
4 Frequency, diversity, form and syntactic function: an overall view	63
4.1 Opening discussion	63
4.2 Overall frequency and evaluative meaning	64
4.3 The most frequent adjectives.....	66
4.4 Density of adjectival descriptions	71
4.5 The adjective phrase: modifiers, complementation, comparative and superlative constructions.....	74
4.6 Syntactic function.....	77
4.7 Summary	80
5 Semantic domains	83
5.1 Introduction	83
5.2 Overall differences and similarities.....	84
5.2.1 Diachronic variation	84
5.2.2 Gender variation in the Victorian material	87
5.2.3 Gender variation in the contemporary material	90
5.2.4 Summary and concluding discussion.....	92
5.3 Age	95
5.4 Appearance.....	97
5.5 Mental Property.....	101
5.5.1 Overall quantitative findings	102
5.5.2 The sub-domain of Cognition.....	105
5.5.3 The sub-domain of Emotion	107
5.5.4 The sub-domain of Characteristics	111
5.5.5 Summary.....	116
5.6 Physical State	117
5.7 Attitude.....	120
5.8 Situation	122
5.9 Sociability.....	127
5.10 Summary	133
6 Part description	137
6.1 Introduction and initial observations.....	137
6.2 Overall quantitative and qualitative findings	139
6.2.1 Distribution across different kinds of nouns referring to parts.....	139
6.2.2 Adjectival density in part description	140
6.2.3 Collocation patterns and the most frequent adjectives	142
6.2.4 Modification within the part descriptions	143
6.3 Part descriptions across semantic domains	145
6.3.1 Classification	145
6.3.2 Distribution.....	147

6.3.3 The Mental Property domain: a closer look.....	152
6.4 Summary	155
7 Summary and conclusions	157
Bibliography	163
Primary sources	163
The Victorian material.....	163
The contemporary material (from the British National Corpus)	163
References	164
Appendix.....	173
Index	178

Tables, figures and lists

Tables

<i>Table 1.1.</i> Hypotheses regarding the portrayal of characters for the present study.....	20
<i>Table 2.1.</i> Features of the Victorian and the contemporary corpus.....	37
<i>Table 3.1.</i> Terms searched for in the corpora.....	43
<i>Table 3.2.</i> Personal pronouns searched for in the corpora.....	46
<i>Table 3.3.</i> Proper names searched for in the corpora.....	47
<i>Table 3.4.</i> Nouns referring to parts of characters searched for in the corpora.....	48
<i>Table 4.1.</i> Frequency of adjectives describing characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	64
<i>Table 4.2.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across positive, negative and neutral meaning in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	65
<i>Table 4.3.</i> The most frequent adjectives in the Victorian material.....	67
<i>Table 4.4.</i> The most frequent adjectives in the contemporary material.....	67
<i>Table 4.5.</i> Proportion of the most frequent adjectives in relation to all adjectival descriptions for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	68
<i>Table 4.6.</i> Distribution of adjectival descriptions across adjectival density in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	72
<i>Table 4.7.</i> The number of instances of the five most frequent modifiers within the adjective phrases in the Victorian and contemporary material....	76
<i>Table 4.8.</i> Proportion of modified adjective phrases in relation to all adjectival descriptions for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	76
<i>Table 4.9.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across syntactic functions in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	78
<i>Table 4.10.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across syntactic functions for female and male characters in the Victorian material.....	79
<i>Table 4.11.</i> Summary of features investigated in Chapter 4.....	80
<i>Table 5.1.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.....	84
<i>Table 5.2.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.....	87

<i>Table 5.2b.</i> The results from Bäcklund (forthcoming) adapted to the present model.	89
<i>Table 5.3.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.	90
<i>Table 5.3b.</i> The results from Hene (1984: 66–7) adapted to the present model.	91
<i>Table 5.4.</i> Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for female and male characters in both sets of material investigated.....	93
<i>Table 5.5.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Age for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	96
<i>Table 5.6.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	99
<i>Table 5.7.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.	100
<i>Table 5.8.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.	100
<i>Table 5.9.</i> Distribution of the adjective phrases in the Mental Property domain across sub-domains for the Victorian and contemporary material.	102
<i>Table 5.10.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	102
<i>Table 5.11.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.	103
<i>Table 5.12.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.	104
<i>Table 5.13.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across permanent and temporary features for the Victorian and contemporary material.	104
<i>Table 5.14.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Cognition from the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.	107
<i>Table 5.15.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Emotion from the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.	111
<i>Table 5.16.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Characteristics from the semantic domain of Mental Property across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.	115

<i>Table 5.17.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Physical State for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	119
<i>Table 5.18.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Attitude for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	120
<i>Table 5.19.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Situation for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	123
<i>Table 5.20.</i> Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Sociability for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.	127
<i>Table 5.21.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability across sub-domains for the Victorian and contemporary material.	127
<i>Table 5.22.</i> Distribution across evaluative meaning for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.	130
<i>Table 5.23.</i> Distribution across syntactic function for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.	131
<i>Table 5.24.</i> Distribution across permanent/temporary features for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.	132
<i>Table 6.1.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across positive, negative and neutral meaning in the Victorian and contemporary material.	138
<i>Table 6.2.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across the categories of heads in the Victorian and contemporary material.	139
<i>Table 6.3.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across adjectival density in the Victorian and contemporary material.	141
<i>Table 6.4.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.	147
<i>Table 6.5.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.	149
<i>Table 6.6.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.	150
<i>Table 6.7.</i> Percentages of adjective phrases in part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in both sets of material investigated.	150
<i>Table 6.8.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across evaluative meaning in the Mental Property domain for the Victorian and contemporary material.	154

Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.	85
<i>Figure 2.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.	88
<i>Figure 3.</i> Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.	90
<i>Figure 4.</i> Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for female characters in both sets of material investigated.	94
<i>Figure 5.</i> Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for male characters in both sets of material investigated.	94
<i>Figure 6.</i> Age continuum from ‘young’ to ‘old’ of the adjectives in the domain of Age.	96
<i>Figure 7.</i> Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.	148

Lists

<i>List 1.</i> Adjectives in the semantic domain of Age.	95
<i>List 2.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution from the semantic domain of Appearance.	98
<i>List 3.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Looks from the semantic domain of Appearance.	98
<i>List 4.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Cognition from the semantic domain of Mental Property.	106
<i>List 5.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Emotion from the semantic domain of Mental Property.	109
<i>List 6.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Characteristics from the semantic domain of Mental Property.	112
<i>List 7.</i> Adjectives in the semantic domain of Physical State.	118
<i>List 8.</i> Adjectives in the semantic domain of Attitude.	120
<i>List 9.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Classifying, Grading or Locative Position from the semantic domain of Situation.	124
<i>List 10.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Nationality/Ethnicity from the semantic domain of Situation.	124
<i>List 11.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Relation from the semantic domain of Situation.	125
<i>List 12.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Skills, Societal/Professional Position and Economy from the semantic domain of Situation.	126
<i>List 13.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Conduct from the semantic domain of Sociability.	128

<i>List 14.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Stance/Behaviour from the semantic domain of Sociability.	129
<i>List 15.</i> Adjectives in the sub-domain of Acceptability Comments from the semantic domain of Sociability.	130
<i>List 16.</i> Adjectives and nouns comprising part descriptions in the semantic domain of Mental Property.	154
<i>List A1.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Classifying.	173
<i>List A2.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Colour/Light.	174
<i>List A3.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Evaluative.	175
<i>List A4.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Physical State.	175
<i>List A5.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Physiological Change.	176
<i>List A6.</i> Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Size/Shape/Volume.	177

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and hypotheses

The aim of the present study is to investigate how female and male characters are described in British children's fiction. This is done by studying adjectives and adjectival expressions attached to nouns and pronouns that refer to characters (see 1.4.1). The study has a diachronic perspective, and focuses on Victorian (mid-19th-century) and contemporary (late 20th-century) children's fiction.

The description of female and male characters in children's fiction is an important object of study, as it can reflect the cultural values of society (Richards 1989: 1; Worth 1977: 5), as well as influence the socialisation process of children (see Clark 1999: 6–7; Hunt 1999: 8; Lemish, Liebes and Seidmann 2001; Mischel 1966). The research questions I focus on are *what* aspects of characters are described in Victorian and in contemporary children's fiction, and *how* these aspects are described adjectivally.

Gender-based characterisation of in children's fiction has been thoroughly examined by literary scholars (see 1.3). Some of their findings form the bases for my hypotheses. To my knowledge, Hene (1984) is the only systematic linguistic study of adjectival descriptions of characters in children's fiction (see further 1.3). However, a diachronic comparison of adjectival descriptions of characters in British children's fiction has yet to be made, and will be carried out in the present study. With the aid of computer-readable texts, and tools to handle them, I am able to explore systematically a large amount of material. This means that my findings can be quantified and supported with statistically significant evidence, which makes this survey different from literary studies in the field.

My over-arching hypothesis is that the description of male and female characters will differ between the Victorian and the contemporary material, since the different views on gender in Victorian and contemporary society will be mirrored in children's literature.

Gender roles were considered a more important defining feature in the Victorian period than today (see e.g. Norbelie 1992; Townsend 1990: 39), which would also suggest that the portrayal of female and male characters in Victorian children's fiction represent traditional Western gender roles. In contrast, gender is becoming widely recognised as a social construct in present-day society, and 'female' and 'male' are not seen merely as exclusive

concepts, in terms of either/or; instead, individuals may display features that are considered both feminine and masculine (see e.g. Bergvall, Bing and Freed 1996; Crawford 1995; Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Romaine 1999; Weatherall 2002). Consequently, I expect the portrayal of female and male characters in contemporary children's fiction to be relatively similar, and thus reflect less pronounced traditional gender patterns.

In addition to the varying attitudes towards gender, different views on children characterise Victorian and present-day society. These views are reflected in the alternative purposes and styles of children's literature during the two periods, for instance, regarding what is considered appropriate reading for children. As a result, the portrayal of characters is probably more idealistic in Victorian children's fiction, and more realistic in contemporary children's fiction (cf. Hunt 2001: xiv, and Chapter 2 of the present study).

The idealistic portrayal of characters is related to the didactic purpose of children's literature, which was more overtly expressed for Victorian than contemporary children's fiction (see e.g. Hilton 1997; Hunt 2001). In texts with a moralising intention, characters are likely to be portrayed either as idealistic role models, or as deterring examples (although this habit was on the wane during the 19th century; see Avery 1965: 71). Such characters are likely to be portrayed in terms of rather stereotypical descriptions. Consequently, I expect the descriptions to be more stereotypical in the Victorian than in the contemporary material. Stereotyping of characters can operate on two levels. Gender-related stereotyping is realised by attributing aspects that are traditionally considered typically feminine and masculine to female and male characters, respectively. This level relates to the content, that is, *what* traits are being attributed to characters (see section 1.3 of the present study). The other level is textual and considers *how* the qualities are attributed to characters (this is related to the aim of stylistic methods, namely to "characterize texts as pieces of communication," Widdowson 1996: 138). This involves variation in the use of lexis and syntactic constructions, evaluative meaning, relative frequency of lexical items etc. (see e.g. Leech and Short 1981: 75–6). Textual stereotyping represents a less rich description of a character.

A more realistic portrayal of characters is likely to include dynamic rather than static descriptions of characters, since characters that are presented as resembling real-life individuals are able to change and develop, in contrast to characters whose main purpose is to function as role models (see Culpeper 2001: 93–4). Further, realistic characters are likely to be portrayed as having more complex and multi-faceted mental qualities than stereotyped characters (cf. Nikolajeva's claim that characterisation is more internally oriented in contemporary children's fiction than in older texts, 2002: 197). Moreover, I hypothesise that a wider spread of features is described in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, as a result of the more realistic portrayal, and

that the descriptions are more formulaic in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.¹

The idealistic/realistic dichotomy may also result in differences regarding the evaluative meaning of the adjectival descriptions. For instance, more positive descriptions of characters are expected in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, since the modified nouns included in the present study refer to characters such as members of the family and adults. Both adults and the family were highly respected and normative entities in the Victorian period (see e.g. Knowles 1998). Therefore it is less likely that nouns referring to such entities should be described negatively. In contrast, since problems in the family, with problematic parents, have become fashionable topics in contemporary children's fiction, terms for adults and kinship terms are expected to be modified by negative adjective phrases. In a more realistic portrayal, negative aspects of characters are also likely to be described, in order to contribute to a complexity of character. Thus, I hypothesise that positive descriptions are more common in the Victorian material and negative descriptions in the contemporary material.

Based on previous research (Hene 1984; Persson 1990), I also expect differences in the descriptions of female and male characters. I hypothesise that the positive descriptions of female characters in children's fiction from both periods focus on external qualities such as appearance, while the positive descriptions of male characters focus on internal, mental qualities (see Persson 1990: 56; see also Swann 1992: 39).

As regards the formality of language, it has been suggested that the language of much 19th-century literature was more elevated in style and complex in language structure than Present-day English (see e.g. Gordon 1966: 155; Görlach 1999: 159). I will use the term 'formal' to refer to both issues of complexity in sentence (or noun phrase) structure and elevated (often Latinate) use of vocabulary. In this respect, I hypothesise that the adjectival descriptions of characters in Victorian children's fiction also display features that are considered rather formal and complex (e.g. elaborate modification), in contrast to contemporary children's fiction. Research has shown that the language of contemporary children's fiction tends to be similar to everyday speech (i.e., rather informal), and that one reason could be the prominence of

¹ The following quotes from scholars in the field illustrate two different impressions stemming from the idealistic/realistic dichotomy. In her study of Victorian children's fiction, Bratton decided to consider the characters as functions within the story, following Propp's analysis of the personages of folk tales, since it would be futile to "find interest in them as representations of psychologically [sic] likely, whole or consistent persons" (Bratton 1981: 27). In contrast, Knowles states that in *Carrie's War* (1973) by Nina Bawden, there is "credibility of character which is integral to this stream of [i.e. contemporary] children's literature" (1995: 199).

direct speech and dialogue (see e.g. Anderson 1984; Cariou 1983; Peddicord 1980; and on Swedish material, Lundqvist 1992; see also Hunt 1988).²

In sum, my hypotheses are mainly related to the dichotomy between an idealistic and a realistic portrayal. Formulaic, stereotyped and positive descriptions are expected to occur to a greater extent in the Victorian material, and diverse, versatile and negative descriptions expected to occur to a greater extent in the contemporary material. In addition, I hypothesise that gender differences are more prominent in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, thus reflecting the different attitudes towards gender in the two periods. Differences in the level of complexity (e.g. the conjoining of adjective phrases) in the adjectival descriptions are also expected, based on previous research (Biber and Clark 2002; Gordon 1966: 155; Görlach 1999: 159). Table 1.1 sums up the hypotheses regarding the portrayal of characters in the Victorian and the contemporary material that will be addressed in the present study.

Table 1.1. Hypotheses regarding the portrayal of characters for the present study.

Victorian	Contemporary
Defined gender roles	Less defined gender roles
Formal language	Informal language
Idealistic:	Realistic:
Positive descriptions	Negative descriptions
Formulaic/stereotyped descriptions	Diverse/versatile descriptions

1.2 The adjectival category

1.2.1 Definition of adjectives

Traditionally, four criteria, constituting a mix of syntactic, morphological and semantic considerations, are used in the definition of adjectives in English (see e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 505–6; Gleby 2002: 128; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 528; Quirk et al. 1985: 402–3). These four criteria, as summed up in Quirk et al. (1985: 402–3), are:

1. ability to occur in attributive function
2. ability to occur in predicative function
3. ability to allow comparison, either with the endings *-er* and *-est*, or with *more* and *most*
4. ability to be modified by the adverb *very*

² However, Anderson (1984) found that there were slighter differences than expected between children's and adult fiction. Cariou (1983) discovered that language in award-winning children's books was more complex than in popular children's fiction.

The first two criteria are considered the most central features of adjectives; thus adjectives that meet both criteria 1) and 2) are generally labelled central adjectives, and those that do not peripheral adjectives (see Quirk et al. 1985: 404). However, as Biber et al. point out, “the boundaries of the adjective category are not easy to draw in terms of these defining characteristics,” especially since “[o]ther word classes can be used in similar ways to adjectives” (1999: 506).

Gleby (2002) developed a diagnostic instrument that can be used to help establish whether participles have adjectival or verbal function. He suggests that within the category of adjectives (including deverbal adjectives), it is possible to rank the items “according to their ‘adjectivehood’ with the help of the number and type of criteria fulfilled” (2002: abstract), and to place them on a scale with ‘verbal’ at one end and ‘adjectival’ at the other. Thus, the potential adjectives among the *-ing* and *-ed* forms can also be placed on this scale using the diagnostic instrument (2002: 2).

Warren (1989) reacts to the basically formal or syntactic classification proposed by, among others, Quirk et al. (1985), which she believes results in an unwarranted “division into central and peripheral members” (1989: 349). As an alternative, Warren proposes a classification based on the functions instead of the syntactic features of adjectives. She distinguishes between four different functions of adjectives: 1) characterising, 2) classifying, 3) identifying, and 4) denoting a state. Warren also points out the difficulties of distinguishing between these four functions, and the importance of context for making such distinctions.

Similarly, Halliday distinguishes two functional categories where adjectives are the most common: Epithet, which “indicates some quality of the subset,” e.g. *long train*, and Classifier, which “indicates a particular subclass of the thing in question,” e.g. *electric train* (1994: 184).³ However, he also states that “[t]he line between Epithet and Classifier is not a very sharp one” (1994: 185).

The idea of a classification of adjectives based on function rather than form has a bearing on the present study since descriptive functions are more relevant than classifying ones in a study of adjectival descriptions of characters (see also Persson 1990: 52, who excluded “technical and medical terms and adjectives denoting nationality, religion, ethnicity, etc.,” since they were deemed irrelevant for his purposes). A functional approach to adjectives can also account for participles that have adjectival functions.

³ There are also other terms in use for these functions. For instance Biber et al. (1999: 508–9) use the terms ‘descriptor’ and ‘classifier’ and *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* uses the terms ‘qualitative’ and ‘classifying’ adjectives (1990: 63ff). The term ‘qualitative adjectives’ also appears in Lyons (1977: 447).

1.2.2 Lexical relationships between adjectives and nouns

The most relevant syntagmatic relation involving adjectives is that between the adjective and the noun it describes. Cruse points out that in a modifier-head relation, adjectives tend to be selectors, items that “presuppose one or more semantic traits of their selectees” (1986: 104). For example, the adjective *pregnant* presupposes the trait ‘female’ in its selectee (Cruse 1986: 104). Similarly, Persson argues that the reason some adjectives and nouns collocate is that they share semantic properties: “collocations serve to highlight the inherent meanings of lexemes, and hence put into relief the conceptual distinctions between partial synonyms” (1990: 119).⁴ The definition of collocations used in the present study is taken from Firth: “[c]ollocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word” (1957b: 12); see also Firth (1957a: 194–214); Renouf and Sinclair (1991: 128); Sinclair (1991: 170). Other scholars apply a narrower definition of collocations, for instance Manning and Schütze, who suggest that non-compositionality and non-substitutability, e.g. *white wine* ≠ *yellow wine*, are defining features of collocations (1999: 184), and Kjellmer, who applies a syntactic constraint to the definition of collocations (1991: 116).⁵

For the present study, the wider definition of collocations used by scholars working in the tradition of Firth and Sinclair is the more useful one, since I am interested in adjectives that describe referents of nouns in several syntactic functions, and because I do not think that lexical relationships between adjectives and nouns referring to characters represent the kind of fixed expressions that non-compositionality and non-substitutability would suggest, as in *kick the bucket* or *white wine*. The study of collocations is pursued in the present work since, as pointed out by Manning and Schütze (1999: 152), through collocations it is possible to discover “social phenomena like the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes through language;” see also Stubbs (1996) for a similar approach.

1.2.3 Adjectives in characterisation

Adjectives play an important role in the description of characters. Culpeper suggests that “[p]ersonality traits usually have adjectival labels, and in fact it has been suggested that this is a defining feature” (2001: 105). Thus, adjectival description is a fundamental aspect of characterisation (see also Biber et al. 1999: 506; Lyons 1977: 440). Of special relevance to the present study is Dixon (1982), who stresses the importance of investigating adjectives that

⁴ Other studies on the semantic implications of certain adjective-noun collocations include Aarts and Calbert (1979) on such combinations as *angry letter*, and Bäcklund (1981) on combinations such as *blithering idiot*. See also Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976: 355–360).

⁵ See also Biber and Conrad (1999) on lexical bundles, and Oakes (1998: 158–166).

denote human properties, since these adjectives may reveal attitudes held by the speakers of a language:

[j]ust as nouns in a language give some idea of the relevant objects in the speaker's environment, and the verbs the important cultural actions, so the HUMAN PROPENSITY words give an idea of the mental attitudes of the speakers of the language. HUMAN PROPENSITY would certainly be the most difficult semantic type to investigate in depth and to make detailed generalisations about; but it would also be one of the most revealing (Dixon 1982: 61).

For instance, by studying what adjectives are used to describe certain terms referring to people and characters in several genres, some of the scholars associated with the project 'Male and Female Terms in English' examine what attributes are typical of certain referents (see Bäcklund 1996; forthcoming; Norberg 2002; Persson 1990; Wallin-Ashcroft 2000). Their findings show that males tend to be described as intelligent in Shakespeare's comedies (Norberg 2002: 203), as well as in recent English (Persson 1990: 56). Females are frequently described with regard to their looks in both 19th-century (Bäcklund forthcoming) and recent English (Persson 1990: 56).⁶ Wallin-Ashcroft found that female characters are often described with positive or patronising adjectives, and male characters with negative or respectful ones, in 18th-century novels (2000: 208).

Another example is Herriman (1998), who studied premodifiers of *woman* and *man* in Present-day English, and found that [w]omen and men tend to be described to a great extent in terms of traditional female and male stereotypes where women are frequently associated with attractive appearance and men with aggressive behaviour" (1998: 141).

1.3 Previous research on gender-based characterisation in children's literature

Quite a few studies have treated the portrayal of male and female characters in children's literature. As a result of the awareness of gender inequalities in society, children's books have been scrutinised to see whether they conform to a stereotyped portrayal of female and male characters, or whether efforts are made to present female and male characters manifesting less traditional gender roles as well. Nikolajeva observes that "description as means of characterization seems to be one of the strongly gendered narrative patterns in children's fiction," since it is "predominantly used to introduce female characters" (2002: 189). However, as observed by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet

⁶ Romaine (1999: 137–40) reaches the same conclusion as Persson and supplements his figures with more recent findings.

(2003: 80–1), scholars often seem to focus on the differences found between male and female characters, and give less emphasis to the similarities.⁷

Victorian children's literature (and also fairytales) is the subject of much gender-related literary research (see e.g. Clark and Higonnet 1999; Marquis 1999; McGillis 1995; Reynolds 1990). Paul states that the focus on the Victorian period "marks a critical recognition of that period as the time when colonial and patriarchal values were being actively inscribed in the culture" (1999: 119). Of special interest is Nelson (1991), who discusses the "emotional education" of children into men and women in Victorian times. She found that, contrary to the findings of others (e.g. Richards 1989: 6; Mangan 1989: 174), Victorian feminine ideals were something equally sought after for girls and boys. Many of the Victorian ideals for children corresponded to the feminine ideals of the time, such as obedience, passivity and purity. In addition, Nelson claims that some of these features were even considered ideal for grown-up men; for instance, purity achieved by asexuality (1991: 44–5). Many present-day handbooks dealing with Victorian children's literature also comment on the Victorian gender ideal. Avery, for example, observes that the ideal Victorian girl "should be thoughtful and devoutly religious before anything else, devoted to her mother and to her brothers and sisters, obedient to her father, well educated, serious of purpose, submissive to whatever heaven might choose to send" (1965: 75; see also Dyhouse 1981).

Studies of late modern and contemporary children's literature have revealed that the traditional gender roles prevail; see e.g. Andr  (2001) on Swedish popular children's fiction published during the first half of the 20th century; Dixon (1977); Skj nsberg (1972) on books published in Norway around 1960; or the more recent collections Brown and St. Clair (2002), Lehr (2001), and Pasternak (1999). Romaine notes that in children's books, "[f]emales appear less often [...], talk less, do less and have more stereotyped roles" (1999: 212). It is observed, for instance, that in Australian children's books, the words *boy* and *boys* are more frequent than the words *girl* and *girls*, and "[t]he books more frequently described girls as *young, little* and *pretty*, whereas boys were more likely to be described as *kind, brave* or *naughty*" (Romaine 1999: 212). In a study of personification in children's books, MacKay and Konishi (1980) discovered that "[s]ocial stereotypes played a role in the choice of *he* vs *she* since antecedents of *he* tended to be strong, active, brave, wise, clever, and mischievous, while antecedents of *she* tended to be weak, passive, and foolish" (1980: 149).

A work of high relevance for the present study is Hene (1984), which presents a systematic linguistic study of descriptions of characters in children's fiction. In her study, Hene investigated differences between the description

⁷ Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's claim concerns gender studies on a wide range of material, not only children's fiction. See also Bing and Bergvall (1998).

of female and male characters with adjectives and adverbs of manner in 'quality' and popular children's fiction published in Swedish in the 1970s. She found some differences in the description of female and male characters (although no significant differences between the two types of fiction emerged):

[t]raditional sex role patterns are most obvious in the characterizations of role characters with respect to their role in society and their relation to other people. Female characters are, e.g., almost exclusively described with respect to their private lives, while male characters are described in terms of their position in society (1984: abstract).

Hene's method will be further described in Chapter 3, since a similar method is employed for the present survey. In addition, Hene's results will be discussed and compared with my findings in relevant contexts throughout the thesis.

Swann sums up the representation of male and female characters in children's reading material as stereotyped: males are portrayed as active and engaged in a wide range of activities, while females are portrayed as passive and engaged in domestic life (1992: 111–2). Her conclusion is that "children's reading material helps reinforce gender as a social division, and perpetuates inequalities between girls and boys and women and men" (1992: 96).

1.4 Definitions, conventions and outline of the study

1.4.1 Definitions and distinctions

Children's literature/fiction

According to Hunt, "[t]he definition of children's literature is an immensely complex and variable one, and generally rests upon authorial intention (however deduced), or the reader 'implied' in the text (however deduced), rather than a factual examination of which books were or are marketed for, adopted by, or imposed upon children" (2001: xvi). Since the discussion of defining what children's literature actually represents is beyond the scope of the present study, the definition considered in the present study is confined to the general criteria offered by Hunt, that is, authorial intention and implied reader. Thus, in the present study, children's literature is the wider term, used to refer to reading material targeted at a child audience, both fiction and non-fiction. Children's fiction is used to refer to fictitious narratives aimed at child readers, featuring a relatively young protagonist. In my discussion of children's literature, I am primarily concerned with texts that have some kind of aesthetic claim, although non-fiction texts such as cook books or schoolbooks for children are occasionally included in the reference to chil-

dren's literature. Both 'children's literature' and 'children's fiction' also comprise texts aimed at young adults (also referred to as YA (young adult) novels, juvenile fiction or teen prose). The present study does not deal with texts aimed at toddlers, such as text in picture books.

'Contemporary children's fiction' is the term most commonly used in literary studies to refer to children's fiction published from the 1970s onwards, and will be the term used in the present work (see e.g. Hunt 1995). 'Victorian children's fiction' is used to designate children's fiction produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901).

Gender/Sex

Throughout the thesis I use 'gender' to refer to the distinction between female and male characters. Gender is normally regarded as socially constructed, whereas 'sex' refers to the biological sex of an individual (see e.g. Bing and Bergvall 1998: 496). Since an aim of the present study is to examine the construction of gendered characters by way of adjectival description, gender is the more appropriate term (see also Clark and Higonnet 1999; Westin 1999).

Modify/Describe

For reasons of convenience, 'modify' is used in the present study to refer to adjectives attributing qualities to a referent of a noun or pronoun in all syntactic positions, unless otherwise specified. Structurally speaking, however, only adjectives within the noun phrase (i.e. in attributive or postpositive position) are called modifiers, while predicative adjectives "characterize a noun phrase that is a separate clause element" (Biber et al. 1999: 505), as dependents in clause structure (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 528).

On a semantic level an adjective describes a character, that is, the referent of the noun used. I will use 'describe' to refer to the function of the adjective on a textual level as well. Thus 'adjectives describing a noun' is to be interpreted as short for adjectives describing the referent of the noun (cf. Bäcklund forthcoming).

1.4.2 The use of statistics and typographical conventions

The results obtained in the present study are tested for statistical significance using the chi square test. Non-significant results, as suggested by the chi square value, mean that the variation found in the data may be a product of chance, and thus further interpretation of the results is not warranted (see e.g. Brown 1988; Oakes 1998; Reynolds 1984). The level of critical value for statistical significance is set at $p < 0.05$, the level commonly used in linguistic surveys (see e.g. Hatch and Farhady 1982: 170; Manning and Schütze 1999: 170; Woods et al. 1986: 149). However, there are also limitations to the usefulness of the chi square test. The most relevant one relates to the size

of the sample. Large samples may produce significant chi square values even if the variables are weakly related (Reynolds 1984: 20). This would also suggest that the chi square test is less suited to account for the probability of statistical significance for findings based on small samples. In the present study, the tables display statistically significant results. However, findings based on small sample sizes, for example, which did not obtain a statistically significant value using the chi square test, are occasionally also accounted for and discussed in the text, albeit not in tabular format. Neither are all statistically significant results presented in tabular format.

As regards typographical conventions, italics are used for examples given in the main text. In addition, italics are occasionally used for emphasis. When the number of instances of an item is given in brackets, ‘x’ is used as short for occurrences, e.g. 10 x. Single quotation marks enclose certain concepts and themes, such as ‘family’, and are used for translations, e.g. *ung* (‘young’). Double quotation marks enclose quotations, e.g. “free of concerns of gender” (Hunt 1999: 39). In the corpus examples, bold face and italics indicate the word being modified, e.g. **girl**, whereas italics are used for the adjectives describing a referent of a noun or pronoun, e.g. *tired*. Underlining indicates the exemplified items discussed in the text, for instance possessive pronouns preceding attitudinal adjectives, e.g. my dear, *dear papa*.

Abbreviations used in the present study are *OED* for the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *BNC* for the British National Corpus. In the corpus examples, the sources are referred to as ‘VIC’ for the Victorian corpus, and ‘BNCsub’ for the sub-corpus drawn from the BNC, accompanied by the file name, e.g. ‘leila’ in VIC, and ‘ABX’ in BNCsub (see Chapter 2 and the bibliography).

1.4.3 Outline of the study

In this introduction, I have presented the aim and hypotheses of the study, and briefly introduced aspects concerning the adjectival category that are relevant for the present study (1.2), and described previous gender-based characterisation in children’s literature (1.3). Section 1.4 has given definitions and explained the use of statistics and typographical conventions.

Chapter 2 discusses the material used. Children’s literature as an object of study is briefly touched upon, and a historical background to Victorian and contemporary children’s literature is provided. Further, I discuss the themes common to the texts included in the corpora, and describe the compilation and the features of the corpora. In Chapter 3, the analytical framework is presented. I describe the retrieval of data, the syntactic functions of the data included, and discuss the methods of classification employed.

The results of the study are presented in Chapters 4–6. Chapter 4 considers how the adjectival descriptions are used to attribute qualities to characters, and addresses issues of overall frequency, diversity, evaluative meaning

(4.2), as well as the form (4.3–4.5) and the syntactic function (4.6) of the adjectival descriptions. I relate the features investigated to a continuum of stereotyped to versatile descriptions, and to levels of textual formality and complexity.

Chapter 5 deals with what aspects of characters are described and presents the results of the classification into semantic domains. Overall diachronic and gender comparisons are provided in 5.2, after which each of the domains is presented in 5.3–5.9. In the discussion of each domain, the adjectival descriptions classified as belonging to the domain are listed. The discussions involve both qualitative and quantitative findings, regarding for instance distribution across female and male characters in the two sets of material, syntactic function, evaluative meaning and permanence.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the results from a study of part descriptions in the material, that is, adjectival descriptions of nouns referring to parts of characters rather than to the characters as a whole. This is in order to complement the findings for overall descriptions in Chapters 4 and 5. Features such as evaluative meaning and the form of the adjectival part descriptions, are addressed in 6.1 and 6.2. Section 6.3 considers the distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains, and the semantic domain of Mental Property for part descriptions is subjected to a closer look in 6.3.3.

Chapter 7 presents a summary and conclusions of the most important findings presented in the study and relates the findings to my hypotheses. In the final part of the chapter I also suggest areas for further research.

2 Material

2.1 Introduction

The material in the present study consists of two corpora of British children's fiction, one comprising material from the mid-19th century (the Victorian material) and one from the late 20th century (the contemporary material). This chapter will provide a historical background to the two sets of material, and will account for the compilation of the two corpora. The historical background is presented in 2.2, and themes common to the texts included in the corpora are discussed in 2.3. Finally, the compilation of the corpora is accounted for in 2.4, and section 2.5 provides a summary of the chapter.

During the middle of the 19th century, children's fiction for a wider audience, intended to entertain as well as instruct, was beginning to develop (see e.g. Richards 1989: 3). Nevertheless, the children's fiction of the century tended to be quite formulaic, as suggested by Nikolajeva: "[t]here were clear divisions between books for boys and books for girls [during the Victorian period], as well as between different genres. The rigid system allowed no deviations, no innovations, or the like. The norms of allowed themes, narrative structures (for instance, 'happy ending'), and values were proclaimed" (1995: xi). Some hundred years later, children's fiction has become an acknowledged and established genre, resulting in greater freedom to explore, for instance, the postmodern trends in fiction for adults for its own purposes (Brown and St. Clair 2002: xii).

In contrast to many other genres of literature, children's literature is defined as a genre by its implied reading audience; sub-genres and themes are of secondary concern. Another point exclusive to the conditions of children's literature is the asymmetric design of the literary system to which children's literature belongs. In the literary system of adult fiction, readers, writers and publishers belong to the same social group of adults. In contrast, in the literary system of children's literature, the imbalance of power between adult writers and child readers complicates the matter of ideology (see Hunt 1988). The producers (adults) and the recipients (children) belong to different groups, one of which has total control over the other. This imbalance in power is one of the reasons why some scholars suggest that children's literature needs a poetics of its own (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994; Shavit 1986), pro-

posing that children's literature should not be considered and evaluated on the same grounds as adult fiction.

Further, because of the didactic intentions of the genre, ideology may be especially pervasive in children's fiction (see Knowles and Malmkjær 1996, Knowles 1998, Stephens 1992, Watson 2002). Fairclough defines ideologies as assumptions that, "through the recurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving," legitimise the existing power relationships (1989: 2), and Hunt maintains that no text, however simple, can ever be innocent, or devoid of ideology, that is, "free of concerns of gender, race, class and so on" (1999: 39). Regarding children's fiction, Sarland suggests that the didactic concerns of the Victorian period were revived as ideological concerns in the 1970s (1999: 40–1).

2.2 Historical background

2.2.1 Victorian children's fiction

The earliest children's books (published from the 18th century onwards) were moralising narratives with a didactic purpose, used in the upbringing and education of children (see Hilton 1997: 5). Hilton states that such books were written for and about children "to both describe and define their proper roles, upbringing and conduct" (1997: 5). The trend of didactic children's books continued into the first half of the 19th century, used, for instance, by religious societies and Sunday schools in the teaching of poor children. However, during the mid-19th century, the previously all-dominating moral fiction was complemented by books representative of different sub-genres, with the purpose of entertainment as well as instructing.⁸

The middle of the 19th century is thus a breaking point between the old (educational children's fiction) and the new (entertaining children's fiction); see e.g. Briggs and Butts (1995: 130). Therefore this period serves as a good starting point for a diachronic study of modern British children's fiction. The children's fiction of the Victorian era can be considered modern owing to its readability, but also owing to the attitude towards children that is emerging. According to Hunt, "a new way of addressing the child reader was being developed — a new attitude, a new narrative stance, and the concept of the new *empowered* child was emerging" (2001: xiii, original emphasis).

There was a strict division between books for girls and books for boys. This division was a result of the middle-class norms of Victorian society. Children were brought up to become proper men and women, and books were expected to assist in the process. Since "'[m]anly' and 'womanly' were much-used and highly-approved terms" in Victorian society (Townsend

⁸ The historical background presented here does not involve fairytales (e.g. Lang's collections) or fantasy fiction (e.g. Carrol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1866).

1990: 54; see also Phillipps 1984: 12–4), it was only natural that different books should be needed for boys and for girls, although girls read boys' books, and it was at least recommended that boys read books published for a girl audience as well.⁹ The sub-genres where progressive ideas about fiction as entertainment first became apparent were found among books for boys. Dunae explains this development: “[b]oys’ literature, which was able to draw on a long tradition of romantic adventure fiction, was generally more robust, more diverse, and more sophisticated [than girls’ literature]” (1989: 14). The books published for girls may have lagged behind in progressive ideas, but they were read by the female audience of the time, and should therefore not be overlooked in a study of Victorian children’s fiction.

Although the new approach to children’s fiction included an element of entertainment, Victorian morals were hardly challenged in the children’s fiction of the time, but packed in a more digestible format. The aim was now “both to entertain and to instruct, to inculcate approved value systems, to spread useful knowledge, to provide acceptable role models” according to Richards (1989: 3). Briggs and Butts explain the shift accordingly: “the tone of threat or admonition [...] gradually gave place to more hopeful and empowering examples that appealed to the idealism of the young rather than playing on their fears” (1995: 130).

One reason for this development was that literacy became increasingly widespread during the middle of the 19th century (Görlach 1999: 6). Consequently, the expanding market of a wider literate audience (with financial resources) demanded more and cheaper books, for entertainment purposes (see 2.4 for a discussion of readership). Another reason was that the view of children, especially in the middle classes, changed. A more romantic view of childhood and the child emerged, influenced by the Romantic Movement, in which the status of children was raised (see also Inglis 1981: 81–2). This meant that children were allowed to read for pleasure, not only as part of their education.

2.2.2 Contemporary children’s fiction

In contemporary children’s literature, many different sub-genres such as fantasy, science fiction, realism, and even book formats such as interactive books, board books, and toy books have emerged. Masses of books are being published, albeit of varying quality, according to Watkins and Sutherland (1995: 289–90). Nikolajeva describes the emergence of contemporary children’s fiction by contrasting it with the rigidity of the Victorian period: “[i]t is against this established system that contemporary writers for children are

⁹ See Salmon’s (1888) reader survey, discussed in Knowles (1998), and Yonge’s recommendations in *What Books to Lend and What to Give* (1887), quoted in Marquis (1999: 55) and Richards (1989: 4).

revolting, introducing new, daring themes and new narrative devices, bringing children's literature closer to the modern, or if one so wishes, the post-modern novel" (1995: xi). An effect of the new themes and devices is that the portrayal of characters is becoming more important. In 1976, Cadogan and Craig noted that

[t]here is at present a tendency to represent childhood in terms of its emotional complexities; this obviously has led to a deepening of characterization, a stressing of each character's individuality and a merging of childhood with an extended social and psychological consciousness. It is no longer cut off, idyllically unrealistic or simply the unresponding vehicle on to which certain impossible chunks of adventure can be loaded (1976: 355).

New issues have made their way into children's fiction, especially in books for older children and teenagers, such as racism, parental failure, alcoholism, and sex. This trend was especially pronounced in the 1970s, generally considered to be the starting point for contemporary children's fiction. Not only in fiction for teenagers, but even "[f]arther down the age range, children were expected to face in fiction the harsh realities of divorce, illness and death, as well as war and holocaust," according to Townsend (1990: 171). Further, Townsend notes that "[i]n the late 1980s and early 1990s new subjects of concern were finding their way into children's fiction and even into picture-books, prominent among them being conservation of the environment and homelessness" (1990: 175).

This problem-oriented realism caused much debate; some critics felt that the problems addressed were mainly acts of tokenism. An alternative was offered by among others Nina Bawden, an author of children's fiction, who "argued for 'emotional realism' in which 'poverty, divorce, and cruelty' would have their place, as in books for adults, as 'part of a fully realized story, not dragged in to satisfy some educational and social theory'" (quoted in Watkins and Sutherland 1995: 303). Others have seen a need for censoring this new outspoken literature for children.¹⁰ Censorship is related to the question of whether the primary aim of children's literature is pedagogical, and whether that involves a need to adapt literature to suit child readers especially. The underlying question regarding gender is whether children's fiction should mirror the gender inequalities in society, or represent an idealistic portrayal (see Swann 1992: 207–8). According to Townsend, "the old sex stereotypes had died a slow death" when we reach the contemporary era of children's fiction (1990: 263).

¹⁰ The emergence of outspoken children's literature in the 1970s probably contributed to a need for handbooks for parents, explaining what books would be appropriate reading, and how to evaluate children's fiction. Lukens (1986) and Stinton (1979) are two examples.

2.3 Themes

A great difference between Victorian and contemporary children's fiction is the use and definitions of sub-genres. A striking feature of children's fiction in the Victorian period is the division of books depending on the gender of the target audience. Gender was a prominent defining factor in the categorisation of books into sub-genres, in contrast to contemporary children's fiction. Overall, Victorian fiction had much more clearly defined sub-genres than contemporary fiction. For instance, Eyre accounts for the difficulties of dividing his survey book of British 20th-century children's fiction into sections depending on sub-genres:

[t]he worst difficulties arise in the 'Fiction' section, in which precise classification is made difficult both by variations in reading age and the increasing, but welcome, blurring of the distinctions between, for example, adventure stories and stories of family life, or between school stories and adventure stories (1971: 14).

Because of the discrepancy of genre divisions between Victorian and contemporary children's fiction, the concept of themes is better suited to account for similarities between the texts included in my Victorian and my contemporary corpus. The three main themes are 'adventure', 'growing up' and 'family', and the narratives often comprise several of these themes. Sub-genres such as fantasy, fairytales or poetry are not examined in the present study.

The theme 'adventure' is fundamental in the Victorian adventure stories in my corpus, primarily intended for boy readers (e.g. *Peter the Whaler* 1851). In the contemporary material, the theme often includes some aspects of mystery (e.g. *The Forest of the Night* 1991). In addition, an element of adventure, manifested by plot-orientation and description of a series of events that lead to a climax, is present in much children's fiction, e.g. Henry's pursuit of the lost mannequin leg in *Henry's Leg* (1985) or the training for and partaking in the competition in *Who, Sir? Me, Sir?* (1983).

'Growing up' is a broad but central theme in children's literature. The childhood and adolescent years usually include a search for identity. The desired identity may look different in Victorian and in contemporary society, with more focus on the realistic needs of the individual in contemporary times, and more of treading along a predestined path of moral development, defined by grown-ups, in the Victorian period. The Victorian sub-genre of evangelical tales included in my material and mainly aimed at a girl audience comprises this theme, since they often present a moral development of the protagonist (e.g. *Ministering Children* 1854). The Victorian adventure stories and school stories also describe the development of their protagonists into maturity (e.g. *The Coral Island* 1858 and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* 1857). In the contemporary material, the theme of 'growing up' comprises

for instance stories where protagonists are grappling with their own identity (*On the Edge* 1984) or flourish and develop under the tender care of another person (*Goodnight Mr Tom* 1981).

Another broad theme dealt with in both Victorian and contemporary fiction is ‘family’, which is naturally important for any child. It was an inviolable and highly normative institution in Victorian society, whereas modern children’s books tend to portray a society where the family as an institution is dissolving. Avery (1965) summarises the position of the family in Victorian children’s fiction as follows:

[a]uthority was nearly always represented as righteous, and the parents of the central characters inevitably were. Even the fashion of including a bad set of children with bad parents was on the wane. Governesses and schoolmasters were usually Dr Arnold-like figures, while mothers were represented as good, gentle, and wise, moved to grief rather than anger at their children’s misdoings, swift to forgive (Avery 1965: 71).

A Victorian sub-genre included in my material that falls primarily under the themes of ‘growing up’ and ‘family’ is the domestic drama, primarily aimed at a girl audience. These stories often deal with family relations or the pursuit of domestic careers (e.g. *The Daisy Chain* 1856 or *Ursula* 1858). In the contemporary material included in the study, the theme of ‘family’ is present in stories dealing with revenge on parents who treat the protagonist badly (*Matilda* 1988), or in stories involving divorced parents (*The Suitcase Kid* 1992).

2.4 The corpora

The two corpora of British children’s fiction compiled for the present study each comprise 95,000 words from ten different texts (see the bibliography for references to the source texts).¹¹ Several factors have been considered in the compilation of the corpora to make them as comparable as possible. The three main factors considered are the time of production, the popularity of the texts and the gender of the protagonist (secondarily considering the implied reader). The gender of the protagonist has an influence on the linguistic choices in the text, and is thus a relevant gender variable for the present study. The gender of the author, on the other hand, has been a secondary concern (for a gender-based style approach to literature; see e.g. Hiatt 1977; Livia 2003). The estimated age of the implied reading audience of the texts is the middle childhood years and early teens, that is, from around 7 to 15

¹¹ Each sample from a text amounts to 9,500 words, ending at the first full stop after the 9,500th word.

years of age. This estimation is based on the publishers' intention, the age of the characters in the books, and the style and content of the texts.

The corpora represent samples of British children's fiction from the initial and present-day stages of modern British children's literature: the middle of the 19th century (the Victorian material), and the late 20th century (the contemporary material).¹² Each corpus covers texts published roughly within a decade. The texts included in the Victorian corpus are electronic versions downloaded from the Internet and checked against the printed versions, or texts studied at the British Library, and thereafter scanned for further processing. The late 20th-century material is drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC), since the access to machine-readable texts, compiled under controlled conditions, provided a time-saving solution.¹³ The BNC comprises 37 texts classified as belonging to the domain 'imaginative', the medium 'book', and with 'child' as the target audience age (33 texts in BNC World edition), of which ten were selected for inclusion in my corpus of contemporary children's fiction.

For the Victorian corpus, the bulk of the texts included were published within a period of eight years, 1851–1858. Owing to the prominence of the 1850s as the watershed between early and modern British children's literature (see Briggs and Butts 1995: 130), it is suitable that most of the texts in the Victorian corpus originate in this period. However, two of the Victorian texts were not published within this time frame. *Masterman Ready* was published in 1841, and *Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances* in 1869. *Masterman Ready* is nonetheless included since it is considered a predecessor of the adventure stories written for boys in the following years. *Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances*, on the other hand, was written for girls, and girls' literature reached its prime somewhat later than boys' literature in the Victorian age (see Dunae 1989: 14). Consequently, the asymmetry in publication years for the texts in the Victorian corpus reflects the state of Victorian children's literature. The selection of contemporary British children's literature drawn from the BNC was published between 1981 and 1993. By this period, children's literature, as regards the aims and style of the books, was established as a contemporary genre of literature.

The texts included in the corpora are texts likely to have been or to be widely read. The popularity of books (both with critics and readers) is revealed, for instance, by examining reader surveys, lists of books regularly borrowed from libraries, lists of literary prize-winners, or literary handbooks (anthologies etc.). A combination of literary tradition and availability guided my selection of texts for the Victorian corpus. In addition, as a secondary

¹² I am grateful to Dr. Sebastian Hoffmann at the University of Zurich and Dr. Murray Knowles at the University of Birmingham for help and advice with the creation of the corpora.

¹³ The source used is the British National Corpus version 1.0 (1995). The BNC World Edition (2000) was not available when I first started this study.

source, Salmon's (1888) reader survey played a role, based on Knowles (1996; 1998). Handbooks on the subject of Victorian children's literature¹⁴ consistently presented some titles as popular among the intended readership in the 19th century; furthermore, many of them still belong to the literary canon. The compilers of the BNC also used a sampling frame that gave priority to texts that were widely read. Burnard (2000) explains that the BNC team used "statistics about books and periodicals that are published, bought or borrowed" as guidance when selecting texts for inclusion in the corpus.

The gender of the protagonists is linked to the gender of the implied reader. In the Victorian corpus, five of the texts have a female protagonist and five texts have a male protagonist. In the contemporary corpus two texts feature both boys and girls as protagonists, that is, a group of children functions as the main character.¹⁵ Of the other contemporary texts, three have a girl protagonist and five a boy protagonist. To include fewer books with a female protagonist in favour of texts with several protagonists is in line with Cadogan and Craig's observation that in "the late '40s and early '50s [...] it became almost a rule that boys' stories should have no girls in them; books which featured both sexes were more likely to be read by girls" (1976: 11). This trend seems to have prevailed. Thus, the texts with several protagonists of different gender can be grouped together with the texts with girl protagonists, since girls read more than boys do and do not mind reading about a boy (or collective) protagonist (cf. Lemish, Liebes and Seidmann 2001: 270). Romaine suggests that "[o]ne explanation may be that these [reading and writing] are less active pastimes and therefore girls are given more encouragement to pursue them" (1999: 214). Boys, on the other hand, read less than girls, and tend to require a male protagonist in order for them to be interested (see e.g. Romaine 1999: 215).

The greatest difference between the two corpora lies in the method of sampling texts. Around 9,500 words are sampled from each text included in my two corpora, which is an adequate sample size according to Biber (1990). The Victorian samples were extracted from three different parts of each book, normally from the beginning, middle and end, with the aim of representing the book as far as possible in its entirety. In contrast, when the BNC was compiled, each sample was randomly selected to include the beginning, middle or end of a text (see Burnard 2000). Consequently, the text samples included in my contemporary corpus each consist of a single coher-

¹⁴ Avery (1965); Bratton (1981); Cadogan and Craig (1976); Darton (1982); Ellis (1968); Hilton, Styles and Watson (1997); Hunt (1995); (2001); Muir (1954); Nelson (1991); Richards (1989); Townsend (1990).

¹⁵ Nikolajeva (2002) has an interesting theory on the "collective protagonist", as she labels the phenomenon. Her hypothesis is that several characters in a text may function as a collective protagonist, in that the characteristics of one complex personality are shared between them. The reason is mainly didactic; this would be one way for the writer to "simplify the message," and make sure it is absorbed by the readers (2002: 67-87).

ent sample of text, taken either from the beginning, middle or end of a children's book. Although the differences in sampling methods between the two corpora may affect the results of the present study to some extent, I considered the advantage of sampling from different parts of the Victorian books greater than possible disadvantages.

In sum, the Victorian and the contemporary corpus of British children's fiction are similar as regards themes, gender of the protagonist and time span for the bulk of texts. Furthermore, the corpora are of equal size, and the number of words sampled from each text is similar. Table 2.1 summarises the features of the two corpora.

Table 2.1. Features of the Victorian and the contemporary corpus.

	Victorian	Contemporary
Time span	1841–1869 (28 years)	1981–1993 (13 years)
Format	5 electronic, 5 scanned	electronic
Protagonist (audience)	5 boy, 5 girl	5 boy, 3 girl, 2 both
Genres/Themes	Adventure, growing up, family	Adventure, growing up, family
Number of texts and words	10 texts = 95,000 words	10 texts = 95,000 words
Sample	Three stretches of text	One stretch of text

2.5 Summary

The material examined in the present study consists of two corpora of British children's fiction, one representing a sample of ten texts from the middle of the 19th century, and one a sample of ten texts from the late 20th century. A new type of children's fiction emerged during the mid-19th century, and by the late 20th century this type of children's fiction was an established genre. The purpose of Victorian children's fiction was both to instruct and present moral values, as well as to entertain. The distinction between male and female was an important one, both in society and in literature. In the late 20th century, children's fiction was an established kind of literature, including a vast array of sub-genres, ready to explore new aesthetic approaches and topics. Instead of representing ideals, problem-oriented realism was now introduced.

The texts included in my two corpora share the three themes 'adventure', 'growing up' and 'family', although these themes are dealt with differently in the texts. The two corpora are similar in that they are gender-balanced as regards protagonists, of equal size, and comprise an equal number of texts and words. Further, the implied audience of the corpora include both boys and girls primarily in their middle years, about 7–15 years old. A difference between the corpora is the method of selecting stretches of text to sample in the books: samples contain a coherent stretch of text in the contemporary corpus, and three separate stretches of texts in the Victorian corpus.

3 Analytical framework and methodology

3.1 Introduction

For the purpose of comparing adjectival descriptions of characters in Victorian and contemporary children's fiction, data were retrieved, manually screened to include only relevant examples, and then classified. These three steps will be accounted for in the present chapter. The study takes a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach. For the quantitative analysis, frequency plays a crucial role in the retrieval of data to be included in the analysis (see 3.2). The qualitative approach is relevant in the selection and classification procedures of the data (see 3.3 and 3.4).

The retrieval of adjectival descriptions of characters involves two steps. First, a search is made for nouns and pronouns that refer to female and male characters (such as *girl*, *Mr*, *son*, *she*, *Jack*). Second, these occurrences in the corpora are screened manually to find those that are modified by adjectives. In other words, nouns and pronouns referring to characters are used as gateways to the adjectival descriptions of characters in the present study. This method was judged more efficient for the retrieval of adjective phrases that describe characters than, for instance, using parsed corpora to find all instances of modifiers in the texts, or using tagged corpora to find all adjectives in the texts. The first step in the retrieval process, that is, the search and study of nouns and pronouns referring to characters, is discussed, and the items presented, in section 3.2.

The second step, that is, the selection of data to be included in the analysis, is addressed in section 3.3. This selection involves studying the concordances of nouns and pronouns referring to characters, and extracting those instances that are modified by adjectives in certain syntactic functions (see 3.3.1) as well as judging whether the item modifying the noun or pronoun represents an adjective or another word class, in order to include only adjectival descriptions of characters. The main problem concerns participles: when participles occur in positions characteristic of adjectives, they have either an adjectival or a verbal function, and for the present analysis, only participles with adjectival function are selected (see 3.3.2). Thus, the adjective phrases investigated are included in the present study on the basis of their function of modifying frequent nouns and pronouns that are used to refer to male and female characters.

Once the adjectival descriptions are selected for inclusion in the study (and consequently already classified according to their syntactic function), semantic classifications of the data are also applied. The semantic focus of the classification relies on previous research on adjectival descriptions of nouns referring to people (see Bäcklund forthcoming; Hene 1984; Persson 1990). The main semantic classification concerns what properties the adjectives describe. This classification is carried out by grouping adjectival descriptions of characters in different semantic domains, such as Appearance or Mental Property (see 3.4.1). The other semantic classifications of the data, evaluative meaning and temporary versus permanent qualities (permanence), are presented in 3.4.2.

3.2 Retrieval: using words referring to characters as gateways

3.2.1 Initial remarks

In the present section I describe the retrieval of words referring to characters, and comment briefly on some differences in use between the Victorian and the contemporary material. For the purpose of data retrieval, a list of the most frequent words was extracted from each corpus, using the program WordSmith Tools (version 3, ©Mike Scott 1999).¹⁶ The 500 most frequent words in each corpus were studied in order to find those that refer to male and female characters.¹⁷ Studying the 500 most frequent words was considered a good starting point. However, to launch a more thorough investigation of adjectival descriptions of characters, additional terms that did not occur among the 500 most frequent words were also searched for (see below for details). For instance, terms that were among the 500 most frequent words in only one of the two corpora were searched for in both corpora.

The nouns and pronouns referring to characters included in the study belong to the following five categories. The terminology for the categories of

¹⁶ Cf. Barnbrook, who emphasises the usefulness of frequency lists as a starting point in computer-aided analyses. Barnbrook describes the procedure thus: “the frequency list is only the first stage in the exploration of the text. It is important to strip the words of their surrounding context so that we can concentrate on them as individual words and make decisions based on their potential linguistic behaviour. Once the selections have been made the next stages of the exploration must be carried out back in the words’ original textual environments” (1996: 66).

¹⁷ Since WordSmith Tools lists all items with the same raw frequency in alphabetical order, all items with the same raw frequency as the 500th word were studied. Thus, each frequency list includes more than 500 words (513 in the Victorian, and 523 in the contemporary). The 500th most frequent word in the Victorian corpus occurs 21 times (*Jack*), and in the contemporary corpus 23 times (*buy*).

central terms¹⁸ (*man*), kinship terms (*mother*), epicene terms¹⁹ (*child*) is adopted from the project ‘Male and Female Terms in English’, which deals with historical aspects of the use of designations of women, men and children in English (see Persson and Rydén 1996). For the purpose of the present study, which focuses on descriptions of characters, the term categories were complemented with personal pronouns (*he*), and proper names²⁰ (*Mrs Lomax*), since these categories of words also appeared in the frequency lists. Most of the words referring to characters investigated are gender-specific (except epicene terms and family names in the category of proper names), which well serves the purpose of the present study. As just pointed out, some of the categories of central and kinship terms have been complemented with searches for additional terms that did not appear in the frequency lists (see further below). For the categories of personal pronouns and proper names, on the other hand, it was necessary to limit the searches in order to guide the retrieval process to yield data of interest for the present study.

In what follows, the five categories of words referring to characters are divided into two groups that are discussed separately, since different search methods were used to retrieve the adjectives modifying them: central, kinship and epicene terms, on one hand, and personal pronouns and proper names, on the other. Finally, 3.2.4 deals with a further type of nouns referring to characters, which also appeared in the frequency lists, namely nouns referring to parts of characters (such as *hair* and *mouth*).

3.2.2 Central, kinship and epicene terms

The category of central terms comprises terms that define a person according to the semantic dimension of gender and age (see e.g. Persson 1990: 36–7; Norberg 2002: 68). Central terms such as *man*, *woman*, *boy* and *girl* function as basic-level lexemes, subordinates to the term *human*, which would explain the relatively high frequency of these lexemes, compared to more specific types of terms, such as occupational terms (*teacher*), agent nouns (*sinner*) or social artefacts (*rebel*) (see Magnusson 1996 for different types of

¹⁸ Central terms are called general terms by Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 522), and Leith, for instance, uses the term ‘generic terms’ (1983: 83).

¹⁹ Epicene terms are central gender-neutral terms (see e.g. Wallin-Ashcroft 2000: 51).

²⁰ The traditional distinction of nouns found in grammars (e.g. Biber et al. 1999: 241 and Quirk et al. 1985: 288) is that between common nouns and proper nouns, where proper nouns is the category reserved for names of people, places etc. However, Huddleston and Pullum make a further distinction between proper nouns and proper names (2002: 515). They use proper nouns for “word-level units belonging to the category noun,” thus stating that *Zealand* is a proper noun whereas *New Zealand* is a proper name, consisting of a modifier and a proper noun (2002: 516). Following this terminology, this category in the present study is labelled proper names, since examples of proper names in the data include instances where titles and proper nouns (in the form of personal names) are combined (see further below).

terms).²¹ The category of kinship terms primarily refers to immediate family (e.g. *mother*, *dad*, *sister* and *son*), although terms for other relatives, such as *aunt* and *grandfather*, are also represented.²²

Since central and most kinship terms are gender-specific, paradigms of search words can be set up where central and kinship terms referring to one gender have a corresponding term designating the other. Additional searches were carried out to include both counterparts in such gender-based pairs (e.g. *aunt/uncle* and *lady/gentleman*) in the analysis. Thus, the investigation of central and kinship terms may be said to be symmetrical: two complete paradigms of terms have been included in the analysis (provided that adjectivally modified instances were found). Moreover, central and kinship terms that were frequent in only one of the two corpora were searched for in both corpora.

Epicene terms (such as *child* and *person*) constitute a third category. Epicene terms are included in the analysis solely on the basis of their appearing among the 500 most frequent words in each corpus, in contrast to the categories of central and kinship terms, which also include the corresponding term in a gender-based pair. As with central and kinship terms, all epicene terms that were among the 500 most frequent words in only one of the two corpora were searched for in both corpora. Epicene terms where the gender of the referent could not be identified from the surrounding context, or epicene terms in the plural that refer to characters of different gender were excluded from the study (14 contemporary instances and 42 Victorian instances), e.g. *I pondered this subject a good deal, and thought that if little children knew how silly they seem to grown-up people when they make faces, they would not be so fond of doing it* (VIC: coral). Similarly, collective nouns such as *team*, *family* or *people* are excluded from the analysis, since the gender of the individuals constituting the collective is often difficult to discern, making collective nouns less interesting from a gender perspective. Generic uses of *man* are also excluded, as are instances of terms that do not have human reference.

The central, kinship and epicene terms examined for the purpose of the present study are listed in Table 3.1, with central and kinship terms organised in gender-based pairs as described above. Both singular and plural forms of central, kinship and epicene terms are included in the analysis.²³ Table 3.1 shows two features of the terms investigated; first, it indicates

²¹ For an overview of the semantic development and use of central terms, see Curzan (2003: 133–179); Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 242–253); Holmes and Sigley (2002); Persson (1990).

²² Wallin-Ashcroft (2000) includes kinship terms in her larger category of relational terms.

²³ A few plural forms occurred among the 500 most frequent words in the frequency list from the Victorian corpus, namely *boys* (79 x), *men* (60 x), *girls* (28 x), *fellows* (23 x), *children* (87 x) and *friends* (30 x). In contrast, the only plural form of the investigated terms found in the contemporary corpus was *children* (40 x).

whether the term appeared in the frequency list drawn from each corpus. Second, it shows whether any instances of adjectives modifying the term were found in the Victorian and contemporary material respectively.

Table 3.1. Terms searched for in the corpora. x = appearing in a frequency list/adjectivally modified occurrences found; - = not in the frequency list; o = no adjectivally modified occurrences.

Term	Frequency list		Adj. described	
	Victorian	Contemporary	Victorian	Contemporary
central terms				
boy	x	x	x	x
girl	x	x	x	x
man	x	x	x	x
woman	x	x	x	x
gentleman	x	-	x	x
lady	x	x	x	x
fellow	x	-	x	x
kinship terms				
father	x	x	x	x
mother	x	x	x	x
dad	-	x	o	x
mum	-	x	o	x
daddy	-	x	o	o
mummy	-	-	o	o
papa	x	-	x	o
mamma	x	-	x	o
brother	x	x	x	x
sister	-	-	x	x
son	-	x	x	x
daughter	-	-	x	x
uncle	-	x	o	o
aunt	x	-	x	o
grandfather	-	-	o	o
grandmother	x	-	x	o
husband	-	-	o	x
wife	x	-	x	x
stepfather	-	x	o	x
stepmother	-	-	o	o
epicene terms				
child	x	x	x	x
baby	x	x	x	x
friend	x	-	x	x
person	x	-	x	x

Table 3.1 shows that there is diachronic variation as regards what terms are used to refer to parents in the present material. A closer look at the data revealed that there are no instances of *mum*, *dad* or *daddy*, *mummy* in the Victorian corpus, whereas there are no instances of *mamma* or *papa* in the contemporary corpus. This follows the description in the *OED*, which states that

papa and *mamma* are rarely used in Present-day British English (2001, s.v. *mama*; 2005, s.v. *papa*); see also Phillipps (1984: 172). However, according to the *OED*, *dad/daddy* and *mum/mummy* are not new terms but date from the 16th century and at least since the 18th century respectively. The results from my corpora provide further evidence that the use of *mamma* and *papa* to refer to parents tends to be replaced by *mum* and *dad* (*mummy*, *daddy*) in Present-day English.²⁴ Moreover, the epicene terms *friend* and *person* appear in the Victorian but not the contemporary frequency list, possibly suggesting that gender-neutral references to characters were more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

A gender discrepancy is also evident from the frequency lists regarding kinship terms: *brother* but not *sister* appears in the frequency list from both sets of material. In addition, the male term *fellow* appears in the Victorian frequency list, and adjectivally modified instances are also found in the contemporary material. One probable reason for the appearance of *fellow* in the Victorian frequency list is the prominence of school stories in the Victorian material. According to the *OED*, *fellow* was “applied by schoolboys to themselves and each other” (1989, s.v. *fellow*). *Fellow* is not part of a gender-linked pair of terms, thus a symmetrical search in this particular instance was not possible. The discrepancies found in the frequency lists of gender-linked terms may be an indication of the imbalance of female and male characters in children’s fiction, with male characters being more frequent, as has been suggested by previous research (see Hene 1984: 46; Romaine 1999: 212; Swann 1992: 111). Such possible imbalance between the number of female and male characters in the material should also be kept in mind when discussing the frequency of adjectival descriptions. However, an examination of the number of characters in the texts is outside the scope of the present study.

3.2.3 Personal pronouns and proper names

The second group of words referring to characters included in the study consists of the two categories of personal pronouns and proper names, categorised in accordance with Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 518). The category of proper names comprises both proper names with simple heads (*Matilda*), and proper names with composite heads, either in the form of a title and a family name (*Mr Weir*) or a given and a family name (*Jane Shaw*).²⁵ Per-

²⁴ Moreover, a search of the terms in the entire BNC World Edition (2000) confirms that the use of *dad/daddy* and *mum/mummy* is much more frequent than the use of *mamma* and *papa* in Present-day English. Frequencies of instances per million words (raw figures in brackets) are 1.6 for *mamma* (154 in 41 texts), 4.6 for *papa* (444 in 98 texts), 21.6 for *daddy* (2111 in 386 texts), 67.2 for *dad* (6564 in 766 texts), 23.8 for *mummy* (2324 in 321 texts) and 83.5 for *mum* (8152 in 726 texts).

²⁵ Compare also Bertills’ (2003) discussion of proper names in children’s literature.

sonal pronouns and proper names provide alternative ways of referring to characters besides the use of terms, and are thus also likely to be modified adjectivally. Biber et al. states that pronouns are particularly common in fiction, owing to the fact that “fiction characteristically focuses on a small number of main characters and typically maintains one topic throughout a sustained narrative” (1999: 238). Consequently, to include personal pronouns and proper names provides a broader perspective in the analysis of adjectival description of characters, although they are normally not included in studies of terms (see Lilja forthcoming; Norberg 2002; Wallin-Ashcroft 2000). The personal pronouns included in the study, *he*, *she*, *him*, *his* and *her*, were selected because they are the most frequent gender-specific personal pronouns.²⁶

Personal pronouns are rarely modified by adjectives in functions other than predicative (Biber et al. 1999: 71; Quirk et al. 1985: 352), and only a restricted range of adjectives are used to modify proper names attributively (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 520). Thus, since adjectives are more likely to modify personal pronouns and proper names in predicative function, these two categories were searched for in the corpora in combination with the linking verb BE, which is by far the most frequent linking verb in the material.²⁷ All forms of BE relevant to 3rd person items were included in the searches for proper names and *he* and *she*, including negated forms, that is, *is*, *'s*, *was*, *were*, *been*, *being*, *be*, *isn't*, *ain't*, *wasn't*, *weren't*, as in (1). The only relevant contextual criterion of BE for the personal pronouns *him*, *her*, and *his*, were the non-finite forms *be*, *been* and *being*, as in (2).

(1) Discouraged, Jinny bent to her picking, telling herself that ***she*** was *stupid* to expect faces at the window or dramatic voices calling. (BNCsub: AC4)

(2) When she looked at poor little Hoomey, she was filled with pity for ***him*** being so *hopeless*. (BNCsub: AT4)

Since the linking verb normally follows the subject of a clause, except in questions, the search criterion was designed to allow BE to appear only to the right of the search word.²⁸ The range for the search criterion was set to five

²⁶ Although *his* is less likely to be adjectivally modified by virtue of being a genitive form, it was nevertheless searched for to present a symmetric search design (since *her* is used as both the objective and the genitive form). Moreover, Görlach claims that “the use of *him* vs *his* in ‘agentive’ position (*I hate him/his reading books*) remained undecided” throughout the 19th century (1999: 77), thus suggesting that constructions such as *his being* + adjective would be possible.

²⁷ Personal pronouns in the functions of object complement may also be modified by adjectives directly following the pronoun, e.g. *I consider him important*. Such possible instances were not retrieved using the present search design.

²⁸ Although this search design does not include questions with reversed word order, that is, BE + pronoun/proper name + adjective, or attributively modified proper names, trial searches suggested that such questions or modifications were infrequent in the material, thus justifying

words right of the search word, based on trial searches; that is, BE needed to occur within five words after the search word in order for the instance to be retrieved. As with the other categories, only personal pronouns and proper names that had human referents were included in the analysis.

The personal pronouns searched for in the corpora are listed in Table 3.2, which shows whether the personal pronoun appeared in one of the frequency lists, and whether any adjectives modifying the personal pronoun predicatively were found.

Table 3.2. Personal pronouns searched for in the corpora. x = appearing in a frequency list/adjectivally modified occurrences found; o = no adjectivally modified occurrences.

Pers. pron.	Frequency list		Adj. described	
	Victorian	Contemporary	Victorian	Contemporary
he	x	x	x	x
she	x	x	x	x
him	x	x	x	x
her	x	x	o	o
his	x	x	o	o

The proper names are given in Table 3.3, organised in groups based on the gender of the referent (p. 47). Proper names constitute a more disparate category of words referring to characters than the other categories investigated. Table 3.3 shows that the gender division of the proper names among the 500 most frequent words is similar in the two corpora: in the contemporary corpus 25 proper names refer to male characters, and 15 to female characters. Similarly, in the Victorian corpus 22 proper names refer to male characters, and 15 to female characters. The preponderance of proper names referring to male characters compared to female characters tallies with results from previous studies, namely that male characters figure more prominently than female characters in children's fiction (Dixon 1977; Hene 1984: 46; Romaine 1999: 212; Swann 1992: 111). Titles are relatively rarely modified by adjectives since many of them are used in vocative function, that is, as terms of address. Moreover, characters referred to by titles are mainly adults, who normally play a minor role in children's fiction. It is probable that the more important the character is to the narrative, the more likely he or she is to be described by adjectives.

the exclusion of these instances in favour of the retrieval of an amount of data that was possible to post-process manually.

Table 3.3. Proper names searched for in the corpora, listed alphabetically according to the gender of the referent. Titles are shown at the end of each group. When no instances were found co-occurring with adjectives the proper name is italicised.

	Victorian	Contemporary
male	Brigson	<i>Barry</i>
	Charles	Bishop
	East	<i>Derek</i>
	Eric	<i>Doyle</i>
	<i>Harry</i>	Gazzer
	Howard	Henry
	Jack	<i>Hoomey</i>
	Martin	Jack
	Montagu	Jazz
	Norman	Jos
	<i>Ready</i>	<i>Ken</i>
	Roger	<i>Lee</i>
	Tom	Mungo
	Tommy	Oz
	Vernon	Philip
	William	Sam
	Captain	<i>Shepherd</i>
	<i>Doctor</i>	Simon
	Dr	Tom
	Master	Tug
Mr	Willie	
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Zen</i>	
	<i>Mister</i>	
	Mr	
	<i>Sir</i>	
female	<i>Brame</i>	<i>Andy</i>
	Ethel	Bella
	<i>Flora</i>	Carrie
	Ida	Crystal
	Jane	Emily
	Jessie	Jinny
	Leila	<i>Katie</i>
	Margaret	Lomax
	<i>Mary</i>	Marie
	Matilda	Matilda
	Patience	<i>Nutty</i>
	Selina	Phelps
	<i>Miss</i>	Tina
	Mrs	<i>Miss</i>
	<i>Nurse</i>	Mrs
both	<i>Brown</i>	Bean
	Seagrave	Wormwood
	Weir	

3.2.4 Nouns referring to parts of characters

A final category of items that refer to characters in the text in some way is nouns that denote parts or aspects of characters, such as *eyes* and *smile*. Descriptions of parts also form part of the overall description of the characters, albeit of a different kind from the rest of the data included in the study, since the adjectives describing the characters do not modify the noun referring to the characters, but only some part or aspect of them.

A complementary study of part descriptions will be presented in Chapter 6. Table 3.4 lists the nouns referring to parts of characters that appeared in the frequency list from at least one corpus.

Table 3.4. Nouns referring to parts of characters searched for in the corpora. x = appearing in a frequency list/adjectivally modified occurrences found; - = not in the frequency list; o = no adjectivally modified occurrences.

Parts	Frequency list		Adj. described	
	Victorian	Contemporary	Victorian	Contemporary
body				
arm	-	x	o	x
arms	x	-	x	x
body	-	x	x	x
feet	-	x	x	x
finger	-	x	o	x
hair	-	x	x	x
hand	x	x	x	x
hands	x	x	x	x
head	x	x	x	x
leg	-	x	o	x
face				
face	x	x	x	x
eyes	x	x	x	x
nose	-	x	x	x
mouth	-	x	x	x
smile	-	x	x	x
non-visible				
heart	x	-	x	x
manner	x	-	x	x
mind	x	x	x	x
voice	x	x	x	x

Table 3.4 shows that there is a greater diversity of words referring to parts of characters among the 500 most frequent words in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. Nevertheless, those among the 500 most frequent words in one corpus were searched for in both corpora. Moreover, instances of part-referring nouns modified by adjectives in all syntactic functions were included in the study. Among the frequent nouns denoting parts of characters, small extremities, such as *mouth* and *finger*, appear more often in the

contemporary than in the Victorian frequency list, which suggests that the contemporary material is more physically oriented than the Victorian material (see also 6.2.1).²⁹ On the other hand, *heart* appears only in the Victorian frequency list, which may be indicative of an alternative way of expressing feelings or inner qualities in the Victorian texts, cf. 6.3.3.

Part descriptions are considered further in Chapter 6, which presents a study of adjectival part descriptions of characters, carried out to complement the findings from the main part of the study (Chapters 4 and 5).

3.3 Screening the data: syntactic grounds

3.3.1 Syntactic functions of adjectives

In linguistic studies of adjectival description of characters, it has been common to focus on adjectives occurring in attributive position (see e.g. Bäcklund 1996; forthcoming; Herriman 1998; Persson 1990). In the present study, other syntactic functions are also taken into account, since they may reveal further patterns in the description of characters, including diachronic differences. There are several syntactic functions in which adjectives can modify nouns and pronouns (see Biber et al. 1999: 510–521; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 528–9; Quirk et al. 1985: 416–428). For the purpose of the present study, four functions of adjectives are identified and used in the syntactic classification of adjectival descriptions of characters. These functions are attributive, predicative and postpositive function, which Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Quirk et al. (1985) present as the three main syntactic functions of adjectives, and the function of predicative adjunct (see further below). In attributive function the adjective is a pre-modifier in a noun phrase (*a funny man*, BNCsub: A1C);³⁰ in predicative function the adjective is a subject complement or an object complement (*Ethel was very unhappy*, VIC: daisy); in postpositive function it is a post-modifier within a noun phrase (*the ladies present*, VIC: ministering). Attributive and predicative functions are much more common than the postpositive function, although adjectives with heavy complementation are usually postposed (Biber et al. 1999: 519; Quirk et al. 1985: 420). Examples can contain adjectives in both premodifying and postmodifying function (Biber et al. 1999: 519), as shown in (3).

²⁹ However, the high frequency of *leg* in the contemporary corpus is due to a mannequin leg being topical in the narrative entitled *Henry's Leg* (42 out of 53 instances of *leg* are from this text).

³⁰ In the present classification, the category of attributive adjectives also comprises the few adjectives that occur in pre-determinative position (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 529), e.g. *too great a person* (VIC: daisy). These categories are considered jointly since both attributive and pre-determinative functions are found in prenominal position within the noun phrase.

(3) She studied him objectively, as one of her team, and saw a quite reasonably *fit*, *bright boy*, *hard* with nights of climbing over factory walls and across their roofs and being chased by securitor men, *quick-witted* out of habit, *used* to an uncomfortable life. (BNCsub: AT4)

The fourth syntactic function of adjectives describing characters is what Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 529) call predicative adjuncts (e.g. *the father said, greyer than ever now*, BNCsub: CH4).³¹ The difference between a postpositive adjective and a predicative adjunct is that the former occurs in the noun phrase, whereas a predicative adjunct is separated from the word it describes by a verb. Huddleston and Pullum claim that predicative adjuncts can be “integrated into clause structure” as well as be detached (2002: 529). Further, they state that “[a]ll adjectives that can function as predicative adjunct can also function as predicative complement” (2002: 529). For instance, *nervous* in [*y*]ou could tell because he was looking all round, *nervous* (BNCsub: ABX) can also be used predicatively, e.g. *he was nervous*. Consequently, the category of predicative adjuncts also covers the few adjectives in preposed position, that is, detached complements, found in my material. Preposed adjectives are complements preceding the subject, often preceded by *how*, as in (4).

(4) How *earnest he* is over his books! (VIC: daisy)

In sum, adjectives describing characters included in the present study fulfil one of the four following syntactic functions: attributive, predicative, postpositive, or predicative adjunct. The four syntactic categories used in the analysis are exemplified in (5)–(8) below.

(5) **Attributive:** Their nurse was a *tall grave woman*; she never played with them, never sang to the baby; and yet they were all as merry and happy as children could wish to be; (VIC: ministering)

(6) **Predicative:** “*He* wasn’t really *absent-minded*, you know, Mr Bishop.” (BNCsub: ACB)

(7) **Postpositive:** There was one *gentleman*, *young* and *dark*, with large brown eyes, who seemed to be employed in making paper pellets of an old letter, chatting the while in a low voice to a young lady with a good deal of red hair. (VIC: overtheway)

(8) **Predicative adjunct:** His *Mum* had acted like this before, all *secretive*, he remembered now, when they’d taken him to choose his bike, his last birthday. (BNCsub: ABX)

³¹ Biber et al. call adjectives in this function detached predicatives (1999: 520) and Quirk et al. call them supplementary adjective clauses (1985: 424). See also Aarts (1992) on small clauses.

3.3.2 Participles: adjectives or verbs?

Participles constitute another category that may appear in the typically adjectival syntactic positions accounted for above. When past and present participles (*-ed* and *-ing*) occur in positions characteristic of adjectives, that is, attributive, predicative and postpositive position, or as predicative adjuncts, they may be ambiguous as to whether they have an adjectival or a verbal function.³² To distinguish participial adjectives from verbal participles, several diagnostic criteria were considered. Of the diagnostic criteria presented in Gleby (2002: 128ff), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 540ff), and Quirk et al. (1985: 413ff), four indicators of adjectival status have been singled out as especially relevant for the present study. In the presence of one or more of these four overt linguistic indications of adjectival status, the participle is classified as an adjective, and thus included in the analysis. These linguistic indications are:

- modification by an adverb of degree³³ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 79)

(9) Poor Eric! although he had been longing for the time ever since the news came, yet now **he** was too agitated to enjoy. (VIC: eric)

- being compounded with another element, for instance an adjective (Quirk et al. 1985: 415)

(10) Then I calmed down and asked a safe-looking lady with children to show me the way to the bus station. (BNCsub: FSD)

- being co-ordinated with a central or near-central adjective (Gleby 2002: 134)

(11) In contrast to Emily, her **mother** was warm and welcoming, though at first sight she seemed lean and severe. (BNCsub: ACV)

³² Magnusson and Persson discuss two semantic distinctions of adjectives that are also related to the two participial forms of adjectives: experience-based, represented by past participles (*-ed*), and source-based, represented by present participles (*-ing*) (1986: 195). Examples in my data include the experience-based *amazed* in *He was sensitive, vulnerable, amazed when his honest truths gave offence* (BNCsub: AT4), and the source-based *welcoming* in *her mother was warm and welcoming* (BNCsub: ACV).

³³ In Present-day English we are inclined to perceive a participle modified by the adverb of degree *very* as having adjectival status, whereas *much* tends to be used with verbal participles (Quirk et al. 1985: 415). However, Phillipps (1970) claims that until recently, there was hesitation about modifying adjectives derived from past participles with *very*. He exemplifies: “[*very pleased* and *very delighted*, for instance, were denounced in Victorian times as ‘Americanisms’” (1970: 182). Therefore, in the present study *much* is not considered a clear indicator of verbal status. See also Bailey (1996: 225–6).

- following linking verbs other than BE³⁴ (Quirk et al. 1985: 403)

(12) The *little boy* trembled and looked *ashamed* under his noble glance of sorrow and scorn. (VIC: eric)

In other instances of participles the verbal status is clearly indicated. Naturally, such examples were excluded from the analysis. For instance, in (13) there is an object that points to the verbal status of the participle, and in (14), *unaccompanied* occurs in a passive verb construction with an overt *by*-agent.

(13) I could not have whistled if I had tried; but then, bad as he was, he was not, like me, disobeying a kind parent. (VIC: peter)

(14) Mrs Phelps, slightly taken aback at the arrival of such a tiny girl unaccompanied by a parent, nevertheless told her she was very welcome. (BNCsub: CH4)

The instances of participles that do not co-occur with any of the above overt linguistic markers of adjectival or verbal status are more problematic. Huddleston and Pullum propose that the semantic content is an indicator of the adjectival status of a participle: “[a] third, much less general, factor is meaning” (2002: 541). A general difference between the meaning of verbal and adjectival participles is that verbs tend to denote events whereas adjectives denote states. The contrast is exemplified in the two clauses *it was broken deliberately, out of spite* (verbal participle denoting event), and *it did not look broken to me* (state-denoting participial adjective) (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 79). Moreover, the overall semantics of the situation in which the participle occurs provides a clue to whether the function is adjectival or verbal (see Smitherberg 2005: 29). For instance, in (15) *infuriating* does not co-occur with any linguistic markers of adjective-hood, but the context suggests that *infuriating* denotes a characteristic permanent feature/state of the mother, and not a temporary action, thus justifying the interpretation of the adjectival status of the participle; hence the instance was included in the analysis.

(15) His purple horrors were neatly laid out on a chair again, all ready for the next morning, but the tight buttonless shirt had been replaced by a brand new one. He picked it up and started to remove all the pins. His *mother* was infuriating but she cared about him, deep down. All the time he’d been going on about the buttons popping off, this shirt had been up here, waiting for him. Henry wished now that he’d not made such a fuss about the perishing uniform. There was no money for shirts. (BNCsub: A1C)

³⁴ Adjectives describing personal pronouns and proper names were only included in the present study when they occurred with BE (see 3.2.3).

In some cases no indication of adjectival function of the participle could be attested, neither overt linguistic markers nor implicit indications (by way of semantic context, for instance). The general strategy was to exclude such instances from the analysis. For instance, (16) and (17) were considered ambiguous and thus excluded.

(16) “If I had not had the dinner to get ready, I would have been off to seek her myself, and would have sent her home in a hurry; but her father will be in to his dinner, and she will get it from him I am thinking.” Leila instantly proposed that they should return by the road; “As Charles is with us, I don’t think papa will be displeased,” she said; “and, we can tell him why.” Then turning to Dame Burton, she added, “We shall be sure of meeting your little Lizzy if we go by the road, and we shall send her home to you very quick; but I hope you won’t be angry with her this time, for you know when it is an interesting play sometimes one forgets.” (VIC: leila)

(17) “Yes,” she said, so subdued that Mungo could barely hear. He noticed too that her shoulders seemed to convulse. Was she shivering? Mungo drew level. Was the wind making her eyes water or were they tears? She hid her face from him. Mungo was embarrassed. “I ... I’m ... There’s no need to...” he stammered. There was a pause. “Look,” he said at last, “the point is, I’d like to be your friend. Even if you don’t need one.” (BNCsub: ACV)

In sum, participles are considered adjectival in the present study when they co-occur with overt markers of adjectival status, or when the overall semantics of the situation suggests an adjectival interpretation. For the purpose of defining the participial adjectives of the present study, each instance of participles describing characters has been analysed according to the adjectival criteria described above, as well as subjected to close readings. The adjectival criteria adopted here cannot be considered indisputable evidence of the status of the participles, however. For instance, some examples are ambiguous since they do not contain any indicators of either adjectival or verbal status, yet others possess markers of both adjectival and verbal status. Therefore, as Smitterberg points out, when trying to distinguish between adjectival and verbal functions of participles, the researcher often has to rely on his or her “general semanto-pragmatic impressions”, and the decision will thus be partly subjective (2005: 30).

3.4 Classification of adjectival descriptions of characters

3.4.1 Semantic domains

Classification of adjectives into semantic domains has been used previously in studies of descriptions of people.³⁵ On the basis of previous research, such a classification is expected to reveal differences, for instance, regarding what properties are most extensively described with reference to male and female characters (see e.g. Bäcklund forthcoming; Hene 1984; Persson 1990). Differences in usage between the two periods investigated can also be discerned by studying the distribution of adjectival descriptions across semantic domains and sub-domains.

The present classification of adjectival descriptions of characters is based on the models used in Hene (1984) and Bäcklund (forthcoming). The classification is carried out by grouping adjective phrases that denote related features and properties, such as adjective phrases denoting mental properties and states (*happy*), or adjective phrases denoting appearance (*pretty*), in different semantic domains. In the present analysis, the adjective phrases are classified into main semantic domains and then further into sub-domains. In the sub-domains the adjective phrases are grouped together on the basis of a more detailed distinction of what properties the adjectives denote, for example adjective phrases denoting cognition (e.g. denoting intelligence) (*brainy*) and emotions (*sad*) respectively in the domain Mental Property. A further distinction between subgroups is sometimes made within the sub-domains, at times including synonyms (or co-hyponyms, cf. Persson 1990: 124), that is, words from the same end of a gradable scale, and sometimes antonyms (see Cruse 1986; Lyons 1977 for a discussion of lexical relations, and Rusiecki 1985 for a theory of gradable adjectives as organised in scales).

The main semantic domains and their sub-domains will be presented in what follows. As in Bäcklund (forthcoming) and in Hene (1984: 40), a distinction is made between intrapersonal semantic domains, in which the adjective phrases describe the person as an individual, and interpersonal domains, where the adjectival description focuses on the person as a social being. These are the semantic domains and sub-domains used in the present study:

³⁵ Semantic domains are also used as a semantic sub-classification of adjectives in general, that is, a group of adjectives that refer to the same kind of attributes, in Aarts and Calbert (1979: 33–5); Biber et al. (1999: 508–9); Dixon (1982: 15ff); and as a device for stylistic studies in Leech and Short (1981: 76). For a discussion of semantic fields, see e.g. Lehrer and Feder Kittay (1992); Lyons (1977).

Intrapersonal domains

- **Age**
- **Appearance:** Bodily Constitution; Looks
- **Mental Property:** Cognition; Emotions; Characteristics
- **Physical State**

Interpersonal domains

- **Attitude**
- **Situation:** Classifying, Grading or Locative Position; Nationality; Skills, Societal/Professional Position and Economy; Relations
- **Sociability:** Conduct; Stance and Behaviour; Acceptability Statements

The category of Age accommodates such adjectives as *old* and *middle-aged*. Adjective phrases denoting Appearance typically refer to looks (*red-haired*) and bodily constitution (*fat*) of the character. An example of three adjectives denoting appearance is provided in (18).

(18) His wife, Nancy, a *tall, thin, freckled woman* with closely cropped iron-grey hair was digging a large trench in the garden. (BNCsub: CAB)

Adjective phrases following the linking verb *look* are also placed in the domain of Appearance since in these cases the property described is expressed as a visible quality, part of the character's appearance.

The category of Mental Property comprises adjective phrases that refer to mental characteristics of a person (*good-natured*) or emotions (*upset*), as well as adjective phrases denoting intelligence, ability³⁶ or other mental properties and states (*mentally alert*). For instance, *thankful* in (19) refers to an expected emotion of Master William.

(19) "Perhaps so, sir; and *Master William* should be *thankful* that he has a father who does take the trouble." (VIC: master)

The final intrapersonal category is Physical State, in which adjective phrases referring to a character's life and health (*sick*) and physical states and needs (*hungry*) are included. In example (20) *asleep* denotes a physical state.

(20) The little party of Fairholm retired early, and *Eric* was soon fast *asleep* with his arm around his new-found brother's neck. (VIC: eric)

³⁶ Adjectives denoting ability (such as talents, experience and knowledge, e.g. *skilful*) are either classified in the category of Mental Property or Physical State, depending on whether the context promotes an interpretation of the adjective as denoting a mental capacity, e.g. *unable to concentrate* (BNC: ACV), or a physical condition, e.g. *able to sit up* (VIC: ministering).

Turning to the interpersonal domains, that is, those domains comprising adjective phrases describing the character in relation to others, the adjective phrases in the category of Attitude are different from the rest of the data in that they are essentially non-descriptive, and rather denote a general evaluation of the person, such as *formidable* in [t]he ladies are really *formidable* (BNCsub: AT4). Such evaluations are difficult to classify with certainty as denoting a specific property accommodated in any of the other semantic domains. Many attitudinal adjectives are used in address to other characters (especially in the Victorian material) and denote the attitude of the speaker, such as “I feel the same, my *dear* boy” (VIC: master). Another example of a general evaluation is *horrible* in (21), which is the protagonist’s evaluation of her stepfather (an evaluation which is reconsidered later in the text). *Horrible* refers primarily to her emotions, and not necessarily to any specific property of the stepfather.

(21) He’s my *horrible stepfather* and I simply can’t stick him. (BNCsub: FSD)

The category of Situation comprises the most diverse set of adjective phrases in the present classification, with a relatively low frequency in each sub-domain. It includes adjectives with a grading or classifying function (*real mother*), as well as adjective phrases denoting the locative position of a character (*opposite*) or nationality (*Irish*). Moreover, Situation accommodates adjective phrases that denote societal position (*lower boys*), and financial status (*rich*), as well as relations (*married*). For instance, *alone* in (22) describes a relation of the character to other characters.

(22) “She should take care that Leila was always at home to dine with her papa when *he* was *alone*, and to read and sing to him in the evenings, as she had been accustomed to do.” (VIC: leila)

Finally, the category of Sociability comprises adjective phrases that refer to the behaviour and/or stance of a character (e.g. *warm*), or their conduct, including adjective phrases denoting originality (*strange*). Moreover, the category includes adjective phrases in statements of acceptability regarding the social behaviour of the character, such as *nice* or *boring*. Although adjective phrases in the sub-domain Acceptability Statements and adjective phrases in the Attitude domain both contain evaluative elements, the focus of the two groups is slightly different. Acceptability Statements are related to the character’s social behaviour, whereas the evaluation in adjectives denoting Attitude refers to a more vague opinion held by the person describing the character. The adjective in (23) refers to the behaviour of the character, and is thus included in the category of Sociability (sub-domain of Conduct).

(23) **He** was invariably polite to her: something that at first made her uneasy.
(BNCsub: ACB)

The borders between the semantic domains and/or sub-domains are not always clear-cut, however, and the classification remains necessarily subjective to some extent. Close readings and the context are crucial in the semantic classification. Consider, for instance, the following examples of *good*, which have all been classified in different semantic domains. In (24) *good* is perceived as having purely emotive value, and the instance is classified in the category of Attitude. In contrast, *good* in (25) refers to the behaviour of the boy, and is thus classified as an instance of adjectives denoting Sociability (in the sub-domain Acceptability Statements). Finally, *good* in (26) is classified in the category of Situation (in the sub-domain of adjectives denoting skills), since it refers to the character's performance in a restricted situation (i.e. the competition).

(24) **Attitude:** “*Dear, good old man,*” said Mrs. Seagrave, after a pause, “what ever may be our fates, and that is for the Almighty to decide for us, as long as I have life, what you have done for me or mine shall never be forgotten.” (VIC: master)

(25) **Sociability:** and if you choose, Ralph, to behave yourself and be a good boy, I'll take you along with me and give you a good share of the profits. (VIC: coral)

(26) **Situation:** Anyway, Mavis Bramley was doing the competition too, and *she* was very good. (BNCsub: A1C)

Another example is the classification of *poor*. The distinction between *poor* denoting attitude and *poor* denoting financial state was at times difficult to make. Often, a combined reference seems to be intended, since people without money are often pitied. However, the classification was based on whether there was some contextual cue to indicate that the financial reading was to be preferred over the attitudinal. In these cases, the instance was classified in the domain of Situation, whereas if not, it was classified as belonging to the domain of Attitude. An ambiguous example classified as primarily denoting financial state is given in (27). The contextual cues considered are the mentioning of warm clothes, which poor people cannot afford to buy, and money.

(27) “Nurse! nurse!” said little Jane, running in, “I am going to help buy warm clothes for a poor little girl with my penny every week” (VIC: ministering)

Finally, two different uses of *tired* will illustrate the same lexical item being classified in different domains. When *tired* takes obligatory complementa-

tion by a prepositional phrase, that is, *tired of*, it carries an emotional shade of meaning. Compare *tired* in (28), where the physical state is in focus (and consequently placed in the domain of Physical State), and in (29), where the quality attributed is a result of a cognitive experience (and consequently classified as describing an emotional state).

(28) But poor *Eric* was too *sick*, and *tired*, and his heart was too full to talk much, and he contended himself with civil answers to the questions put to him, dropping the conversation as soon as he could. (VIC: eric)

(29) He fancied that *he* should be never *tired of* looking at the sea, and could not take his eyes off the great buoy that rolled about in the centre of the bay, and flashed in the sunlight at every move. (VIC: eric)

3.4.2 Evaluative meaning and permanence

In addition to the classification of data into semantic domains, the present analysis considers the evaluative meaning of the descriptions, that is, positive (*happy*), negative (*blind*) and neutral (*married*) adjectives (as applied in Bäcklund forthcoming; Norberg 2002; Persson 1990; Wallin-Ashcroft 2000). In addition, the distinction between temporary (*hungry*) and permanent (*tall*) features (see below) is relevant in certain semantic domains (related to the distinction between properties and states). Although the adjective phrases belonging to the domain of Attitude and the Sociability sub-domain of Acceptability Statements already have an evaluative element incorporated, the classification of evaluative meaning cuts across the semantic domains, since adjective phrases from all domains can have either positive, neutral or negative meaning, for instance, the above-mentioned examples *happy* (Mental Property), *blind* (Physical State) and *married* (Situation: Private Relations).

An attempt at a classification of the evaluative meaning of the uses of adjective phrases is expected to provide interesting insights into the description of characters. By classifying the adjectival descriptions of characters in the present study, one aim is to reveal the “semantic prosody” of the nouns and pronouns referring to characters. The semantic prosody of units of meaning is discussed by scholars working in the tradition of Firth, Halliday and Sinclair.³⁷ According to Tognini Bonelli, words (and other units of meaning) involve “a specific semantic prosody at the pragmatic and connotational level” (2002: 91). This semantic prosody relates to the communicative intent, and may give positive or negative meaning to words that are seemingly neutral. However, the classification of evaluative meaning will admittedly be impressionistic, especially regarding the Victorian material, since the evalua-

³⁷ See for instance Stubbs’s (2001) application of the model to terms referring to people, among other things.

tive meaning of the Victorian age may be lost or different to a present-day reader, a fact pointed out by Bailey (1996: vi) and Görlach (1999: 8) among others. The classification of evaluative meaning is based on Persson (1990). In his analysis of adjectives describing people in terms of positive, negative or neutral adjectives, the principle of classification was to ask about an adjective X whether it is “generally thought better to be X than not to be X” (1990: 52). If it is thought better to be “X”, that is, to possess the property that the adjective denotes, the adjective is classified as positive, if not, the adjective is classified as neutral. A reversed question is used to identify negative uses of adjectives.

As was the case with the classification of adjectives into semantic domains (see above), the context is also crucial in the interpretation of the evaluative meaning of the adjective. Both modifications within the adjective phrase as well as the surrounding context are considered. In the present study, the general strategy is only to classify adjectives as positive and negative when this interpretation is clear from the context. Indeterminate examples are placed in the neutral category. Thus, instances of adjectives that are normally considered positive or negative are assigned neutral status when the context suggests that the property denoted by the adjective does not apply to the character being described, or does so only to a moderate extent. However, if the feature is conspicuously absent, it is nevertheless relevant to the description of the character in question, according to Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976: 262).³⁸ In (30) the adjective is negated. Normally, *daft* is considered a negative adjective since it refers to a mental capacity below average. However, the negation and the comparative construction *as...as* do not necessarily reverse the meaning of *daft* in this context. It is difficult to know whether the intended meaning is ‘in fact, she is fairly intelligent, although not exactly brainy’ or ‘but still rather daft’. Consequently, the instance has been classified as neutral.

(30) “And she’s not thick neither. There’s a lot going on in her head.” “You could have fooled me.” “Yes, well,” said Bella, “if you kept your mouth shut and listened a bit more you might have noticed. She was talking to me just now, before you put your oar in.” Gazer said nothing. “All right, all right,” said Bella, “don’t sulk. I’m not saying she’s brainy, am I? Just that *she’s not as daft as she looks.*” (BNCsub: ACB)

As mentioned above, the permanence of the property described will at times also be considered. Neither Bäcklund (forthcoming) nor Hene (1984) differentiates between adjectives denoting a temporary property or state (such as

³⁸ Miller and Johnson-Laird argue that negations are used to “indicate that some customary or expected state of affairs is not the case” (1976: 262). They give the clause *George Washington is not a table* as an example of a negation conveying irrelevant information, which, in turn, would make the reader perceive the statement as odd (1976: 262).

happy) or a permanent quality (such as *good-natured*), mainly because they consider the distinction too difficult to ascertain in their material. Like Bäcklund and Hene, I will not quantify the variable of permanence regarding all the adjective phrases investigated in the present study. I will, however, observe when the qualities ascribed to characters tend to be of a permanent or temporary nature, and present quantified findings for the variable in some of the semantic domains. Moreover, the classification of certain properties, such as the distinction between adjectives denoting a person's character and adjectives denoting a person's emotions, is related to the distinction between permanent and temporary qualities. In the present study, this distinction is also linked to characterisation in that permanent features are considered more likely to trigger a category-based (i.e. stereotyped) impression of a character instead of a person-based impression, by virtue of being static and thus implying no change (Culpeper 2001: 93–4; see also Chatman 1993: 60).

3.5 Summary

The present chapter has described the retrieval, selection and classification of data. Nouns and pronouns referring to characters were used as gateways to retrieve adjectival descriptions. The syntactic functions of adjectives formed the basis for the selection of data. In other words, adjectives modifying nouns and pronouns in the most common syntactic functions were selected for inclusion in the study. Finally, the adjectival descriptions selected were also subjected to semantic classifications, in order to draw attention to interesting differences and similarities in the material.

First, for the retrieval process, the searches for nouns and pronouns referring to characters were carried out using automatic as well as manual scanning. The focus was on items that are of interest from a gender point of view. Frequency was used as a starting point, since the analysis of frequent items facilitates observations of patterns in the adjectival descriptions. As a tool for finding the frequent items in the material, a list of the 500 most frequent words in each corpus was extracted. All nouns (other than collective nouns) referring to characters, and a selected set of pronouns in the frequency lists were retrieved and studied. The words used to refer to characters in the texts were organised into five categories: central terms (e.g. *lady*), kinship terms (e.g. *father*), epicene terms (e.g. *baby*), personal pronouns (e.g. *she*), and proper names (e.g. *Philip*).

The different categories of nouns and pronouns referring to characters required different search strategies in order to retrieve data that were useful for the present study. The core group of terms, central, kinship and epicene terms, was complemented with additional searches for the purpose of thoroughly investigating these categories. In contrast, for the supplementary categories of personal pronouns and proper names, it was necessary to limit

the searches to be able to target the data of interest for the present study. The additional searches for central, kinship and epicene terms entailed searching in both corpora for terms that were frequent only in one of the corpora, as well as including plural forms of the terms. In addition, both counterparts in gender-based pairs (such as *girl/boy* and *aunt/uncle*) of central and kinship terms were included in the searches, even if only one representative of a pair appeared in a frequency list. The limited search performed on the categories of personal pronouns and proper names restricted the retrieval to those instances that co-occurred with the linking verb BE.

In addition, another type of nouns referring to characters was used for retrieval of adjectival descriptions of characters, namely nouns referring to parts of characters. Such adjectival descriptions of characters will be subjected to separate treatment, since they constitute a different category of description than adjectival descriptions of nouns and pronouns referring to characters as a whole (see Chapter 6).

Second, for the selection of data to be included in the analysis, four relevant syntactic functions of adjectives were distinguished: attributive (*a happy girl*), predicative (*the girl was happy*) and postpositive (*the girl alone*) function, and the function of predicative adjunct (*the girl said, happier than ever*). The problem with participles, which can be adjectival or verbal in the syntactic functions considered, was also addressed. In this respect, the following definitions were applied. The first criterion for identifying adjectival participles was whether an overt indicator of adjectival status was present, such as an adverb of degree or co-ordination with a central adjective. For those examples without overt linguistic markers of adjectival status, the overall semantics of the situation, that is, the situational context, was considered, for instance whether the participle denoted an event (i.e. had verbal force) or a state (i.e. had adjectival function). For those examples that still remained uncertain, the general strategy was to exclude the examples from the analysis.

Third, for the semantic classification of data, the main semantic domains distinguished were the intrapersonal Age (*grown-up*), Appearance (*handsome*), Mental Property (*unwise*), Physical State (*dead*), and the interpersonal Attitude (*silly*), Situation (*rich*) and Sociability (*nice*). Furthermore, the adjectives were classified as to whether they had positive (*glad*), negative (*hungry*) or neutral (*tall*) meaning, and whether they denoted temporary (*drunk*) or permanent (*false-hearted*) features of a character.

4 Frequency, diversity, form and syntactic function: an overall view

4.1 Opening discussion

The present chapter introduces overall quantitative comparisons of the adjectival descriptions of characters (see Chapter 3). Both diachronic and gender variation is addressed when overall frequencies are considered. The idea of a stereotype-continuum for the descriptions is central to the chapter, since most features investigated in the present chapter are related to such a continuum (see Culpeper 2001: 78–9 for a discussion of the concept of stereotypes). I argue that some features render the descriptions more formulaic, which may add to a stereotypical, shallow portrayal of characters. Such features include less diverse descriptions, as shown by type/token ratio, extensive use of a few frequent adjectives (e.g. *old*), and certain recurring collocations (e.g. *little girl*). In contrast, other features are considered to contribute to a complex, realistic portrayal of characters. Such complexity can be achieved for instance by modified adjective phrases (*not very big*), since modification elaborates the meaning of the adjective and may render the description less formulaic. Moreover, the syntactic function of the adjective phrase is relevant in estimating the information value of the description: attributive adjectives give information in an integrated format, resulting in a relatively low information value. In contrast, predicative adjectives are attributed a higher information value, since the purpose of a clause containing predicative adjectives is to describe the referent of a noun phrase (cf. *kind woman*, VIC: master, with the constructed example *the woman was kind*); see further 4.6. In addition, the evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases will be examined.

As will be shown, the results from the present investigation suggest that more stereotypical descriptions are found in the Victorian than in the contemporary material. The gender differences are also more pronounced in the Victorian material. Above all, the descriptions of female characters in the Victorian material are formulaic and add to a stereotypical portrayal.

The following section, 4.2, accounts for results regarding overall frequency, type/token ratio and evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases. In section 4.3, particularly frequent adjectives in the material are described, and their role in the material discussed. Section 4.4 presents a measure for the

number of adjective phrases modifying the same noun or pronoun. This measure is labelled ‘density of adjectival descriptions’ in the present study. Modifiers and other elements within the adjective phrase are considered in section 4.5. Finally, in section 4.6, overall findings regarding the syntactic function of adjective phrases are presented. As stated in 1.4.2, for tables where a chi square test of statistical significance could be carried out, only tables displaying statistically significant results are given. The focus is on diachronic variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material. However, when deviations from the diachronic patterns are discernible for any of the four groups of characters, that is, Victorian female, Victorian male, contemporary female, and contemporary male characters, the differences are pointed out.

4.2 Overall frequency and evaluative meaning

Although the Victorian material exhibits a greater number of adjectival descriptions, the descriptions in the Victorian material are not more diverse, as is indicated by the type/token ratio shown in Table 4.1. There are 858 adjectival descriptions in the Victorian material, compared to 639 in the contemporary material. The distribution across female and male characters is fairly even in the Victorian material (54% vs 46%), whereas the adjectival descriptions primarily occur in descriptions of male characters in the contemporary material (61% compared to 39%). Thus, the raw figures suggest that adjectival descriptions of characters are more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, and, in the contemporary material, more common with male than female characters.

Table 4.1. Frequency of adjectives describing characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian				Contemporary			
	types	tokens	t/t ratio	percent	types	tokens	t/t ratio	percent
Male	203	397	0.51	46%	204	392	0.52	61%
Female	158	461	0.34	54%	142	247	0.57	39%
Total	297	858	0.35	100%	286	639	0.45	100%

There are 297 types³⁹ among 858 tokens of adjectives describing characters in the Victorian material (type/token ratio 0.35) and 286 types among 639 tokens in the contemporary material (type/token ratio 0.45). In other words,

³⁹ In the classification of types, adjective phrases with the same lexeme as head of the phrase were considered as constituting the same type, although different shades of meaning may be intended. Moreover, comparative and superlative forms were subsumed under the same type as the base form. Consequently, *not any better*, *good with people* and *good* are all classified as the same type. In contrast, compounds such as *good-natured* are classified as separate types.

the mean value is 2.9 tokens per type of adjectival description in the Victorian material, which is a higher value than the 2.2 tokens per type exhibited in the contemporary material. The greater diversity of properties denoted by adjectives in the contemporary material supports the hypothesis that contemporary children's fiction displays a less stereotypical portrayal of characters than does Victorian children's fiction (see 1.1). In other words, although there are more descriptions in the Victorian material, they often denote the same qualities, and thus do not contribute to as exhaustive a description of the characters as the descriptions in the contemporary material do.

The type/token ratios for each group of characters reveal even greater differences. The ratios for Victorian male, contemporary male and contemporary female characters are similar, ranging between 0.51 and 0.57. However, the ratio of adjectival descriptions of female Victorian characters stands out by being considerably lower, 0.34 (cf. also Table 4.5). This finding suggests that the adjectival descriptions of female characters in Victorian children's fiction are less diverse than the descriptions of the other three groups of characters.

The adjective phrases are classified as either expressing positive (*happy*), negative (*hungry*) or neutral (*tall*) meaning. As explained in 3.4.2, the classification was based on the consideration of whether it is generally deemed better to possess the quality X (= positive adjective phrase) than not (= negative adjective phrase). However, this subjective criterion may be difficult to assess in the material, especially in the Victorian material for a present-day reader (cf. Bailey 1996: vi; Görlach 1999: 8). Thus, I preferred to classify instances with opaque evaluative meaning as neutral, and only classify instances of adjective phrases that undoubtedly expressed positive or negative meaning as such. The implication is that although some of the adjective phrases in the neutral category might be considered either positive or negative, the adjective phrases classified as positive or negative represent the clear cases.

An overall view of the evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases reveals an interesting difference between the Victorian and the contemporary material; see Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Distribution of adjective phrases across positive, negative and neutral meaning in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	239	28	110	17
Negative	145	17	169	26
Neutral	474	55	360	56
Total	858	100	639	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 33.78$

Table 4.2 shows that there are more positive (28%) than negative (17%) adjective phrases in the Victorian material, whereas the contemporary material exhibits an opposite pattern (17% positive vs 26% negative). This agrees with Bäcklund's (forthcoming) finding regarding the description of people in 19th-century English. She found adjective phrases with positive meaning to be more common modifiers in noun phrases with both female and male reference than adjective phrases with negative meaning. As regards children's fiction, the finding can be related to the different purposes of the genre in the two periods examined. Because of the didactic intentions of Victorian children's fiction, the characters were often presented as idealistic role models, thus mainly exhibiting positive qualities (see 1.1). Moreover, negative descriptions of members of the family are unlikely in the Victorian material, since the family was a normative institution during the Victorian period (see Knowles 1998). Further reasons for this striking difference between the two sets of material are discussed in the presentation of each semantic domain in Chapter 5.

The proportions of neutral adjective phrases, on the other hand, are similar in the periods investigated, 55% in the Victorian and 56% in the contemporary material. That the majority of the adjective phrases have been classified as neutral depends on the subjective criterion used for the classification of evaluative meaning, and the limitations inherent in such a classification (see 3.4.2).

4.3 The most frequent adjectives

A number of adjectives occur noticeably often in the data, especially in the Victorian material. These adjectives warrant a separate discussion, since firstly, they are highly frequent, and secondly, two of the most frequent ones in the Victorian material are non-existent in the contemporary material. Thus, a quantitative and qualitative comparison between the Victorian and the contemporary material will highlight interesting differences and similarities. The five most frequent adjectives in each set of material, and also for male and female characters in each set, are given in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

Table 4.3. The most frequent adjectives in the Victorian material.⁴⁰ Adjectives frequent with characters of one gender in particular are marked in bold.

Female	Male	Total
<i>Old</i> 62	<i>Old</i> 36	<i>Old</i> 98
<i>Little</i> 56	<i>Little</i> 18	<i>Little</i> 74
<i>Young</i> 36	<i>Poor</i> 14	<i>Poor</i> 44
<i>Poor</i> 30	<i>Kind</i> 12	<i>Young</i> 44
<i>Dear</i> 20	<i>Dear</i> 11	<i>Dear</i> 31
	<i>Good</i> 11	
	<i>New</i> 11	

Table 4.4. The most frequent adjectives in the contemporary material.⁴¹ Adjectives frequent with characters of one gender in particular are marked in bold.

Female	Male	Total
<i>Old</i> 21	<i>Old</i> 55	<i>Old</i> 76
<i>Little</i> 17	<i>Small</i> 9	<i>Little</i> 25
<i>Good</i> 6	<i>Little</i> 8	<i>Small</i> 14
<i>Pleased</i> 6	<i>Young</i> 8	<i>Young</i> 13
<i>Late</i> 5	<i>Aware</i> 7	<i>Good</i> 11
<i>Small</i> 5		
<i>Young</i> 5		

The five most frequent adjectives overall account for 34% (291/858) of all the adjectives in the Victorian material, and 22% (139/639) in the contemporary material. This further supports the hypothesis that there is a greater diversity among the adjectival descriptions in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. As regards the frequency of particular adjectives, the findings of the present study correlate with Hene's (1984) findings for adjectival descriptions of characters in children's fiction published in Swedish: the four most frequent lexemes in Hene's material are *liten* ('little/small'), *gammal* ('old'), *glad* ('happy') and *ung* ('young') (1984: 254). The five most frequent adjectives in the contemporary material of the present study are not exclusive to children's fiction, either. According to Biber et al. (1999: 512), *old*, *little*, *small*, *young* and *good* are among the most common attributive adjectives in Present-day English in general.⁴² In contrast, *poor* and *dear*,

⁴⁰ Comparative and superlative forms are included in the figures (6 *older*, 7 *elder*, 5 *eldest*, 1 *younger*, 1 *youngest*, 3 *dearest*, 1 *better* and 2 *best*). Moreover, the figures include eight phrases in which *old* denotes a specified age, such as *ten years old*, and *twelve-year-old* (1 x) although Huddleston and Pullum consider the latter type of adjective phrase a compound adjective (2002: 552). Nevertheless, the meaning of the two constructions denoting exact age is similar, which is why the latter construction is considered in the examination of *old* as well.

⁴¹ Comparative and superlative forms are included in the figures (6 *older*, 3 *elder*, 3 *better* and 1 *best*). Moreover, the figures include six phrases in which *old* denotes exact age, such as *nine years old* and *five-year-old* (3 x of this type).

⁴² However, Biber, Conrad and Reppen point out that *small*, in contrast to *little*, is comparatively often used in predicative position (1998: 93). They use *little* and *small* to illustrate that the association patterns for seemingly synonymous words may differ both in regard to their

which are frequent in the Victorian material, are not among the most common attributive adjectives in Present-day English, as stated by Biber et al. (1999), nor do they occur at all in my material of contemporary children's fiction. The use of *poor* and *dear* in relation to characters was a tendency of the past: for instance, Wallin-Ashcroft (2000) found the usage frequent with female terms in 18th-century fiction.

As regards the adjectives that are especially frequent with either female or male characters in each set of material, no conclusive observations can be made. Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that the adjectives which are among the most frequent for male characters in the Victorian material (*kind*, *good* and *new*) are more of a permanent or classifying nature, whereas the frequent adjectives typical in descriptions of male and female characters in the contemporary material (*pleased*, *late* and *aware*) denote more temporary or dynamic properties.

The proportion of the instances that the most frequent adjectives constitute for female and male characters in both sets of material is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Proportion of the most frequent adjectives in relation to all adjectival descriptions for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	113/397	28%	87/392	22%
Female	204/461	44%	65/247	26%

The proportion of adjectival descriptions involving the most frequent adjectives is much larger (44%) for female characters in the Victorian material compared to the descriptions of Victorian male characters (28%), and both female and male characters in the contemporary material (26% and 22%), cf. also the type/token ratios in Table 4.1. Hene (1984) points out that when many instances of frequent adjectives are used in the descriptions of characters, we tend to perceive these traits as defining features. In Hene's material, female characters are also described to a greater extent with adjectives that occur frequently in the material overall, and she argues that such usage may add to a stereotypical portrayal of female characters. In contrast, the use of the most frequent adjectives in the descriptions of male characters might be balanced by a greater diversity of adjectival descriptions overall for male characters (Hene 1984: 235). Compare the examples below, where the description of a female character in (1) exhibits two of the most frequent adjectives only (*dear* and *young*), whereas the description of the male character in

grammatical (predicative vs attributive) and lexical (collocative) patterns. Biber, Conrad and Reppen found that when characterising physical size in conversation, *small* in predicative position is used to emphasise the "smallness" of the person being described, in contrast to *little* in attributive position, which "provides an identifying characteristic" (1998: 94).

(2) includes both a frequent adjective, *young*, as well as other, less frequent ones (*slight*, *delicate-looking*) and part descriptions (*bright blue eyes*, *thickly-curling light hair*). If we accept Hene's conclusion, this difference in use illustrates a less informative and descriptive, and thus more stereotypical, description of the female character compared to the description of the male character.

(1) "Try to compose yourself, my *dear young lady*," he said gently; (VIC: leila)

(2) She was only on the first step, when the dining-room door opened, and there came out a *young man*, *slight*, and *delicate-looking*, with bright blue eyes, and thickly-curling light hair. (VIC: daisy)

This pattern is especially prevalent in the Victorian material, but as in Hene's findings, frequent adjectives are also used somewhat more with female than with male characters in my contemporary material (26% compared to 22%).

A closer look at the most frequent adjectives reveals that there are differences among them. *Little*, for instance, is commonly used with nouns and pronouns referring to female characters in both the Victorian and contemporary material. Of the instances of *little*, 76% (56/74) in the Victorian and 68% (17/25) in the contemporary material modify female terms.⁴³ The most frequent collocation with *little* in both sets of material is *little girl* (30 x in the Victorian, and 9 x in the contemporary material). For the most part, *little* modifies terms referring to child characters; ten instances describe adult female characters in the Victorian material (of which 9 is *the little old lady* in *Mrs Overthway's Remembrances*; see below). Noticeably, *little woman* is also used to refer to a child character in *Leila* (2 x). In the contemporary material, five instances of *little* modify terms referring to adult characters, three female and two male. The instances of *little* describing adult characters are classified as denoting appearance and not age of the character (see 5.4).

Another similarity regarding the descriptions of female characters concerns the relatively frequent collocation *old woman*. The semantic prosody of *old woman* is found to be generally negative in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. There is no male counterpart with the same shade of meaning in the material. Persson (1990) makes the same observation about *old woman* carrying negative meaning, although he approaches the pairing of words from a slightly different angle. In Persson's view, the term *woman* may carry negative meaning, which means that there is a semantic fit between *woman* and other negative elements. *Old* is often accompanied by a string of negative adjectives when modifying *woman* (see e.g. (3) below), in

⁴³ A similar result is found in Hene, who contends that *liten*, meaning 'little' or 'small', occurs more often in descriptions of female than in descriptions of male characters (1984: 254).

which case the interplay of negative meaning between *woman* and the other adjectives may even affect *old* negatively (1990: 56). For comparison, it could be noted that the collocation *old lady* is not associated with negative meaning in my material. Since *lady* generally has a neutral or positive meaning, *old* is not negatively affected in the collocation *old lady*; see e.g. (4).

(3) “She’s just a *silly old woman*.” (BNCsub: ACB)

(4) The *old lady* opened the jar and handed one to him. (BNCsub: CAB)

In the contemporary material, the high frequency of *old* is partly accounted for by the consistent use of the phrase *the old man* with reference to three specific characters in the material: 51% of the instances of *old* in the contemporary material occur in the phrase *the old man*. Of these instances, thirteen are found in the narrative *The Forest of the Night*, ten in the text *Henry’s Leg* and eight in the text entitled *Traffic*. In *The Forest of the Night* as well as in *Traffic*, the old man in question is a friendly character, someone who helps the protagonist, whereas in *Henry’s Leg*, the old man is Henry’s antagonist, a competitor in want of the mannequin leg. Example (5) is from *The Forest of the Night*.

(5) He had disobeyed the old man, his ally, and might have forfeited his friendship. (BNCsub: ACV)

As with the use of the phrase *the old man*, the phrase *the little old lady* refers to a main character in one of the Victorian texts, namely in *Mrs Overtheway’s Remembrances*. The protagonist uses the phrase *the little old lady* as a name for the character soon to become her friend. When they have become acquainted, she refers to her as Mrs Overtheway, since she lives across the street from the protagonist.

In addition to *little* in the Victorian corpus, *old*, *young*, *poor* and *dear* are used primarily with reference to female characters. Twenty-six (59%) of the instances of *young* co-occur with *lady*, indicating that *young lady* was a frequent collocation in Victorian children’s fiction (cf. Firth 1957a: 195). In contrast, *young lady* occurs only twice in the contemporary material, which suggests that the collocation is on the wane in British children’s fiction. What is more, both these times *young lady* is used when the referent is being rebuked or met with a condescending attitude, for instance by the furious father in (6). (The few instances in the contemporary material can also be indicative of the term *lady* falling out of use.)

(6) At the white house Emily’s father was furious. “I thought you were told not to go far, *young lady*.” (BNCsub: ACV)

Nine of the 44 instances of *poor* occur with the kinship term *mother*, and almost 40% of all instances of *mother* are modified by *poor* (9/24), which makes *poor mother* a rather frequent collocation in the Victorian material; see e.g. (7).

(7) “Think, Peter, of the grief and anguish it would cause your *poor mother* and me, to see you suffer so dreadful a disgrace -- to feel that you merited it.”
(VIC: peter)

Knowles (1998) discovered the same tendency in his investigation of Victorian children’s fiction. Moreover, he observes that the pattern is absent in his contemporary children’s fiction material (1998: 85–6). The primary function of *poor* in this context is probably to express sympathy and love. However, it can also be related to the didactic purposes of Victorian children’s fiction, where mothers are portrayed as having a reason to be pitied; the fictitious children would probably behave badly, cause disgrace to the family or abandon their mothers (thus representing counter-examples to the ideal). Compare Avery’s observation about the Victorian mother in children’s fiction: “mothers were represented as good, gentle, and wise, *moved to grief* rather than anger at their children’s misdoings, swift to forgive” (1965: 71, my emphasis).

In conclusion, the high frequency of collocations involving the five most frequent adjectives with female characters in the Victorian material lends further support to the pattern of a more stereotypical description of female than male characters in the Victorian material. The contemporary material does not yield the same result.

4.4 Density of adjectival descriptions

The number of adjectives that modify the same noun or pronoun will be referred to as the density of adjectival description, since this feature concerns the stacking of adjectival descriptions in a clause. Such density can be achieved for instance by a string of attributive adjectives (*a reasonably fit, bright boy* BNCsub: AT4), by a sequence of predicative adjectives (*Mrs Lomax was tired, desperate and impatient* BNCsub: BPD), or by combinations of these and/or adjectives in other functions (i.e. postpositive function and predicative adjuncts). Sequenced predicative adjectives are not particularly common in Present-day English, but have a stronger tendency to appear in fiction than in other registers, according to Biber et al. (1999: 518). Chafe (1982: 42–3) observes that conjoined adjective phrases are primarily used in written rather than spoken registers, since they too, like attributive adjectives, are seen as an integrative device. A starting point for the examination of adjectival density was to classify all instances of adjectival descriptions

according to the number of adjectives that are used to modify the same noun or pronoun. Examples of nouns and pronouns being modified by a different number of adjectives are presented in (8)–(10) below, and the distribution of instances across adjectival density is shown in Table 4.6.

(8) **1 Adj:** *Simon* was *good-looking*, Marie thought, as she watched him cut across the beach on a long diagonal towards the kiosk. (BNCsub: ACB)

(9) **2 Adjs:** “Lawks!” said the woman; “well well! *poor young gentleman*, I’m afeard he’s been doing something bad.” (VIC: eric)

(10) **5 Adjs:** *He* was *little, quick, funny*, decidedly *mischievous*, and about fourteen years *old*. (VIC: coral)

Table 4.6. Distribution of adjectival descriptions across adjectival density in the Victorian and contemporary material.

No. of adjs.	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
1	534	62	457	72
2	230	27	132	21
3	57	7	33	5
4	20	2	12	2
5	10	1	5	1
7	7	1	0	0
Total	858	100	639	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 5$, $\chi^2 = 17.93$ (row seven = expected values below 5). When categories of three or more adjectives are collapsed: $p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 14.22$

In both sets of material investigated, more than half the instances occur in modifications with one adjective phrase only: 62% in the Victorian material and 72% in the contemporary material. The higher share of single adjective phrases in the contemporary than in the Victorian material points to differences in the density of adjectival descriptions between children’s fiction from the two periods examined. Similarly, instances occurring in modifications with two adjective phrases are more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (27% vs 21%), together with instances occurring in modifications with three or more adjectives: a combined 11% (94/858) vs 8% (50/639). Thus, the classification of adjectival density in my material suggests that the adjectival descriptions are less dense in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, since descriptions with one adjective phrase are more common in the contemporary material, whereas descriptions with two or more adjective phrases are more common in the Victorian material. This tallies with Anderson’s finding that elaborate modification, such as strings of adjectives, is relatively rare in contemporary children’s fiction (1984: 163).

The ratio of adjective phrases per noun/pronoun further supports the result. Each noun/pronoun is modified by an average of 1.27 (858/676) adject-

tive phrases in the Victorian, and 1.19 (639/538) in the contemporary material. It is possible that this finding is a token of a more general trend in the fictional register overall, since Biber and Clark found that the use of conjoined sequences of adjectives dropped from the 19th to the 20th century (2002: 52).

Another trend in the adjectival descriptions is that co-ordinated adjectives more often denote related attributes in the Victorian than in the contemporary material. Co-ordination of related attributes is also noted by Huddleston and Pullum, although they seem to suggest that this is a pattern reserved for attributive adjectives (2002: 561). Huddleston and Pullum label the phenomenon “intensificatory tautology,” and state that “it is found with a very narrow range of adjective meanings – normally ‘very small’ or ‘very big’,” giving the example *tiny little bird* (2002: 562). Nevertheless, especially in my Victorian material, the phenomenon occurs in predicative position as well as with adjective phrases denoting other qualities than size. Obviously, it is not surprising that adjective phrases describing the same person denote related attributes, instead of antonyms in polar opposition, such as *alive/dead*, for instance. However, although antonyms are rarely used to describe the same character, there are degrees in the synonymy of co-ordinated adjectival descriptions. Co-ordinated adjectival descriptions range from denoting completely disparate qualities, as in (11), to denoting qualities from the same semantic domain, in (12) physical health, to near-synonymy, as in (13).

(11) *She* was *good-natured*, *indolent* and *highly-sexed*. (BNCsub: AT4)

(12) “How is madam, sir?” continued Ready to Mr. Seagrave; “is she better?” “I fear *she* is very *weak* and *ill*,” replied Mr. Seagrave; (VIC: master)

(13) *He* was extremely *skilful* and *clever*, with a boyish character that seemed as if it could never grow older; *ardent*, *sensitive*, and *heedless*, with a quickness of sympathy and tenderness of heart that was increased, rather than blunted, by exercise in scenes of suffering. (VIC: daisy)

In examples such as (13), the co-ordination serves an emphasising function, and should probably not be regarded as a token of lexical diversity. What is being emphasised by the use of two synonymous adjectives is one single quality that the character possesses. In other words, when co-ordinated adjectives denote similar attributes, the structure does not contribute to an exhaustive description. In contrast, when adjectives denoting three disparate qualities are sequenced, as in (11), they enhance the impression of extensive description. Thus, the trend of co-ordinated adjectives being more synonymous in the Victorian than in the contemporary material further supports the finding that there is greater diversity among the adjectival descriptions in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

The distribution across adjectival density for Victorian female characters deviates a great deal from the distribution for the other three groups of characters, regarding both the categories of one and two adjective phrases modifying the same noun/pronoun. Nouns or pronouns referring to Victorian female characters are comparatively rarely modified by one adjective phrase (266/461 or 58%), and strikingly often with two adjective phrases (142/461 or 31%).⁴⁴ The preponderance of two modifying adjective phrases for nouns or pronouns referring to Victorian female characters is principally a result of collocations involving two adjectives, such as *little old* and *poor young*, that are used more often with female than male characters in the Victorian material, as may be seen in 4.3.⁴⁵ As previously stated, collocations may contribute to a perceived stereotyping in the description.

In conclusion, the results point to a tendency for female characters in the Victorian material to be described with adjectival combinations considered to contribute to a stereotypical portrayal, that is, a density of two adjective phrases modifying the same noun/pronoun. Moreover, since stacking adjectives is considered an informational feature, the higher density of adjectival descriptions in the Victorian than in the contemporary material might be indicative of a more complex language structure in Victorian than in contemporary children's fiction.

4.5 The adjective phrase: modifiers, complementation, comparative and superlative constructions

The present section takes a closer look at the phrase-internal modifiers, primarily from a frequency point of view. In relation to modifiers of adjectives, it is suitable to account for comparative and superlative constructions, since there is a resemblance between the meaning of such constructions and degree modifiers (cf. for instance the modified adjective *very pretty* (VIC: daisy) with the analytic comparative construction *ten times more attractive* (VIC: ursula), which both boost the meaning of the adjective). In the following discussion of frequency, the term 'modified adjective phrases' will be used to cover all the forms of modification and complementation accounted for below. Modification within the adjective phrase renders the description

⁴⁴ For one modifying adjective phrase, the figure for Victorian male characters is 68% (268/397), and for contemporary female and male characters 68% and 74%, respectively (168/247 and 289/392). For two modifying adjective phrases the figure is 22% (88/397) for Victorian male characters, and 22% (54/247) and 20% (78/392), respectively for contemporary female and male characters.

⁴⁵ Bäcklund (forthcoming), on the other hand, found strings of modifiers (attributive adjectives and *of*-phrases) to be more common in noun phrases with male (61%) than female reference (39%) in 19th-century English. However, she also states that especially between 1850 and 1870, this is a result of the adjectival collocation *dear old* commonly found in letters between men from the period.

less formulaic, since the quality presented by the adjectival head is elaborated.

The modifiers and constructions used within the adjective phrases belong to the following types. The largest formal category in the present material is that of degree modifiers. This category can be divided into amplifiers and downtoners (see Quirk et al. 1985: 445ff).⁴⁶ Amplifiers are adverbs that boost the meaning of the adjectives, such as *very*, which can be used with almost any adjective, or e.g. *sharply* in *sharply aware* (BNCsub: AC4), in which the selection of amplifier is dependent on the meaning of the adjective. Downtoners, as the term implies, lessen the meaning of the adjective, e.g. *rather deaf* (VIC: overtheway). *Not* is also included in this category.⁴⁷ Other modifiers include descriptive adverbs such as *scrupulously civil* (VIC: eric).⁴⁸ A few nouns can also be used as modifiers of adjectives, especially denoting age, e.g. *scarce seventy years old* (VIC: tom). Adjectival complementation consists mainly of prepositional phrases such as *thick between the ears* (BNCsub: ABX) and *to*-infinitives (*able to preside* VIC: daisy) in the present material. Comparative and superlative constructions are formed with the inflectional endings *-er* and *-est* (e.g. *the coolest new boy* VIC: tom) or with *more* and *most* in periphrastic/analytic comparisons.⁴⁹ Adjectival descriptions can also occur in the comparative construction *as...as* (e.g. *as big as him* BNCsub: ABX).

The frequency of modified adjective phrases is similar in the Victorian and contemporary material: 35% of the adjective phrases are modified in the Victorian (303/858) and 38% in the contemporary material (243/639). What is more, the most frequent items modifying the adjectives in the present study are practically the same in the Victorian and contemporary material: *very*, *not*, *so* and *too*, albeit in a different order of frequency.⁵⁰ *Very* and *so* are more frequent in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, whereas *not* has gained ground in the contemporary material; see Table 4.7.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed distinction of degree modifiers within a cognitive approach, see Paradis (2000). She uses a different terminology, however; amplifiers are called reinforcers and downtoners attenuators (2000: 148).

⁴⁷ Although *not* is traditionally considered a clause negator, the meaning of *not* is relevant for the attribution of a quality denoted by an adjective phrase to a referent of a noun or pronoun (cf. Quirk et al 1985: 776). Therefore, in the present context, *not* has been considered among the other, phrase-internal, modifiers.

⁴⁸ Gullberg (1939: 382ff) and Hene (1984: 29) observe the construction in Swedish, and Gullberg proposes it to be an integrative device of expressing a thought that would normally require co-ordination of two adjective phrases (1939: 384).

⁴⁹ Investigating possible factors influencing the choice of inflectional or periphrastic comparison, Lindquist (2000) studies, for instance, premodification, as well as the syntactic function of the adjective, and co-ordination of adjective phrases (cf. sections 4.6 and 4.4 of the present study). See also Kytö (1996), Kytö and Romaine (1997); (2000), and Leech and Culpeper (1997).

⁵⁰ Complementation in adjective phrases, e.g. *to*-infinitives, which are relatively common, is not taken into account here, since the phrasal and clausal complements denote a wide range of meanings, even though the initial element is the same, e.g. *to*, *of* or *with*.

As regards the fifth most frequent phrase-internal modifier, *enough* holds this position in the Victorian, and *really* in the contemporary material. Except for *not*, these modifiers are all amplifiers. A difference between *enough* and *really* is the level of formality: *really* has a more informal ring to it than *enough*.

Table 4.7. The number of instances of the five most frequent modifiers within the adjective phrases in the Victorian and contemporary material.

Victorian	Contemporary
<i>very</i> 41	<i>not</i> 37
<i>not</i> 31	<i>very</i> 16
<i>so</i> 20	<i>so</i> 12
<i>too</i> 12	<i>too</i> 9
<i>enough</i> 8	<i>really</i> 7

Very is used less extensively in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. To a certain extent, the adjective phrases in the contemporary material tend to be modified by amplifiers ending in *-ly* instead, such as *exceedingly proud* (BNCsub: CH4) or *terribly sorry* (BNCsub: AT4). A difference between the uses of *not* in the two data sets is that the negation itself is more often amplified in the Victorian material, and attenuated in the contemporary material. Compare *not at all well* (VIC: daisy) and *not the least bit ill-natured* (VIC: leila) from the Victorian material, with *not as daft as* (BNCsub: ACB) or *not very popular* (BNCsub: ACV) from the contemporary material (see Quirk et al 1985: 785, 791).⁵¹ Thus, the negated adjective phrases in the Victorian material tend to represent more extreme statements, whereas the negated adjective phrases in the contemporary material are more moderate.

Gender variation as regards modified adjective phrases is displayed in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Proportion of modified adjective phrases in relation to all adjectival descriptions for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	168/397	42%	153/392	39%
Female	135/461	29%	89/247	36%

⁵¹ Syntactically, in the latter examples, *not* is analysed as modifying the comparative construction or the adverb of degree instead of the other way around. However, the semantic interpretation of negated adjective phrases being attenuated is the same (see Quirk et al 1985: 791–2).

The descriptions of female characters in the Victorian material are the least modified (29%) of the descriptions for the three groups of characters (cf. the contrast for part descriptions in 6.2.4). In the contemporary material, the number of modified adjective phrases is more balanced between male and female characters (39% vs 36%). These results further suggest that the adjectival descriptions are more similar between the female and male characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

4.6 Syntactic function

The syntactic functions considered in the present study were introduced in 3.3.1: attributive (*a busy man*, VIC: daisy), predicative (*Leila was asleep*, VIC: leila) and postpositive function (*the woman opposite*, BNCsub: ABX), and the function of predicative adjunct (*the father said, greyer than ever*, BNCsub: CH4). This section presents and discusses the results from the classification. In general, the two most common functions of adjectives are, first, the attributive function and, second, the predicative function. Attributive function serves the primary purpose of packing additional information into noun phrases, whereas predicative adjectives serve as verbal complements in clausal presentations of information (Biber et al. 1999: 506–7). Thus, attributive adjectives are seen as an integrative device (Chafe 1982: 41; see also Biber 1988: 237), since they integrate the information carried by the adjective into the noun phrase. The main purpose of a clause containing a predicative adjective is to describe or characterise the referent in subject or object position (see e.g. Biber, Conrad and Reppen's discussion of the use of *small* in predicative, vs *little* in attributive position, 1998: 94). In contrast, descriptions given by attributive adjectives present already known information (or present it as already known), while the purpose of the clause may be different. According to the principle of end-focus, a predicative adjective carries more important information than does an attributive adjective, since the most important information in a clause tends to appear at the end (for further reading on information packaging, see Biber et al. 1999: 896–964; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1365–1447; Quirk et al. 1985: 1353–1419). In other words, adjectives in attributive function may contribute to less weight being paid to the descriptions, whereas predicative function puts the description of the character more in focus (see *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* 1990: 64–5; Hene 1984: 30, 252). Compare *beloved* in attributive function in (14), and predicative function in (15).

(14) Side by side, without a word, the parents knelt down, and with eyes wet with tears of joyfulness, poured out their hearts in passionate prayer for their young and *beloved* boys. (VIC: eric)

(15) But Peterkin's mischief was almost always harmless, else *he* could not have been so much *beloved* as he was. (VIC: coral)

Obviously, other syntactic factors also influence how we perceive an adjectival description of a character, for instance what kind of lexical item is being described, noun or pronoun. Moreover, whether the modified noun is in subject or object/complement position, or whether the noun phrase is definite or indefinite influences our perception of the information value of attributive adjectives. Nevertheless, since the present study focuses on adjectives, I have limited the examination to a classification of the syntactic function of the adjective phrases.⁵²

The distribution of adjective phrases across syntactic functions in the Victorian and the contemporary material is given in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Distribution of adjective phrases across syntactic functions in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Attributive	501	58	212	33
Predicative	300	35	396	62
Postpositive	16	2	9	1
Pred. adjunct	41	5	22	3
Total	858	100	639	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 3$, $\chi^2 = 108.35$

Table 4.9 shows that attributive position is more frequent than predicative in the Victorian material (58%), whereas predicative position is more frequent than attributive in the contemporary material (62%). The decrease in use of attributive adjectives between the 19th and the 20th century for the fictional register is also attested in Biber and Clark (2002: 51). According to previous research (e.g. Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998: 94; Hene 1984: 30), the preponderance of predicative adjectives in the contemporary material would suggest that there is more focus on the descriptions of characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

However, it is also possible that the diachronic differences are due to a more general development of writing styles in British children's fiction,

⁵² I have not considered whether the adjective phrases are restricted to attributive-only or never-attributive position (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 553–561). The reasons for adjective phrases to be attributive-only or never-attributive vary from morphological (e.g. *asleep*, *aware*), to syntactic (e.g. adjectives with obligatory complementation such as *able to*, *devoid of*) or semantic. The semantic distinction is evident in the classification into semantic domains; Huddleston and Pullum list some adjective phrases denoting medical health or condition as never-attributive, e.g. *well*, and attributive-only includes degree and qualifying attributes such as *true mother*, VIC: tom, as well as temporal and locative attributes, e.g. *new friend*, VIC: tom (2002: 555–560; the examples are from my data). Never-attributives denoting health are classified in the domain of Physical State (5.6), and degree, temporal and locative in attributive-only position in the domain of Situation (5.8).

progressing from formal to less formal.⁵³ Predicative adjectives are traditionally considered a feature of informal, more speech-related language, whereas attributive adjectives are associated with an informational and more formal style (cf. Chafe 1982: 42; Biber 1988: 237). Thus, since predicative adjectives would probably be easier to process than attributive ones, the shift might also reflect an adaptation process where children’s reading comprehension skills are taken into account more in contemporary than in Victorian children’s fiction. The use of the smaller syntactic categories of postpositive adjectives and predicative adjuncts further suggests a development towards less formal usage, since the use of adjectives in these positions decreases slightly over time (from a combined 7% to 5%). Both postpositive position and the position as predicative adjunct represent a more convoluted way of presenting information; compare the predicative use of *happy* in (16) and its use as a predicative adjunct in (17).

(16) *He* was perfectly *happy* that way, or had been up to now, but it wasn’t a body to put to competition. (BNCsub: AT4)

(17) His *mother* driving the car, so *happy*, *young-looking* and fashionably *dressed* and his father, a big, confident man in a smart suit, smiling and turning round to say something to Simon in the back seat. (BNCsub: ACB)

Another possible explanation for the large share of attributive adjective phrases found in the Victorian material is the extensive use of collocations, which tend to be used to a greater extent with female characters, such as *poor little* or *dear young*, commented on in sections 4.3 and 4.4. Table 4.10 further illustrates the tendency of attributive adjective phrases to be used to a greater extent to modify female than male characters in the Victorian material.

Table 4.10. Distribution of adjective phrases across syntactic functions for female and male characters in the Victorian material.

	Female	%	Male	%
Attributive	294	64	207	52
Predicative	135	29	165	42
Postpositive	9	2	7	2
Pred. adjunct	23	5	18	5
Total	461	100	397	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 3$, $\chi^2 = 14.27$

As many as 64% of the adjective phrases describing Victorian female characters occur in attributive function, compared to 52% for Victorian male

⁵³ Compare Gordon (1966: 155), who states that “much ‘popular’ nineteenth-century prose” (which would entail Victorian children’s fiction) “affected an elaboration of vocabulary and sentence-structure that today sounds absurdly pompous” (see also Görlach 1999: 159).

characters. The same pattern is found in the contemporary material although the variation is slight and not statistically significant.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, both results are in contrast to Hene's finding that predicative use of adjectives is more common with female than male characters (1984: 252). Thus, Hene's finding supports the proposition that female characters are described extensively in children's fiction (see Nikolajeva 2002: 189), whereas the present investigation suggests that another pattern may be relevant in British children's fiction. This pattern will become even clearer as the main points from sections 4.2 through 4.6 are reiterated in a concluding summary.

4.7 Summary

The present chapter has primarily dealt with features of adjectival description that can be related to the idea of formulaic descriptions versus descriptions that are more diverse or complex. Formulaic descriptions contribute to the image of the character as a stereotype, whereas more diverse descriptions contribute to the perception of characters as complex, resembling real-life individuals. The features investigated are summed up in Table 4.11, which indicates on which side of the simplified scale of stereotypical to complex the investigated features have been placed. The features are: type/token ratio, use of the most frequent adjectives, collocations with adjectives as shown by the examination of adjectival density, modification within the adjective phrases, and syntactic function.

Table 4.11. Summary of features investigated in Chapter 4.

Stereotypical	Complex
--	Diversity as indicated by type/token ratio
Extensive use of the most frequent adjectives	--
Two adjectives collocating	--
--	Modified AdjPs = less formulaic expressions
Attributive function	Predicative function

As expected, the results of the features examined in the present chapter suggested that the adjectival descriptions found in the Victorian material tended to display features considered to contribute to a stereotypical description of characters. Conversely, the adjectival descriptions of characters in the contemporary material generally displayed features that can be regarded as contributing to more dynamic and complex descriptions. Moreover, there were greater similarities between the descriptions of female and male characters in

⁵⁴ The proportions of adjective phrases in attributive function in the contemporary material are 35% (86/247) for female, and 32% (126/392) for male characters. The proportions in predicative function are 61% (150/247) for female, and 63% (246/392) for male characters.

the contemporary than in the Victorian material. The descriptions of male characters in the Victorian material resembled the descriptions in the contemporary material in many ways concerning the features shown in Table 4.11, whereas the descriptions of female characters in the Victorian material were found to be the most stereotypical.

In the type/token ratio, Victorian female characters scored the lowest, 0.34, followed by Victorian male characters, 0.51, contemporary male characters, 0.52, and contemporary female characters, 0.57. As for the proportion of the most frequent adjectives in the descriptions, the order was reversed in the contemporary material; Victorian female characters showed the highest figure, 44%, followed by Victorian male characters, 28%, contemporary female characters, 26%, and contemporary male characters, 22%.

The adjectival descriptions were generally denser in the Victorian material; especially collocations with two adjectives were typical in descriptions of Victorian female characters. This feature was suggested to contribute to stereotypical descriptions of characters, since the adjectival collocations may function as lexical stereotypes, that is, fixed expressions in the language (cf. Bosch 1985). For the proportion of adjective phrases with internal modification, descriptions of Victorian female characters scored the lowest (29%), followed by descriptions of contemporary female (36%), contemporary male (39%) and Victorian male characters (42%). Attributive adjective phrases typically occurred in descriptions of Victorian female characters and predicative adjective phrases typically in descriptions of contemporary male characters.

In conclusion, the present chapter has dealt with how adjectival descriptions are used in the portrayal of female and male characters. The findings point to differences concerning the degree of stereotyping in the adjectival descriptions, as revealed by the features accounted for above. The most stereotypical descriptions were found in the representation of Victorian female characters. Moreover, it was shown that the adjectival descriptions displayed less formal and complex features in the contemporary than the Victorian material, which might be indicative of Present-day English being less formal than 19th-century English overall.

The findings from the Victorian material correlate for the most part with what Bäcklund (forthcoming) found regarding adjectival descriptions in 19th-century English more generally. In contrast, my findings are not always in concordance with what Hene revealed about the descriptions of female and male characters in children's books published in Sweden during the 1970s. For instance, Hene found that more focus was placed on the descriptions of female than male characters in contemporary children's fiction, by means of a greater use of predicative adjectives. Possibly, the discrepancy between her findings and mine can be taken as an indication that adjectival descriptions of children's fiction have continued to develop towards a more similar portrayal of the female and male characters in the late 20th century as

well, since the portrayal of characters was more similar in my material than in that of Hene's study. Alternatively, this finding points to structural differences between the languages and/or differences in literary tradition.

5 Semantic domains

5.1 Introduction

The adjective phrases in the data have been classified as belonging to different semantic domains, based on the qualities that the adjective phrases denote. The purpose is to reveal what aspects of the characters the authors have chosen to focus on in the descriptions. The domains are the intrapersonal Age, Appearance, Mental Property and Physical State, which focus on the character as an individual, and the interpersonal Attitude, Situation and Sociability, which consider the character in relation to other characters (based on Bäcklund (forthcoming) and Hene (1984); see further 3.4.1). (Intra- and interpersonal domains will not be discussed in terms of larger groupings in what follows.) Most of the semantic domains are also divided into sub-domains (see 3.4.1 and below in this chapter). Overall distributions across the domains are the primary concern. In addition, I take the distribution across sub-domains into account, and examine the adjective phrases found in the domain closely. These latter micro-level analyses will reveal the kind of adjective phrases used to denote the qualities of the characters, by considering the quantifiable variables of syntactic function, evaluative meaning and, in certain cases, the variable of permanence (i.e. whether the feature is presented as a temporary or a permanent quality), as well as other domain-specific features distinguished.

I will show that gender differences are more pronounced in the Victorian than in the contemporary material regarding the adjectival descriptions of characters as classified in semantic domains. Moreover, the descriptions of female characters show both great diachronic differences for some domains, and conspicuous diachronic stability in other domains. The adjectival descriptions of male characters, on the other hand, fall between these two extremes, and show moderate change in all semantic domains distinguished.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section (5.2) will account for overall diachronic and gender differences and similarities between the Victorian and the contemporary material. The section first treats overall diachronic variation, and then gender variation within the Victorian and the contemporary material. I will also compare the findings of the present study with those of other related studies. The concluding sub-section presents a synthesis of the findings dealt with in 5.2. Sections 5.3–5.9 survey each of the semantic domains in turn, addressing both qualitative and quantitative

findings. In each section, the adjectives in the domains are presented and discussed. To facilitate a clear overview and comparison, primarily the heads of the adjective phrases (subsuming comparative and superlative forms) are given (e.g. *devoid* for the phrase *devoid of fear*), and those that occur in other domains as well are marked in italics. A figure follows the adjective if it is used more than once, and indicates how many times it occurs. In addition, the type/token ratios for each of the four groups of characters (Victorian female, Victorian male, contemporary female, and contemporary male) for each domain or sub-domain are given, in order to illuminate the diversity among the adjectival descriptions for each group of character in each domain (or sub-domain). Only tables accounting for statistically significant results are presented (see 1.4.2). The primary focus is on diachronic variation. However, patterns deviating from the overall diachronic pattern for any of the four groups of characters are pointed out.

5.2 Overall differences and similarities

5.2.1 Diachronic variation

The distribution of adjective phrases across the semantic domains is relatively stable across the Victorian and the contemporary material; see Table 5.1. This table shows that the largest domains in the Victorian material are Mental Property and Age, with an equal proportion of 24%, followed by Sociability (14%) and Appearance (12%). The four largest domains in the contemporary material are the same as in the Victorian material, although the proportions differ: Mental Property (36%), Age (20%), followed by Appearance (15%), and Sociability with a proportion similar to the Victorian material (14%). The distribution across domains is also visually presented in Figure 1.

Table 5.1. Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Age	206	24	125	20
Appearance	104	12	94	15
Mental Property	206	24	232	36
Physical State	62	7	43	7
Attitude	78	9	16	3
Situation	85	10	39	6
Sociability	117	14	90	14
Total	858	100	639	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 8095.08$

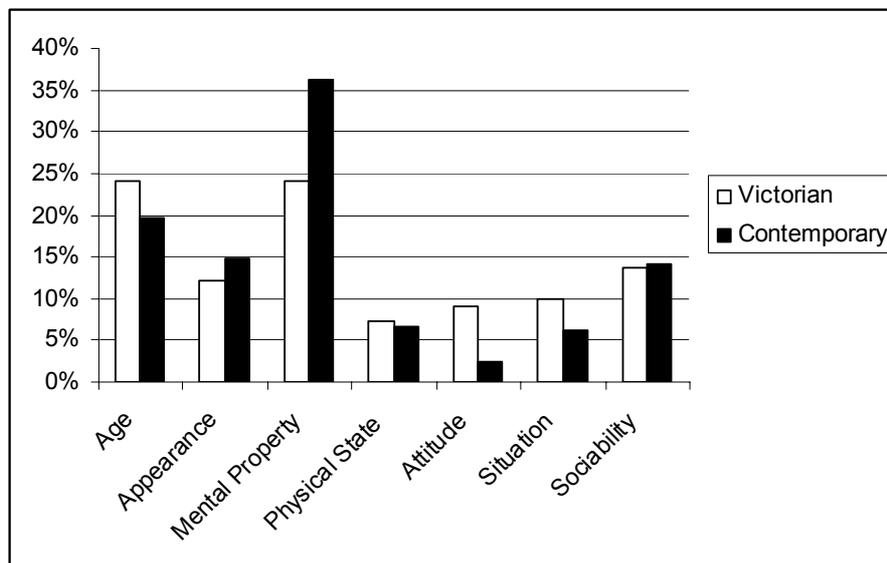


Figure 1. Distribution of adjective phrases (based on raw figures) across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.

As mentioned, Mental Property is the largest domain in both the Victorian (24%) and the contemporary (36%) material. In addition, it is the largest domain in two studies comparable to the present one: Bäcklund’s forthcoming study on 19th-century English (23%) and Hene’s (1984) study on children’s fiction published in Swedish in the 1970s (33%).⁵⁵ That Mental Property is such a large domain in all three studies suggests that mental qualities are considered important features of characters to describe in different kinds of texts. Further, the higher frequency of mental property descriptions in the studies of present-day material compared to 19th-century material suggests that the importance has increased over time. In addition, Nikolajeva’s (2002) proposition that external rather than internal orientation tends to occur “in older rather than in contemporary texts” (2002: 182) would help to account for the smaller proportion of adjective phrases denoting mental, that is, internal, properties in the Victorian compared to the contemporary material.

The focus on age (the second largest domain) in the present material is in all likelihood accounted for by the specific genre examined, that is, chil-

⁵⁵ The largest domains in Hene (1984: 253) are Mental Property (33%), Sociability (15%) and Appearance (15%), whereas the largest domains in Bäcklund (forthcoming) are Mental Property (23%), Age (21%) and Attitude (13%), calculated on the figures in Bäcklund’s Tables 6a, 6b, 7a and 7b. The explanation for Attitude being such a large domain in Bäcklund is that her material also contains descriptions of real people from letters, in addition to descriptions of characters in fictional texts. It is likely that adjective phrases that convey the attitude of a speaker, or occur in address, are rarer in fictional material, since such material for a large part consists of narrative text.

dren's fiction. Age tends to be a property of greater relevance in childhood than later on in life (as there are greater differences between a five-year-old and a ten-year-old than between a thirty-year-old and a thirty-five-year-old, for instance).

Appearance and sociability (the third and fourth largest domains) are aspects that authors tend to focus on when describing characters adjectivally, as suggested by the present study, as well as by Bäcklund (forthcoming), and Hene (1984). A reason why appearance is extensively described is perhaps because it helps the reader to visualise the characters (cf. Nikolajeva 2002: 184). The quality of sociability probably receives a lot of description because a character's interaction with other characters is considered important.

As revealed by the four largest domains in both sets of material, there is little diachronic variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material as regards which aspects represent the largest proportion of adjectival descriptions. The reason may be that mental properties, appearance and sociability are features that are of universal interest, and age is a feature of particular interest in a genre aimed at child readers.

There are, however, some differences regarding proportionate frequencies of occurrence between the two periods investigated. Age is described to a greater extent in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (24% compared to 20%)⁵⁶, together with Attitude (9% compared to 3%), and Situation (10% vs 6%); an example of an adjective describing situation from the Victorian material is given in (1).

(1) Observe one of those fellows, the instant an *educated gentleman* appears in the circle of which he is the attraction; how his eye will quail and his voice sink, and he will endeavour to sneak away before his true character is exposed. (VIC: peter)

As discussed earlier (section 4.3), the frequent adjectives *little* and *old* account for a large share of the adjective phrases denoting age in the Victorian material, and in addition to denoting age, *little* and *old* occur, for instance, in contexts where the primary function is rather to add emotive colouring. However, since these uses are for the most part impossible to distinguish from one another, all instances were classified in the domain of Age, unless they specifically denoted another aspect of a character, such as *little* denoting the size of adult characters (see further below in the discussion of each domain). Like *little* and *old*, *dear* and *poor* are also among the most frequent adjectives in the Victorian material (see 4.3). *Dear* and *poor* are classified as denoting attitude (for the most part; see 5.7), and constitute the absolute majority of instances in the domain of Attitude for the Victorian material. In

⁵⁶ A similar result is presented by Bäcklund, who also found Age to be a feature extensively described for characters in the 19th century (21% of Bäcklund's instances occurred in the domain of Age).

contrast, these adjectives are absent in the contemporary material (see further 5.7), which explains why Attitude is a larger domain in the Victorian than in the contemporary material. The larger share of adjectives denoting situation in the Victorian material is probably a result of the more class-conscious society of the 19th century (see e.g. Phillipps 1984: 143), where people were defined according to their situational status; a strategy which would be mirrored in children's fiction of the time.

Two domains exhibit a greater proportion of instances in the contemporary compared to the Victorian material: Appearance (15% vs 12%), and above all, Mental Property (36% compared to 24%). The high frequency of adjective phrases denoting mental qualities in the contemporary material suggests that contemporary children's fiction is more internally oriented than Victorian children's fiction. This development is also proposed to be a general trend in the history of children's fiction (cf. Nikolajeva 2002: 197). Example (2) represents a description of mental properties from the contemporary material.

(2) If *Marie* hadn't been so *desperate* to escape from that room, she wouldn't have suggested taking Bella out in her wheelchair. (BNCsub: ACB)

5.2.2 Gender variation in the Victorian material

The gender variation in the Victorian material is noticeable. The domains with a greater proportion of adjectival descriptions for female than male characters are Age, Appearance, and to a lesser extent, Attitude and Sociability. The domains where there is a predominance of adjective phrases describing male characters are Mental Property, Situation and to a certain extent, Physical State. The figures are given in Table 5.2, and a diagram showing the distribution is presented in Figure 2.

Table 5.2. Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.

	Female	%	Male	%
Age	145	31	61	15
Appearance	68	15	36	9
Mental Property	75	16	131	33
Physical State	29	6	33	8
Attitude	47	10	31	8
Situation	33	7	52	13
Sociability	64	14	53	13
Total	461	99	397	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 4756.72$

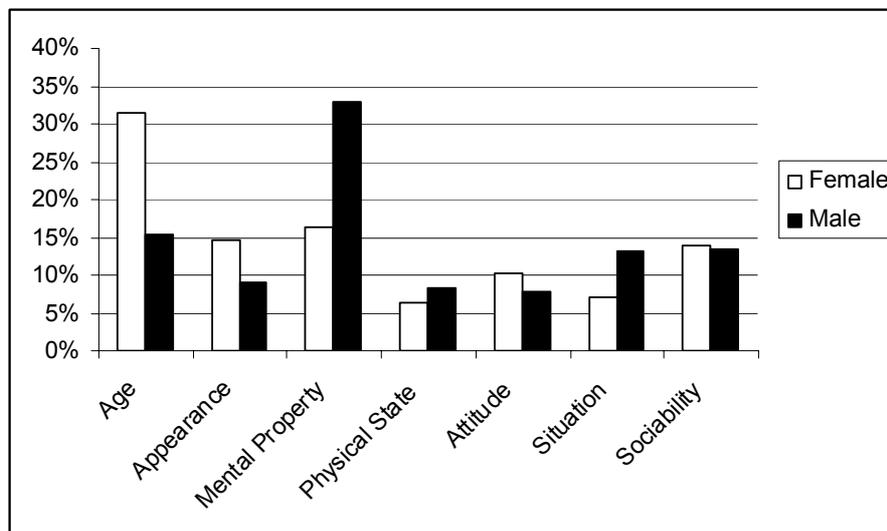


Figure 2. Distribution of adjective phrases (based on raw figures) across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.

The dominance of adjective phrases describing female characters in the domain of Age is due to the more frequent use of *old* and *little* with female than with male characters (see 4.3 and 5.3). Appearance is a feature traditionally considered to belong to the female sphere (see e.g. Hene 1984: 9), so it is not surprising that appearance is described more extensively for female characters in the Victorian material. The large difference between the share of adjective phrases that describe mental property for male and female characters (33% compared to 16%) is indicative of the descriptions of male characters focusing more on inner than outer qualities. Consequently, the portrayal of female characters in Victorian children's fiction can be considered less deep, since inner qualities are not described to the same extent as for male characters. Instead, descriptions of female characters in the Victorian material tend to focus on surface features, such as appearance. Example (3) shows a description of appearance, that is, an outer feature, of a female character in the Victorian material and example (4) adjective phrases denoting mental properties, that is, inner qualities, for a male character.

(3) The latter good soul was a *gaunt angular woman*, who, with an old black bonnet on the top of her head, the strings dangling about her shoulders, and her gown tucked through her pocket-holes, went clattering about the dairy, cheese-room, and yard in high pattens. (VIC: tom)

(4) "Where is that *brave, kind man*?" cried she, "that I may bless him and thank him." (VIC: master)

The greater number of adjective phrases that describe situation for male characters suggests that it was more important in Victorian times to point out the positions of male characters, for instance regarding economic and professional status, owing to the unequal gender structure in the class-conscious society of the 19th century (see also Bäcklund, forthcoming).

Since Bäcklund (forthcoming) used a classificatory model similar to the present one to investigate how people and characters were described using adjectival expressions in 19th-century English, it is of interest to compare the results from the Victorian material with her study. Bäcklund investigated attributive adjectives and *of*-phrases modifying a selected set of female and male terms in 19th-century English. The results from Bäcklund's study are shown in Table 5.2b.⁵⁷

Table 5.2b. The results from Bäcklund (forthcoming) adapted to the present model.

	Female	%	Male	%
Age	133	22	165	21
Appearance	64	10	36	5
Mental Property	132	21	199	26
Physical State	8	1	21	3
Attitude	64+79	23	78+99	23
Situation	47+15	10	98+4	13
Sociability	76	12	73	9
Total	618	99	773	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 10379.94$

The female and male variation patterns are similar in Bäcklund's study and mine. As in the present study, the domains with female predominance in Bäcklund are above all Appearance and Sociability. A roughly equal proportion of the adjective phrases denotes age and attitude for male and female characters in Bäcklund's material, whereas, as in the present study, the domains Mental Property, Physical State and Situation all have male predominance. The correlation between Bäcklund's findings and the present study suggests that similar patterns of descriptions were used in a variety of 19th-century texts (drama, fiction and letters), including Victorian children's fiction. This may lead to the assumption that the range of aspects typically described for male and female characters, as well as real-life individuals in the 19th century, was rather limited.

⁵⁷ For the present comparison with the results from my study, Bäcklund's category of Ability has been omitted, owing to the scarcity of instances of adjective phrases used to denote ability in my material. Bäcklund had 25 male and three female instances of adjectives denoting ability. Moreover, Bäcklund used a separate category of Nationality, while this category was subsumed under the category of Situation in the present study. Consequently, for the present comparison, her Nationality domain was merged with her domain of Situation. Finally, my category of Attitude covers both of Bäcklund's categories Address and Attitude.

5.2.3 Gender variation in the contemporary material

A major difference between the Victorian and the contemporary material is that there is less variation in the descriptions of male and female characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. The distribution across semantic domains in the contemporary material is shown in Table 5.3 and Figure 3. The only resemblance between this distribution and that of the Victorian material is the male predominance in Physical State.

Table 5.3. Distribution of adjective phrases across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.

	Female	%	Male	%
Age	47	19	78	20
Appearance	37	15	57	15
Mental Property	91	37	141	36
Physical State	13	5	30	8
Attitude	6	2	10	3
Situation	18	7	21	5
Sociability	35	14	55	14
Total	247	99	392	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 3351.23$

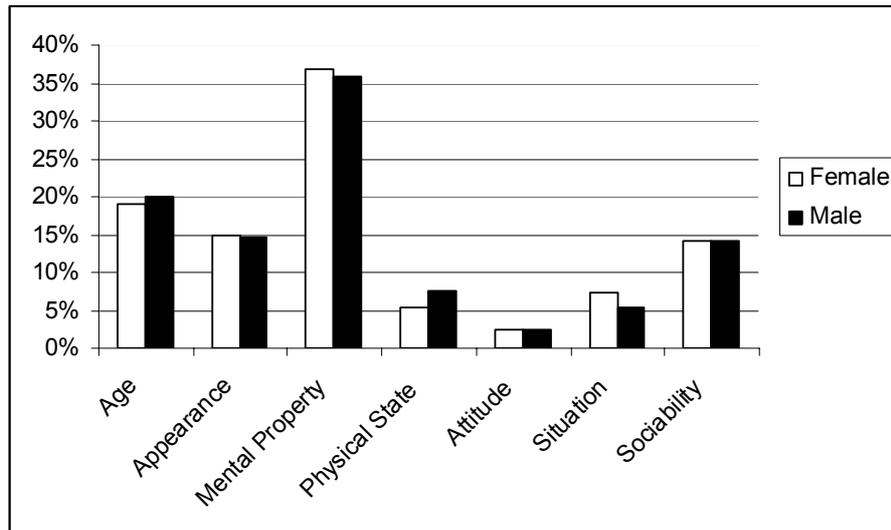


Figure 3. Distribution of adjective phrases (based on raw figures) across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.

The most salient result shown in Table 5.3 and Figure 3 is that the distribution of adjective phrases across different semantic domains is remarkably similar for male and female characters in the contemporary material. The greatest difference is found in the Physical State domain, where male charac-

ters are described with a slightly larger share of instances than female characters (8% vs 5%), and the domain of Situation, where a somewhat larger share of instances describe female than male characters (7% vs 5%).

In order to compare the findings of the present study with findings from another study dealing with descriptions of characters in contemporary children's literature, the results from Hene's (1984) study were adapted to fit the present model. The main difference between Hene's study and mine lies in the methods of data retrieval. Hene collected all adjectival, as well as adverbial, expressions related to descriptions of all characters she came across in the text samples. Consequently, for the results of distribution across semantic domains, Hene's material includes adverbial descriptions as well as part descriptions.⁵⁸ To make the data more comparable, the categories Hene reserved primarily for adverbials and part descriptions were weeded out from the present analysis: Pace and Movements (304 female and 569 male instances) and Facial Expressions (103 female and 184 male instances).⁵⁹ The results from Hene (1984) are given in Table 5.3b.

Table 5.3b. The results from Hene (1984: 66–7) adapted to the present model.

	Female	%	Male	%
Age	105	5	156	4
Appearance	348	16	844	21
Mental Property	953	43	1538	39
Physical State	176	8	213	5
Attitude	104	5	160	4
Situation	10+131	6	38+316	9
Sociability	401	18	709	18
Total	2228	101	3974	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 23418.40$

The main similarity between Hene's material and mine is that a greater number of domains tend to contain a majority of adjective phrases describing female rather than male characters. However, the domains with female dominance vary between Hene's and the present study. The domain with a female preponderance in my contemporary material is above all Situation, in contrast to Hene's material, which offers a completely different picture. Situation, together with Appearance contain a majority of adjective phrases describing male characters in Hene's study. The domains with a female pre-

⁵⁸ Adverbial descriptions include for instance *tillade han sorgset* 'he added in a sad voice', and part descriptions include *hans allvarliga, men öppna ansikte* 'his serious but open face' (Hene 1984: 146).

⁵⁹ Moreover, Hene's category of Ability is omitted in the comparison (71 female and 141 male instances), owing to the scarcity of adjective phrases denoting ability in the present material. Further, Hene's category of Nationality, Race and Sex is included in the counts for the category of Situation, since Nationality is classified as a sub-domain of Situation in the present study (see 3.4.1). A final difference is that my category of Attitude is called Address in Hene's study.

ponderance in Hene's material are primarily Mental Property and Physical State, whereas Physical State is a larger domain for male characters in the present study. Moreover, the differences between descriptions of female and male characters are more pronounced in Hene's material than in my contemporary material.

In conclusion, an overall comparison of adjective phrases in different semantic domains from Hene's and the present study reveals no similar patterns regarding what aspects are typically described for female and male characters between children's books published in Swedish in the 1970s and British children's books published mainly in the 1980s and early 1990s. These differences in aspects described may be taken as an indication that contemporary children's fiction is characterised by a great diversity in the adjectival descriptions, and no aspect is typically described for either male or female characters.

5.2.4 Summary and concluding discussion

In sum, the overall findings concerning diachronic variation presented in section 5.2 showed that Mental Property (24% in the Victorian, and 36% in the contemporary material) was the largest, and Age (24% in the Victorian, and 20% in the contemporary material) the second largest semantic domain in the material. In the Victorian material, male characters were typically described with adjective phrases denoting internal qualities, such as mental properties. Conversely, female characters were often described with adjective phrases denoting external attributes such as appearance. In the contemporary material, the most striking feature was the even distribution across domains between female and male characters. However, physical aspects of male characters were described slightly more often than those of female characters. In other words, the differences between male and female characters were much more pronounced in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

Finally, the distribution across semantic domains will be summarised from a different perspective. By comparing the results from the sub-sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, some interesting results regarding the diachronic development of gender differences were revealed. The figures that form the bases of these comparisons are given in Table 5.4. These percentages together with raw figures are also given separately in the discussion of each domain in 5.3-5.9. The distribution across domains for female characters is also shown in Figure 4, and for male characters in Figure 5 (see p. 94).

Table 5.4. Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for female and male characters in both sets of material investigated.

	Vic. female	Cont. female	Vic. male	Cont. male
Age	31	19	15	20
Appearance	15	15	9	15
Mental Property	16	37	33	36
Physical State	6	5	8	8
Attitude	10	2	8	3
Situation	7	7	13	5
Sociability	14	14	13	14
Total	99	99	99	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, χ^2 based on the raw figures: for the female-female comp. = 3797.72; for the male-male comp. = 4325.34

The findings from the comparison of female characters in the Victorian and the contemporary material showed that Age and Attitude were larger domains in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, owing to the frequent use of four adjectives: *little*, *young*, *poor* and *dear*. Attitude also exhibited great variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material for male characters, suggesting that the variation is primarily diachronic and not gender-related. The domains of Appearance, Physical State, Situation and Sociability revealed practically no diachronic development in the descriptions of female characters, suggesting that such qualities are described to a similar extent in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. In contrast, the Mental Property domain showed great diachronic variation, in that contemporary female characters were described extensively with adjective phrases from the Mental Property domain (37%), compared to Victorian female characters (16%). Consequently, mental properties seem to have gained importance in the descriptions of female characters in British children's fiction.

For male characters, moderate diachronic differences were found in most domains. The largest difference was found in the domain of Situation, with male characters being described more extensively in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (13% vs 5%). The domains of Physical State and Sociability, on the other hand, accounted for an approximately equal share of the descriptions for Victorian and contemporary male characters. Consequently, the set of aspects of male characters being described remains relatively stable between the Victorian and the contemporary material. Conversely, the descriptions of female characters have changed considerably regarding the distribution of certain aspects such as mental properties, or remained practically the same, for instance regarding the distribution of adjective phrases denoting situation. This development can also be viewed as the descriptions of contemporary female characters being adapted to the male pattern of description.

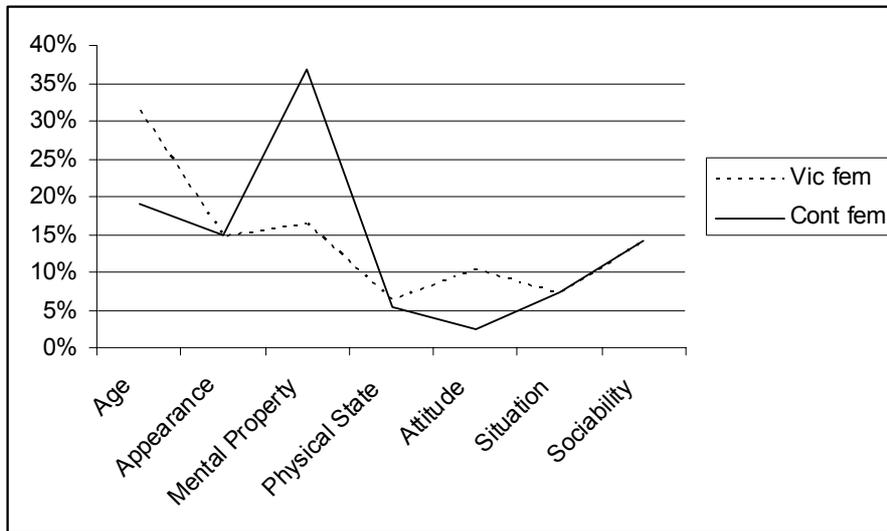


Figure 4. Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for female characters in both sets of material investigated.

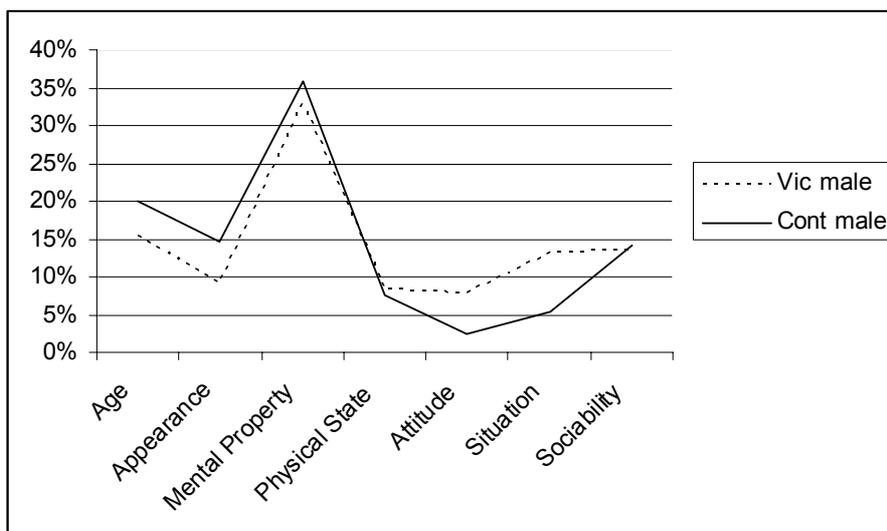


Figure 5. Percentages of adjective phrases across the semantic domains for male characters in both sets of material investigated.

In conclusion, overall similarities regarding the distribution across domains were more common than differences, suggesting little diachronic variation overall. Gender variation was pronounced in the Victorian material, and slight in the contemporary material. The descriptions of female characters showed either great diachronic development or practically none. The de-

scriptions of male characters for the most part exhibited moderate variation in the distribution across domains.

5.3 Age

The first of the intrapersonal semantic domains to be accounted for is Age. This is a large domain in both sets of material investigated (24% in the Victorian, and 20% in the contemporary material), although the number of different adjectives is low. Consequently, the type/token ratios in this domain exhibit the lowest figures for all four groups of characters. Moreover, these instances normally carry little evaluative meaning. The adjectives classified as belonging to the Age domain are given in List 1.

List 1. Adjectives in the semantic domain of Age. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
grown-up	grown-up	<i>little</i> 14	ancient
<i>little</i> 47	<i>little</i> 17	middle-aged 2	<i>big</i>
<i>old</i> 61	<i>old</i> 30	<i>old</i> 21	<i>little</i> 6
young 36	<i>small</i> 5	<i>small</i> 5	middle-aged 3
	young 8	young 5	<i>old</i> 54
			<i>small</i> 5
			young 8
t/t ratio 0.03 (4/145)	t/t ratio 0.08 (5/61)	t/t ratio 0.11 (5/47)	t/t ratio 0.09 (7/78)

The most frequent adjectives in both the Victorian and the contemporary material (see 4.3) primarily denote age, such as *little*, *old*, *small* and *young*.⁶⁰ In addition, the domain of Age comprises a few instances of *grown-up* in the Victorian material, and *middle-aged*, *ancient* and the non-inherent⁶¹ use of *big* in *big brother* (BNCsub: A1C) in the contemporary material. There are no sub-domains in the Age domain, since all adjective phrases denote attributes on the same scale, ranging from childhood to adulthood. A suggested age continuum of the adjectives denoting age in the present material is given in Figure 6.⁶² As is to be expected in literature for children, most instances in the material belong to the young side of the scale, by virtue of many characters being children or teenagers.

⁶⁰ The frequent adjectives *little*, *small* and *old* are classified as belonging to the domain of Age unless the context clearly suggests that the instance belongs to some other semantic domain. *Little* and *small* may refer to the physique of a character, for example, all instances of *little* or *small* that describe adult characters, in which case the instance is classified in the category of Appearance. A few special uses of *old* belong to the domains of Attitude and Situation, respectively (see further in each domain).

⁶¹ Non-inherent use does not characterise the referent of the noun directly, and is mainly restricted to attributive function (Quirk et al. 1985: 428–9).

⁶² Expressions denoting exact age, such as *twelve-year-old*, are not included in Figure 6.

little	small		grown-up	old	ancient
big	young		middle-aged		

Figure 6. Age continuum from ‘young’ to ‘old’ of the adjectives in the domain of Age.

As concerns the syntactic function of the adjective phrases in the domain of Age, the absolute majority (87% in both sets of material) occur in attributive function (180/206 in the Victorian and 109/125 in the contemporary material), which is an indication that the age of a character is seldom given as the topic of the clause (cf. Hene 1984: 30, 252). The age of the characters is mainly mentioned in passing, as for instance in the phrase *the old man* discussed in 4.3, while the purpose of the clause can be for instance to describe the action of the character (e.g. *the old man came puffing up to them*, BNCsub: CAB).

The proportion of adjective phrases that describe age for male and female characters shows that age-denoting adjectives are primarily associated with female characters in the Victorian material; see Table 5.5.

Table 5.5. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Age for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	61/397	15%	78/392	20%
Female	145/461	31%	47/247	19%

For Victorian female characters, 31% of the descriptions denote age, in contrast to the other three groups of characters, for whom smaller proportions are used to denote age. This is a consequence of the previously mentioned frequent adjectives discussed in section 4.3 (*little, old, small, young*), classified as belonging to this domain, which foremost occur with Victorian female characters.

In sum, the greatest variation in the domain of Age is found between female and male characters in the Victorian material. The age of female characters is described to a considerably greater extent than that of male characters in the Victorian material. In contrast, there is an approximately equal distribution for male and female characters in the contemporary material, with 20% and 19% of the descriptions used to denote age, respectively. There is little diversity as regards what adjectives are used to denote age in the material. Moreover, half of the lexemes (*little, old, small, young*) are highly frequent in both sets of material, making the domain one of the largest in both the Victorian and the contemporary material.

5.4 Appearance

The domain of Appearance is divided into two sub-domains, each focusing on a separate aspect of appearance. First, the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution contains adjective phrases that describe the physique of a character. Second, the adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Looks describe other outward aspects of characters, for instance regarding features such as hair or skin (e.g. *pale*), evaluative comments about the looks of the characters (e.g. *attractive*), or emotions described as visible qualities (e.g. *solemn-looking*). As explained in 3.4.1, adjective phrases following the linking verb *look* are also placed in the sub-domain of Looks, e.g. *ashamed* and *thoughtful*, since in such contexts the qualities denoted by the adjective phrases are visible to an observer and thus form part of the appearance of the character (cf. also the discussion of externally-oriented and internally-oriented description of mental qualities in 6.3.3). The adjectives occurring in the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution are given in List 2 (p. 98), and those in the sub-domain of Looks in List 3 (p. 99).

For the adjectives in Bodily Constitution, it can be noted that there is a stylistic difference between the Victorian and the contemporary material. The Victorian material contains adjectives that are more elevated in style, such as *graceful*, *large-made* or *strapping*, in contrast to many of the adjectives in the contemporary material, which tend to have a more down-to-earth flavour, often ending in *-y*, such as *gawky*, *dumpy*, *tubby* or *portly*.⁶³ Leech and Short observe that adjectives ending in *-y* “belong to the popular, rather than learned, stratum of English vocabulary and tend to have emotive connotations” (1981: 93). Further, the adjectives describing male characters in the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution tend to focus on the large aspect somewhat more in the Victorian material, while the adjectives describing female characters denote either smallness or largeness to a similar extent in both sets of material.⁶⁴

⁶³ An interesting counter-example is provided by Sørensen (1985), who examines the idiosyncratic style of the 19th-century writer Charles Dickens. Sørensen notes Dickens’s productive word-formation with adjectives ending in *-y*, and suggests that Dickens was fond of them “perhaps because they are easily formed colloquialisms that are often of a humorous character” (Sørensen 1985: 41; see also Görlach 1999: 137).

⁶⁴ In addition, the use of *little*, especially with male adult characters in the contemporary material, can also have evaluative meaning, as in *skinny little husband* (BNCsub: CH4).

List 2. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution from the semantic domain of Appearance. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
angular 2	<i>big</i> 5	umpy	<i>big</i> 4
gaunt	gigantic	fat 2	broad-shouldered
graceful	great 2	gawky	bulky
lank	large	large	droopy
<i>little</i> 9	large-made	<i>little</i> 3	fat 4
slight	<i>little</i>	plump 2	gawky
<i>small</i>	long	short	heavy
stout	slight	skinny	huge
strapping	stout	tall 3	lanky
tall 4	strapping	thin 3	<i>little</i> 2
thin 2	tall 4	tiny 4	plump
			portly
			short 2
			skinny 2
			slim
			<i>small</i> 4
			stocky
			tall 5
			thick-set
			thin 2
			tubby
			undersized
			wide
t/t ratio 0.46 (11/24)	t/t ratio 0.58 (11/19)	t/t ratio 0.50 (11/22)	t/t ratio 0.58 (23/40)

A comparison of Lists 2 and 3 reveals a clear pattern of variation: the categories of contemporary male in List 2, and Victorian female in List 3 contain the greatest number of adjectives. Male characters in the contemporary material are often described with adjective phrases from the sub-domain of Bodily Constitution (e.g. *broad-shouldered*, *thick-set* or *tubby*). Female characters in the Victorian material, on the other hand, are often described with regard to their looks, with special focus on good looks (e.g. 6 x of *beautiful* and *pretty*, respectively). The least variety among the adjective phrases in both sub-domains is shown for Victorian female characters, as displayed by the type/token ratios. The proportion of adjective phrases that are used to describe appearance for female and male characters in the Victorian and the contemporary material is given in Table 5.6 (p. 99).

List 3. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Looks from the semantic domain of Appearance. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
active-looking	ashamed	brunette	bald
attractive	bearded	calm	beaky
beautiful 6	beautiful	dark-haired	dressed
blooming 2	bluff-looking	dressed	good-looking
blue-eyed	dark	freckled	grey 2
clothed	delicate-looking	fresh-faced	jowly-looking
cross-looking 2	dressed	gorgeous	pale
dressed 4	fair	pale	pale-looking
fair 3	grey-headed	pretty 3	pale-skinned
fine	handsome	recognizable	plain
handsome	kind-looking	safe-looking	ratty-looking
kind-looking	nice-looking	white	red
pale 2	plain	young-looking	red-faced
pink-eyed 2	pleasant-looking		scared-faced
pretty 6	pretty		smartly-dressed
red-haired 6	rough-looking		<i>thoughtful</i>
rosy	solemn-looking		
rosy-faced			
sallow			
splendid			
t/t ratio 0.45 (20/44)	t/t ratio 1.00 (17/17)	t/t ratio 0.87 (13/15)	t/t ratio 0.94 (16/17)

Table 5.6. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	36/397	9%	57/392	15%
Female	68/461	15%	37/247	15%

Table 5.6 shows that female characters are described with adjectives denoting appearance to a greater extent than male characters in the Victorian material (15% versus 9%). This is expected, since appearance is a domain traditionally associated with femininity (see e.g. Hene 1984: 9). Consequently, appearance might have been a quality considered less important to describe for male characters in the Victorian material (however, compare the distribution for part descriptions in 6.3.2). In contrast, such considerations seem inapplicable to the contemporary material, where the appearance of male and female characters is described to the same extent.

Further quantitative diachronic differences concern the syntactic function of the adjectives in this domain (foremost attributive and predicative), and the evaluative meaning (positive, negative or neutral). The distribution across syntactic function is given in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7. Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Attributive	72	69	42	45
Predicative	17	16	41	44
Postpos./adjunct	15	14	11	12
Total	104	99	94	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 17.98$

Table 5.7 shows that attributive function is very frequent among the adjective phrases denoting appearance in the Victorian material, whereas the distribution between attributive and predicative adjectives is more even in the contemporary material.⁶⁵ As explained earlier (4.6), descriptions occurring in attributive function present the information more in passing, compared to predicative function, where the purpose of the clause is to describe the referent of a noun or pronoun (cf. Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998: 94). In other words, the fact that the percentage of attributive function is as high as 69% in the Victorian material suggests that here the adjective phrases denoting appearance frequently occur in a position in the clause connected with a relatively low information value.

The distribution of the adjective phrases in the domain of Appearance across evaluative meaning is given in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Appearance across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	34	33	8	9
Negative	4	4	12	13
Neutral	66	63	74	79
Total	104	100	94	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 20.10$

Table 5.8 shows that there are many more positive than negative adjective phrases in the Victorian material (33% vs 4%), whereas there are more negative than positive adjective phrases in the contemporary material, although the result is more even than in the Victorian material (13% vs 9%). In fact, the descriptions of contemporary female characters were also dominated by positive rather than negative adjective phrases (16% or 6/37 positive vs 5% or 2/37 negative). Thus, it is primarily the appearance of contemporary male characters that is described with negative adjective phrases (18% or 10/57 negative vs 4% or 2/57 positive). The majority of adjective phrases denoting appearance are neutral in both sets of material investigated. The relatively

⁶⁵ In fact, for contemporary male characters, there is even a predominance of predicative adjectives (47% or 27/57 predicative and 40% or 23/57 attributive).

high proportion of positive adjective phrases in the Victorian material, 33%, is mainly the result of adjective phrases denoting good looks for female characters in the Victorian material (of the positive instances, 82% or 28/34 describe female characters); see e.g. (5).

(5) “I was taken into the room where *mamma* was lying on her bed so *pale*, so *beautiful*, only the tinge of colour in her cheek.” (VIC: leila)

In sum, the greatest qualitative difference for the domain of Appearance is found between the descriptions of contemporary male characters, and Victorian female characters. The bodily constitution of contemporary male characters is described frequently, and often with rather non-elevated terminology. For Victorian female characters, the quality of possessing good looks is frequently described. As many as 82% of the positive Victorian adjective phrases in this domain describe female characters. Finally, the appearance of Victorian male characters is not described to any notable extent.

5.5 Mental Property

As discussed in 5.2, the Mental Property domain is by far the largest domain in the material as a whole, especially in the contemporary material, with 36% of the instances. In the Victorian material, the Mental Property domain represents 24% (see Table 5.1). Owing to the diversity of meaning of the adjective phrases denoting mental properties, the division into sub-domains is especially relevant in order to provide a comprehensible overview. In the discussion of the results for the Mental Property domain, I will first give an overall account of the distribution across sub-domains, and the results for three quantifiable parameters, that is, syntactic function, evaluative meaning and permanence of the description. I will then present the adjectives classified as belonging to each of the sub-domains Cognition, Emotion and Characteristics. The sub-domain of Cognition includes adjective phrases that denote mental abilities and states, and other cognitive processes of a character, such as *intelligent* or *accustomed*. Emotion includes adjective phrases denoting emotions such as *happy* or *sad*, and Characteristics includes adjective phrases denoting mental properties and states that are typical of the characters (e.g. *brave* or *mild-mannered*). Emotions are often temporary states, in contrast to adjective phrases denoting characteristics, which tend to denote permanent properties. Adjective phrases denoting cognition include items referring to both permanent properties and temporary states. Consequently, the domain of Mental Property comprises both adjective phrases that denote properties and that denote states. The difference between properties and states are brought out in the classification of temporary and perma-

ment features. For each of these sub-domains, both quantitative and qualitative findings will be discussed.

5.5.1 Overall quantitative findings

The distribution of adjective phrases denoting Mental Property across sub-domains is given in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9. Distribution of the adjective phrases in the Mental Property domain across sub-domains for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Cognition	44	21	71	31
Emotion	87	42	108	47
Characteristics	75	36	53	23
Total	206	99	232	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 10.88$

Table 5.9 shows that Emotion is the largest sub-domain in both the Victorian and the contemporary material, with 42% and 47% of the instances. However, for Victorian male characters, the sub-domain of Characteristics is slightly larger than that of Emotion (40% or 53/131 vs 39% or 51/131). Overall in the Victorian material the Characteristics sub-domain is the second largest, whereas Cognition is the second largest sub-domain in the contemporary material. Consequently, the distribution across sub-domains suggests that the authors have focused on different mental properties in the adjectival descriptions of the Victorian and the contemporary material. Cognition attracts more focus in the descriptions of characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, while mental characteristics are described more extensively for the Victorian characters. Nikolajeva also suggests that giving narrative statements about a character's permanent traits (i.e. characteristics) was a tendency of the past in children's fiction (2002: 197).

The proportion of adjective phrases used to describe mental properties of the characters in the two sets of material overall varies considerably between the female characters, whereas the proportion describing male characters remains relatively stable. The proportions are given in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property for female and male characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	131/397	33%	141/392	36%
Female	75/461	16%	91/247	37%

The most deviant group of characters is Victorian female characters, which exhibits a significantly smaller proportion of adjective phrases describing mental properties than the other three groups of characters. Consequently,

mental properties are not qualities typically attributed to female characters in Victorian children's fiction (however, compare the distribution for part descriptions in 6.3.2). The reason is probably that mental qualities of female characters were not considered important or essential in Victorian children's fiction.

Some diachronic variation can also be discerned as regards the variables of syntactic function, evaluative meaning and permanence. Table 5.11 reveals the distribution across syntactic function for the Victorian and the contemporary material, respectively.

Table 5.11. Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Attributive	51	25	21	9
Predicative	140	68	200	86
Postpos./adjunct	15	7	11	5
Total	206	100	232	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 22.24$

As shown in Table 5.11, the majority of the adjective phrases in the Mental Property domain are in predicative function, e.g. *Jinny was calm* (BNCsub: AC4). This trend is especially pronounced in the contemporary material, where 86% of the mental adjective phrases are found in predicative position. As stated in section 4.6, predicative adjectives put the description more in focus than attributive adjectives do (see also *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* 1990: 64–5; Hene 1984: 30, 252). In other words, adjective phrases denoting a mental property tend to appear in a syntactic function that promotes the information conveyed by the adjective phrase, suggesting that the mental qualities of a character are considered important features to highlight.

The evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases denoting mental properties varies considerably between the Victorian and the contemporary material, following the overall pattern presented in section 4.2. There are more positive than negative adjective phrases in the Victorian material (32% versus 27%), whereas there are more negative than positive adjective phrases in the contemporary material (43% versus 19%); see Table 5.12.

Table 5.12. Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	66	32	43	19
Negative	55	27	100	43
Neutral	85	41	89	38
Total	206	100	232	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 16.52$

The predominance of negative adjectives in the contemporary material is mainly a result of adjective phrases denoting negative emotions, as displayed in the sub-domain of Emotion, e.g. *afraid* (see 5.5.3). This usage is probably an effect of the descriptions of characters being more internally oriented and realistic.

The variable of permanence is relevant to consider and quantify for the domain of Mental Property, since it is related to the division of properties into sub-domains. The adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Emotions primarily denote temporary states (e.g. *furious*), and those in the sub-domain of Characteristics for the most part denote permanent properties (e.g. *good-natured*). The distribution across permanent and temporary features is given in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13. Distribution of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Mental Property across permanent and temporary features for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Permanent	110	53	94	41
Temporary	96	47	138	59
Total	206	100	232	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 1$, $\chi^2 = 7.28$

As shown in Table 5.13, permanent properties are more common in the Victorian material, and temporary features in the contemporary material (cf. Nikolajeva 2002: 197). The distribution of mental adjective phrases across permanent and temporary qualities is more even in the Victorian material (53% vs 47%) than in the contemporary material, where temporary features account for 59% compared to 41% for permanent ones. Describing properties as temporary may contribute to a deeper portrayal of characters, by suggesting that the characters may be subject to change (Culpeper 2001: 94). Conversely, properties described as permanent traits are more likely to be perceived as part of formulaic descriptions, since they are not likely to change (cf. static characters in Chatman 1993: 60; see also Culpeper 2001: 47–57). The ability to change is linked to a more complex and multi-faceted portrayal. Consequently, the finding regarding the permanence of mental properties may contribute to an impression of the characters in the Victorian

material as category-based (i.e. stereotypical, and the characters in the contemporary material as person-based (see Culpeper 2001: 93–4).

In sum, the overall quantitative findings for the domain of Mental Property show some variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material, but also similarities. Victorian female characters are described with a considerably smaller proportion of adjective phrases denoting mental properties than the other three groups of characters (16% compared to 33–37%). Mental Property has been divided into three sub-domains, of which Emotions is the largest in both sets of material investigated. The sub-domain of Characteristics is the second largest in the Victorian material and Cognition in the contemporary material. Characteristics were in fact described more extensively than emotions for Victorian male characters. The division into sub-domains is related to the variable of permanence, for which the results show that adjective phrases more often denote permanent features in the Victorian material, and temporary features in the contemporary material. Predicative function is the most common syntactic function overall, but especially so in the contemporary material, thus suggesting that adjective phrases denoting mental properties are given a higher information value in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. Finally, as regards the evaluative meaning, the pattern in the Mental Property domain is the same as the overall pattern in the data: positive meaning is typical of the Victorian material, and negative meaning of the contemporary material (see 4.2). One possible reason is that characters in contemporary children's fiction are allowed to experience negative emotions and display negative characteristic traits, as well as positive ones, which also makes them more similar to real-life individuals, instead of solely functioning as role models with ideal traits.

5.5.2 The sub-domain of Cognition

The adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Cognition denote a diverse set of cognitive processes and abilities. The adjectives are given in List 4.

List 4. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Cognition from the semantic domain of Mental Property. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
<i>able</i> 3	<i>able</i> 3	<i>able</i>	<i>able</i> 5
affected	accustomed	absorbed	absent-minded
aware	aware 2	brainy	absorbed
clever 2	<i>bad</i>	daft	alert
ignorant	bright	doolally	apt
quick	capable	gormless 2	aware 7
ready	clear	ignorant	bright
scatterbrained	clever 2	prepared	certain
<i>sharp</i>	conscious	ready 2	clever
sure	ignorant	responsible	confused
wise 4	inclined	<i>right</i>	conscious
	intent	serious	daft 2
	quick 2	<i>sharp</i>	gormless
	ready	stupid 3	incapable
	<i>right</i> 3	sure 4	quick-witted
	<i>sensible</i>	thick 2	<i>right</i> 5
	skilful	unsuited	stupid
	<i>smart</i>	used	sure 4
	sure	wise	thick 2
	unwise	wrong	<i>unable</i> 2
			used
			<i>weak</i>
			wrong
t/t ratio 0.65 (11/17)	t/t ratio 0.74 (20/27)	t/t ratio 0.71 (20/28)	t/t ratio 0.53 (23/43)

The adjectives in the sub-domain of Cognition belong in the main to three subgroups according to their different shades of meaning: adjective phrases denoting consciousness/concentration (*aware*, *intent*, *confused*), capability/proclivity (*incapable*, *inclined*, *prepared*), and intelligence (*clever*, *ignorant*, *thick*), including their negative poles. There is also a residual category with examples such as *certain*, *used to* and *wrong*. The most salient diachronic difference pertains to the adjectives denoting intelligence, which exhibit a greater variety in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. Within the three subgroups described above, little gender variation can be discerned. However, it is apparent from List 4 that the types of adjectives denoting Cognition are fewer for Victorian female characters than the other three groups of characters, which all exhibit an approximately equal number of types. The least diversity is shown among the adjective phrases describing contemporary male characters, as shown by the type/token ratios.

As regards the evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases, the same pattern of variation is present in the Cognition sub-domain as in the Mental Property domain overall; see Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Cognition from the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	13	30	10	14
Negative	5	11	21	30
Neutral	26	59	40	56
Total	44	100	71	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 7.27$

Table 5.14 shows that the majority of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Cognition are neutral in both sets of material investigated. However, there is great variation in the distribution of adjective phrases with evaluative meaning between positive and negative. In the Victorian material, the adjective phrases have positive rather than negative meaning (30% vs 11%). In the contemporary material, on the other hand, 30% of the adjective phrases are negative and 14% positive, thus revealing a pattern opposite to that in the Victorian material, which, again, can be related to the idealistic/realistic dichotomy, with negative adjective phrases being more likely in a realistic portrayal.

There is little diachronic variation as regards syntactic function and the distribution across permanent and temporary features in this sub-domain. Adjective phrases denoting cognition in the present material occur principally in predicative function (89% or 39/44 in the Victorian, and 92% or 65/71 in the contemporary material). Further, adjective phrases denoting cognition are classified as temporary features in more than half of the instances (59% or 26/44 in the Victorian, and 54% or 38/71 in the contemporary material).

To sum up, the most salient diachronic variation for the adjective phrases denoting cognition is found in the distribution across evaluative meaning. When adjective phrases denoting cognition carry evaluative meaning, they tend to be positive rather than negative in the Victorian material. In contrast, they are more often negative than positive in the contemporary material. Another diachronic difference is that a greater variety of adjective phrases denote intelligence (or lack thereof) in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. The least diversity among the adjectives denoting cognition was found for contemporary male characters.

5.5.3 The sub-domain of Emotion

The sub-domain of Emotion is the largest sub-domain in Mental Property in both sets of material (see 5.5.1). This sub-domain also exhibits a great variety of adjectives. Like adjective phrases denoting cognition, adjective phrases denoting emotions primarily occur in predicative position. Further,

as is to be expected of adjective phrases denoting emotions, they foremost denote temporary states. The adjectives in the sub-domain of Emotion are given in List 5 (p. 109).

The greatest variety in the sub-domain of Emotion is found among the adjectives describing contemporary female characters (type/token ratio 0.72). As regards gender variation, Victorian female characters are also described with a greater variety of adjective phrases denoting emotions than Victorian male characters, showing that the emotions of female characters are described with a greater range of adjectives than the emotions of male characters, in both sets of material. This could be linked to the traditional view that the display of emotions is a typically female trait (Hene 1984: 136).

The adjectives in the sub-domain of Emotion are further distinguished into nine subgroups denoting similar or related emotions, and one residual category containing those adjectives that did not fit into any other subgroup. Some of these subgroups include antonyms, whereas others include near-synonyms only. In the subgroups including antonyms, adjective phrases from one of the two poles on the scale (cf. Rusiecki 1985) were rare, and thus did not prompt a separate subgroup. The subgroups, presented together with some typical examples, are as follows.

- Anger (*angry, furious, mad*)
- Astonishment (*horrified, struck, surprised*)
- Excitement/composure (*bewildered, calm, determined*)⁶⁶
- Fright (*afraid, scared, worried*)
- Happiness (*happy, cheerful, delighted*)
- Like/dislike (*attached, disgusted, sweet on*)
- Sadness (*melancholy, miserable, sad*)
- Satisfaction/dissatisfaction (*disappointed, pleased, reassured*)
- Tentativeness/nervousness/confidence (*anxious, tentative, unnerved*)
- Residual (*ashamed, concerned, interested, proud and thankful*)

On this micro-level of analysis, the largest subgroup for each group of character will be discussed, accounting for observations regarding both diachronic and gender variation.

⁶⁶ *Determined* is placed in this subgroup since determination also requires some sort of strong excited emotion.

List 5. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Emotion from the semantic domain of Mental Property. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. Female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
afraid	afraid 3	agitated	adamant
angry	agitated	angry 2	afraid 3
anxious	angry 2	<i>ashamed</i>	angry 4
attached	anxious 2	bewildered	<i>ashamed</i> 2
bewildered	astonished	calm 2	astonished
clamorous	cheerful	concerned	bored
composed	confounded	cross	convinced
delighted	cowed	desperate 2	cross
disappointed	dashed	determined	crotchety
disinclined	delighted 2	disappointed	desperate 2
fond 3	disappointed 2	elated	determined 2
frantic	discontented	fed up	fed up
frightened 3	disgusted	furious 2	frightened 3
glad	fond 4	happy	furious
happy 6	half-ashamed	horrified 2	glad
interested	happy 2	impatient	happy 2
melancholy	<i>hurt</i>	intense	hasty
miserable	impatient	keen	horrified
pleased 2	miserable	<i>mad</i>	huffy
sad	nervous	optimistic	impatient
satisfied 2	pleased 4	pleased 6	interested
sorry 2	proud 2	reluctant	irritable
struck	put out 2	restless	<i>mad</i> 3
unhappy 2	reassured	sad	nervous 3
	sorry 3	scared	pleased 4
	struck	shocked	proud 2
	thankful 2	stunned 2	relieved 2
	<i>tired</i> 2	surprised	satisfied 2
	unnerved	<i>sweet</i>	scared 2
	vexed 3	<i>tired</i>	sorry
		upset 2	stunned
			sulky
			surprised 2
			tense
			tentative
			unconvinced
			unhappy 2
			upset
			worried 3
t/t ratio 0.64 (23/36)	t/t ratio 0.59 (30/51)	t/t ratio 0.72 (31/43)	t/t ratio 0.60 (39/65)

Victorian female characters are primarily described with adjectives denoting sadness (7 x with five different adjectives, e.g. *melancholy*, *miserable* and *unhappy*) and happiness (7 x with two different adjectives: *glad* and *happy*). Neither sadness nor happiness is described to a great extent in the contemporary material, whereas Victorian male characters show almost as great a use

as Victorian female ones (7 x denoting sadness with four different adjectives, and 5 x denoting happiness with three different adjectives).

Most of the examples describing emotions for Victorian male characters denote properties of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (10 x with five different adjectives, with equal proportions of tokens for the satisfactory and dissatisfactory ends of the scale). This subgroup is also comparatively common for the other three groups of characters. The adjective phrases primarily denote feelings on the satisfaction-related end of the scale, largely owing to the frequent use of *pleased* for all four groups of characters.

The largest subgroup for contemporary female characters is Excitement/composure with 15 instances using 12 different adjectives. The majority denote negative excitement, e.g. *agitated*, *bewildered*, or *impatient*. Only one adjective denotes a property belonging to the composed side of the scale (*calm*). Like the distribution in the contemporary material, this subgroup is also more common with Victorian female than Victorian male characters (4 x compared to 2 x), but overall much more common in the contemporary material (descriptions of contemporary male characters represent 11 x with nine different adjectives). This finding indicates that strong emotions are more commonly described in the contemporary material, which may be an effect of a more realistic portrayal. In contrast, characters functioning as role models are not expected to have strong outbursts of emotion to the same extent.

The subgroup of adjective phrases denoting anger is the largest one for contemporary male characters, with 12 instances using seven different adjectives, of which the following were found exclusively with contemporary male characters: *crotchety*, *huffy* and *irritable*. Once again the finding for contemporary male characters is in great contrast to the result for Victorian female characters. One single adjective denotes anger for Victorian female characters, and what is more, it is used in a conditional construction, which indicates that the character in question does not (yet) possess the attribute of anger; see (6). Victorian male, and contemporary female characters fall in between these extremes with seven and six instances, respectively.

(6) “Better not,” Selina answered; “it does not do with Matilda to talk to her too much on subjects she does not like; if I had gone on, in a few minutes more *she would have been angry*. Did you not observe how her colour was rising?” (VIC: leila)

Next, the distribution across positive, negative and neutral adjective phrases will be considered. The figures for evaluative meaning are given in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15. Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Emotion from the semantic domain of Mental Property across evaluative meaning for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	29	33	21	19
Negative	33	38	62	57
Neutral	25	29	25	23
Total	87	100	108	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 7.96$

Table 5.15 shows that negative adjective phrases are much more common than positive ones in the contemporary material (57% vs 19%). The distribution is more levelled in the Victorian material (38% vs 33%), although negative adjective phrases are predominant in this material as well. A closer look at the four different groups of characters reveals that the adjective phrases are predominantly negative rather than positive for all groups except for Victorian female characters.⁶⁷ This is especially true for contemporary male characters, where as many as 61% (40/66) of the adjective phrases have negative meaning.⁶⁸ Thus, the greatest differences in the material are found in the comparison between Victorian female characters on the one hand, and contemporary male characters on the other.

In sum, the adjective phrases denoting emotion tend to have negative rather than positive meaning in both sets of material investigated, albeit most markedly so for contemporary male characters. Of the different emotions, feelings of (negative) excitement (e.g. *desperate*) were particularly common in the contemporary material, together with feelings of anger. In the Victorian material, adjective phrases denoting sadness and satisfaction were particularly common. Excitement was described more for female than male characters in both sets of material, whereas anger was distinctly more often attributed to male characters in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. According to Hene, anger is a typically male emotion, although being emotional in general is traditionally considered a female trait (1984: 136). However, the micro-level analyses in the sub-domain of Emotion suggest that diachronic variation is more prominent than gender variation.

5.5.4 The sub-domain of Characteristics

The adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Characteristics denote traits that are perceived as being characteristic of the individual described. Consequently, the majority of these adjective phrases are presented as permanent

⁶⁷ The proportion of positive adjective phrases for Victorian female characters is 39% (14/36), compared to the proportion of negative adjectives, which is 33% (12/36).

⁶⁸ The proportion of negative adjective phrases denoting emotion is 51% (22/43) for contemporary female characters and 41% (21/51) for Victorian male characters.

features. The adjectives in the sub-domain of Characteristics are given in List 6.

List 6. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Characteristics from the semantic domain of Mental Property. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
delicate	amenable	brave	amazed
downright	ardent	cheerful	confident
eager	brave	crazy	cool 2
energetic	cheery	decisive	earnest
full 2	cool	devoted	even-tempered
good-hearted	depraved	distracted	excitable
grave	desponding	fierce	fierce
heroic	determined	good-natured	firm
impetuous	devoid	highly-sexed	flexible
innocent	earnest 2	indolent	full
lighthearted	easy-going	infuriating	funny
motherly	false-hearted	insistent	gruff
obstinate	funny	<i>mad</i>	hard 2
self-possessed	given	mixed up	impulsive
<i>smart</i>	godless	nosey	innocent
spoilt 2	good-natured	placid	insolent
<i>sweet 2</i>	grave	<i>sensible</i>	<i>mad 2</i>
tearful	hasty	sensitive	mild-mannered
<i>true</i>	heedless	spoilt	practical
	high-couraged	tearful	rough
	high-spirited		safe
	honest 2		sensitive
	honourable 2		<i>thoughtful</i>
	humorous		tough
	ill-natured		twitchy
	impetuous		unmalicious
	indulgent		unpredictable
	just		unreliable
	keen		vulnerable
	kind-hearted		wet
	<i>mad</i>		
	mischievous		
	old-fashioned 2		
	prudent		
	rash		
	selfish		
	self-willed		
	sensitive		
	simple 2		
	singular		
	spoiled		
	steady		
	<i>thoughtful</i>		

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
	transparent		
	voracious		
	<i>weak</i>		
	well-principled		
	wild		
t/t ratio 0.91 (20/22)	t/t ratio 0.91 (48/53)	t/t ratio 1.00 (20/20)	t/t ratio 0.91 (30/33)

A noticeably large number of adjectives describe Victorian male characters compared to the other three groups of characters. All four groups of characters show conspicuous diversity in this sub-domain, most of all contemporary female characters (type/token ratio 1.00). To enable a closer look at the adjective phrases denoting characteristics, ten subgroups and one residual category were distinguished. Compared to the sub-domain of Emotion, there are generally fewer instances in each subgroup, since the sub-domain of Characteristics contains a smaller proportion of the instances in the Mental Property domain overall. On the other hand, there is generally greater variety within the subgroups, since most types of adjectives in the Characteristics sub-domain are only used once for each group of character. The subgroups distinguished are given below, with two typical examples from each subgroup. The residual category contains four adjective phrases, all of which are mentioned below.

- Confidence (*confident, self-possessed*)
- Enjoyment (*cheerful, funny*)
- Foolishness (*crazy, mad*)
- Honour/dishonour (*earnest, well-principled*)
- Kindness (*good-hearted, unmalicious*)
- Sensitivity (*sensitive, vulnerable*)
- Strength (*decisive, heedless*)
- Stability/flexibility (*grave, placid*)
- Weakness (*weak, wet*)
- Wickedness (*fierce, mischievous*)
- Residual (*highly-sexed, motherly, old-fashioned, and practical*)

The distribution of adjective phrases in different subgroups is fairly similar between the Victorian and the contemporary material. Wickedness and stability/flexibility are the two largest subgroups in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. The third largest subgroup in the Victorian material is honour, whereas adjective phrases denoting strength are the third most frequent subgroup in the contemporary material. The distribution of instances in the subgroup of wickedness exhibits identical patterns in both sets of material investigated (7 x describing Victorian and contemporary male characters, respectively, and 4 x describing Victorian and contemporary

female characters). Although the figures are low, there are thus slightly more adjective phrases attributing malevolence as a characteristic trait to male than female characters. This finding may be related to the traditional view that it is in the male's nature to be evil-minded still lingers in the portrayal of characters in British children's fiction (cf. James' idea that the hunting instinct is the reason for callous behaviour such as carelessly disembowelling frogs, and that this instinct is "decidedly weaker in [women] than in men," 1890: 414–5).

Even greater gender differences are found in the subgroup of stability/flexibility, for which male characters, especially in the Victorian material, score high. Male characters are described with 11 instances in the Victorian and seven in the contemporary material. The corresponding figures are four instances for Victorian, and two for contemporary female characters. In the contemporary material, the adjective phrases foremost denote aspects on the flexible end of the scale, e.g. *flexible* or *impulsive*. In contrast, the stable/flexible continuum is equally frequently represented for the Victorian male characters, with both *grave* and *hasty*, for instance. The preponderance of male descriptions with adjectives that describe stability and calmness, as well as flexibility and enthusiasm, could be related to the notion of activity. Previous research has shown that male characters tend to be described as active to a greater extent than female characters (see e.g. Swann 1992: 112).

A notable feature of the adjectives describing Victorian male characters is the large proportion of adjectives that describe the character as honourable (8 x with the use of five different adjectives). In contrast, Victorian female characters, and contemporary male characters only occur with adjective phrases denoting honourable traits twice each (e.g. *heroic*), and contemporary female characters are never described as honourable, suggesting that being honourable was an important trait for Victorian male characters. This feature is of course related to the idealistic portrayal of characters common in Victorian children's fiction (see 1.1).

There is a diachronic difference as regards gender variation in the subgroup of strength (a large group in both sets of material). In the contemporary material there is an equal distribution of adjective phrases between male and female characters (3 x each). In contrast, Victorian male characters are more often described with adjective phrases denoting mental strength (e.g. *brave*) than Victorian female characters (7 x compared to 2 x). The data is scarce but even so this finding might suggest that mental strength was not a feature associated with female characters in the Victorian material, whereas this has changed in the contemporary material. To conclude, as regards the distribution across subgroups in the sub-domain of Characteristics, the variation between male and female characters is greater than the variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material.

In contrast, some diachronic variation is evident regarding the syntactic function of adjective phrases denoting characteristics, as shown in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16. Distribution of adjective phrases in the sub-domain of Characteristics from the semantic domain of Mental Property across syntactic function for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Attributive	38	51	14	26
Predicative	24	32	37	70
Postpos./adjunct	13	17	2	4
Total	75	100	53	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 18.68$

Table 5.16 shows that adjective phrases denoting characteristics occur more often in attributive than predicative position in the Victorian material (51% vs 32%), whereas predicative function is far more common than attributive in the contemporary material (70% vs 26%).⁶⁹ This finding points to differences in weight placed on the feature of characteristics between the Victorian and the contemporary material, since predicative function puts the information given by the adjective in a more prominent place in the clause than does attributive function (cf. 4.6). Consequently, the difference in distribution across syntactic function may be an indication of characteristic traits being given a higher information value in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

In sum, a great diversity of adjectives is used to denote characteristics. In particular, a large number of adjective phrases describe characteristic traits for Victorian male characters. The most common syntactic function in the sub-domain of Characteristics is attributive function in the Victorian material, and predicative function in the contemporary material. This finding suggests that characteristic traits tend to occur in syntactic functions which give prominence to the information conveyed by the adjective phrase to a higher degree in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

When considering the subgroups distinguished, there is greater variation between male and female characters than between the Victorian and the contemporary material. For instance, stability or flexibility is described with a variety of adjectives for the male characters in particular, in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. Further, a striking feature of the description of Victorian male characters is that they are often described with refer-

⁶⁹ In addition, there is a great difference regarding postpositive adjective phrases and predicative adjuncts between the Victorian and the contemporary material. In the Victorian material, 17% of the instances occur in either of these functions, compared to 4% in the contemporary material.

ence to their honour, which rarely applies to the other three groups of characters.

5.5.5 Summary

The present section has dealt with adjective phrases that denote mental properties. Both diachronic variation and variation between the descriptions of male and female characters were discerned. Owing to the great diversity of mental properties described, the domain of Mental Property was divided into three sub-domains: Cognition, Emotion and Characteristics. The distribution of adjective phrases across sub-domains revealed that Emotion was the largest sub-domain in both sets of material. However, Characteristics was the largest sub-domain for Victorian male characters, which made Characteristics the second largest sub-domain in the Victorian material overall. In contrast, Cognition was a larger sub-domain in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

The variable of permanence is related to the distinction of sub-domains in the Mental Property domain. Emotions tend to be temporary, and characteristics permanent features. The distribution across the variable of permanence suggested that permanent features were more common in the Victorian material, and temporary features in the contemporary material. Consequently, the results for the variable of permanence tallied with the distribution of adjective phrases across sub-domains in the two sets of material examined, since the distribution across sub-domains showed that Characteristics was a larger sub-domain in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, and that a larger proportion of the Mental Property adjective phrases were used to describe Emotion in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

As for the variable of syntactic function, the majority of adjective phrases in the Mental Property domain occurred in predicative position, especially in the contemporary material. Diachronic variation was shown in the sub-domain of Characteristics, where attributive was the most common function in the Victorian material, while predicative was the most common function in the contemporary material. This variation between the two sets of material is interesting, since it suggests that features considered to be typical of a character were mentioned more in passing in the Victorian material, by way of attributive adjective phrases, whereas characteristic traits were more often presented as important information in the clause in the contemporary material, by virtue of being in predicative position.

The evaluative meaning also revealed some variation. The distribution across positive, negative and neutral meaning in the Mental Property domain showed that positive meaning was more common in the Victorian, and negative meaning in the contemporary material. However, in the sub-domain of Characteristics, negative meaning was more common than positive for Vic-

torian female characters, and in the sub-domain of Emotion, negative meaning was more common than positive for Victorian male characters.

The micro-level analyses of the adjectives in each sub-domain showed some gender-based as well as diachronic variation. Diachronic variation was more noticeable in the sub-domain of Emotion than in the sub-domain of Characteristics. Moreover, diachronic variation was more discernible than gender variation in the sub-domain of Emotion. In this sub-domain, anger was a feeling primarily reserved for male characters, whereas female characters were described as experiencing excitement more often in both sets of material. However, adjectives denoting excitement and anger were particularly common in the contemporary material. Sadness was often described in the Victorian material. In the subgroup of Characteristics, stability/flexibility was described more often for male than female characters in both sets of material. In the contemporary material, the majority of adjectives denoted flexibility of some kind, whereas in the Victorian material the stability aspect was equally stressed. The honour/dishonour trait was foremost attributed to Victorian male characters, in all but one instance (*godless*) denoting the positive aspect.

In conclusion, the accumulated findings for the Mental Property domain suggested considerable diachronic variation between the Victorian and the contemporary material. A typical description of a Victorian character was positive, permanent or in attributive position. These features combined may add to a perception of the adjectival descriptions as formulaic, since they present the description as self-evident information (by way of attributive function), and static (by way of a permanent feature). In contrast, a typical description of a contemporary character was negative, temporary or in predicative position.

5.6 Physical State

The adjective phrases in the domain of Physical State denote states and qualities related to the physical status of characters, both regarding qualities such as *fit*, and temporary states such as *hungry*. The majority occur in predicative function. This is a rather small domain in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. The adjectives found in the domain of Physical State are given in List 7.

List 7. Adjectives in the semantic domain of Physical State. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
<i>able</i> 2	alive 2	awake	alive 3
alive	asleep 4	dead 3	asleep
asleep	awake 2	exhausted	<i>cold</i> 2
dead 3	blind	ill 2	dead 6
deaf	comfortable 2	pregnant	deaf
dumb	dead 3	tense	drunk 2
faint	dumb	<i>tired</i> 3	faint
feverish	healthy	<i>unable</i>	fit
half-starved	<i>hurt</i> 4		healthy
healthy	ill 3		hollow
hungry	mortal		hungry
ill	sick		hurt 2
short-sighted 2	strong 2		premature
strong 5	<i>tired</i>		sober
<i>weak</i> 2	<i>weak</i>		strong
well 5	well 3		<i>tired</i> 3
	worn out		unhurt
			<i>weak</i>
t/t ratio 0.55 (16/29)	t/t ratio 0.52 (17/33)	t/t ratio 0.62 (8/13)	t/t ratio 0.60 (18/30)

A comparison between the adjective phrases in the Victorian and the contemporary material in List 7 suggests that two new topic areas in the physical domain, absent in the Victorian material, have made their way into contemporary British children's fiction: intoxication and reproduction. The list of adjectives from the contemporary material gives us *drunk* and *sober*, relating to the level of intoxication, and *pregnant* and *premature*, that is, terminology from the field of obstetrics.

Adjective phrases that are more frequently used in the Victorian than in the contemporary material are such as refer to a positive physical property of a character (*strong*, *healthy*, *well*). In particular, the differences between the descriptions of female characters in the two sets of material are striking. Adjective phrases denoting a positive physical state are used rather frequently with Victorian female characters, while no instance is evidenced for contemporary female characters. Instead, the adjective phrases describing physical properties of contemporary female characters focus on negative states, e.g. *exhausted*, *tense* and *tired*. Consequently, the findings point to diachronic differences in the portrayal of female characters especially, with contemporary female characters experiencing mainly negative physical conditions, while the descriptions of the physical states of Victorian female characters are more diverse, denoting both positive and negative conditions. Another gender difference that emerges when List 7 is studied more closely is that the state of being *hurt* (or *unhurt*) is only mentioned for male characters in both sets of material. This gender difference could be taken as an

implication that male characters are described as having a more active lifestyle where they risk being hurt than female characters, in both the Victorian and the contemporary material.

A final observation for the adjective phrases in this domain is that a marginally larger proportion denotes physical attributes for female characters in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, as shown in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Physical State for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	33/397	8%	30/392	8%
Female	29/461	6%	13/247	5%

This somewhat unexpected finding is perhaps explained by the themes and purposes of Victorian books for children. Many of the physical adjective phrases that describe Victorian characters appear in a context which can be related to the didactic purpose of Victorian children's fiction (see 1.1 and 2.2.1). For instance, in the Victorian material, a character is struck *blind* to test her faith in God. In the same text, another character has experienced a spell of speech impairment; this physical state also functioning in a moralising context; see (7).

(7) "I shall be better when they are here, I mean; and bid aunt tell Selina, not to be very sorry, and to remember how God comforted her when *she* was *dumb* and gave her strength to bear it; and He is giving me strength also, dear papa." (VIC: leila)

Another aspect of the moral-inducing Victorian literature was to provoke empathy for the poor, and the misery of an orphaned child is narrated in the Victorian material, using adjectives such as *hungry* or *faint*. Such physical states are often related to financial status, since characters who cannot afford to buy anything to eat are likely to become hungry and weak.

To sum up, Physical State was a smaller domain for female characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, and a relatively small domain in the material overall (7% in both sets of material). Nevertheless, the contemporary material contained a subgroup of adjective phrases that was absent in the Victorian material, namely a few adjective phrases denoting properties related to intoxication and reproduction. Such physical states were not described in the Victorian material. In contrast, positive physical properties (e.g. *healthy*) were more often described for Victorian than contemporary characters. This was possibly an effect of the more didactic nature of Victorian children's fiction, where characters with positive physical properties were presented as role models. However, the moralising purpose of Victorian children's fiction was also a likely reason for the rather numerous

negative adjective phrases describing Victorian characters, the moralising functions being to evoke empathy for the poor, or piety.

5.7 Attitude

The first interpersonal (i.e. denoting qualities relating to the characters as social beings) domain to be discussed is that of Attitude. A common feature of the adjective phrases in this domain is that they all convey a general evaluation of the character, either held by another character in the text or focalised through the narrator. The adjectives in the Attitude domain are given in List 8.

List 8. Adjectives in the semantic domain of Attitude. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
bright	dear 11	formidable 2	all right 3
dear 20	fine	<i>great</i>	fine
<i>good</i>	<i>good</i> 2	poisonous	<i>great</i> 2
noble	noble 2	<i>silly</i> 2	horrible 2
<i>poor</i> 23	<i>old</i> 4		<i>old</i>
<i>silly</i>	<i>poor</i> 10		<i>silly</i>
	<i>silly</i>		
t/t ratio 0.13 (6/47)	t/t ratio 0.23 (7/31)	t/t ratio 0.67 (4/6)	t/t ratio 0.60 (6/10)

As shown in List 8, not only is the difference between the type/token ratios for Victorian and contemporary characters remarkable (ranging from 0.13 for Victorian female to 0.67 for contemporary female characters), but there is also a strikingly uneven distribution of adjective phrases denoting attitude in the Victorian and the contemporary material. The proportion of adjective phrases denoting Attitude for female and male characters is given in Table 5.18, which shows that a far greater number of instances are found in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

Table 5.18. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Attitude for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	31/397	8%	10/392	3%
Female	47/461	10%	6/247	2%

The reason for this variation is the high frequency of the adjectives *dear* and *poor*, which constitute as many as 82% (64/78) of the instances denoting

Attitude in the Victorian material.⁷⁰ Disregarding *dear* and *poor*, the number of adjective phrases in this domain is similar between the Victorian and the contemporary material (14 and 16 instances, respectively). *Dear* and *poor* do not occur at all in the contemporary material, while they are among the most frequent adjectives overall in the Victorian material (see 4.3). All 75 instances of these adjectives in the material, except for 11 instances of *poor* denoting financial situation, were classified as belonging to the domain of Attitude (see further 3.4.1). *Dear* and *poor* denoting attitude do not fulfil descriptive roles, but rather reflect fixed expressions in the language, so-called lexical stereotypes (see 4.3). By ascribing a certain property to a character automatically, as if the property is inherent in the character, it can contribute to cultural stereotypes being reinforced through language. *Dear* and *poor* in this domain are about twice as common with female as with male characters (20 x compared to 11 x of *dear*, and 23 x compared to 10 x of *poor*). Thus, the more extensive use of these adjectives with female than male characters in the Victorian material can be interpreted as adding to a stereotypical description of female characters in the Victorian material. In contrast, the descriptions of neither female nor male characters in the contemporary material exhibit this kind of stereotyping. The use of *poor* can also be indicative of a condescending or patronising attitude towards the character attributed the quality (see Wallin-Ashcroft 2000), which the authors of contemporary children's fiction have seen fit to abandon.

Leaving *dear* and *poor* aside, a closer look at the adjectives in List 8 shows that a greater variety of negative adjectives is used in the contemporary than in the Victorian material: *formidable*, *horrible*, *poisonous*, and *silly*, compared to only one negative adjective denoting attitude in the Victorian material (beside *poor*), namely *silly*.

In contrast to the diachronic variation discussed above, a similarity between the Victorian and the contemporary material is found regarding the context in which the adjective phrases in the Attitude domain occur. Most of the instances in the domain of Attitude occur either in direct address, or in indirect reference to another character in quoted speech, such as *silly* in (8). For instance, when *old* is used with emotive value to express warm feelings of the speaker towards the referent it occurs in address; see (9). Moreover, attitudinal adjectives often follow a possessive pronoun, as in (10).

(8) “What a *silly child*” you will say, Ida. (VIC: overtheway)

(9) “You’re out of your mind, *old fellow*.” (BNCsub: AT4)

(10) “He loves me, I am His child, and He can comfort my dear, *dear papa*.” (VIC: leila)

⁷⁰ This finding tallies with the result from Bäcklund's forthcoming study, where *poor* and *dear* constitute the absolute majority of the instances in the category of Attitude (83%).

These features serve to signal that the primary function of adjective phrases in the Attitude domain is to indicate a relation between the referent and the speaker, rather than assigning a property to the referent. In other words, the factors exemplified above are motivating factors for the interpretation of such instances as belonging to the interpersonal domain of Attitude rather than any other semantic domain.

Finally, a comparison of the variable of syntactic function points to some variation between the contemporary and Victorian material, despite the uneven proportion of adjective phrases denoting attitude in the two sets of material examined. In the Victorian material, all instances classified as denoting attitude occur within noun phrases (i.e. in attributive, 77/78, or postpositive, 1/78, position); cf. also Huddleston and Pullum's discussion of expressive attributes (2002: 558). In the contemporary material, on the other hand, adjective phrases in predicative position are also found in this domain (38% or 6/16 instances), as in (11).⁷¹ Examples of adjective phrases in attributive position are given above in (8)–(10).

(11) "Oh, great heavens, Sylvester, the Pony Club! The tweed and wool stockings brigade. The *ladies* are really *formidable*. We shan't have to get involved with all that?" (BNCsub: AT4)

In sum, the most common adjectives in this domain for the Victorian material are *dear* and *poor*, which are non-existent in the contemporary material. *Dear* and *poor* are especially frequent with Victorian female characters. There are fewer instances in the Attitude domain in the contemporary than in the Victorian material (16 x compared to 78 x); however, the contemporary material exhibits a greater variety of adjectives. Negative adjectives in particular were frequent in the contemporary material. Finally, as regards syntactic function, except for one postpositive adjective, all instances in the Victorian material have attributive function. In contrast, predicative function is also evidenced in the contemporary material, with as many as six examples out of 16.

5.8 Situation

The second interpersonal domain in the material is that of Situation. This is the most diverse category in the material, since adjective phrases denoting several different aspects of situational properties are placed here (see 3.4.1). The interpersonality of the adjective phrases in this domain is achieved by the element of comparison inherent in an interpersonal adjective, since a quality of a character is often defined by comparing it with other characters.

⁷¹ Ten out of 16 instances (63%) occur in attributive function in the contemporary material.

The proportion of adjective phrases denoting situation is fairly similar for all groups of characters except Victorian male characters, for which a larger share of the adjective phrases denote situation, e.g. *Irish*, *powerful* and *absent*; see Table 5.19.

Table 5.19. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Situation for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	52/397	13%	21/392	5%
Female	33/461	7%	18/247	7%

As regards the distribution of evaluative meaning, some gender differences are found, although not statistically significant, possibly owing to low raw frequencies. Female characters are described with adjective phrases with negative rather than positive meaning (30% compared to 12% for Victorian female, and 22% compared to 17% for contemporary female characters). In contrast, the descriptions of male characters feature adjective phrases with positive rather than negative meaning (19% compared to 10% for Victorian male, and 33% compared to 0% for contemporary male characters), in both sets of material.⁷²

Like the overall pattern of distribution across syntactic function (see 4.6), the distribution in the domain of Situation shows that adjective phrases tend to appear in attributive position (66% or 56/85) in the Victorian material, and in predicative position (69% or 27/39) in the contemporary material.⁷³ This finding suggests that when adjective phrases denote situation in the contemporary material, they often occur in a syntactic position that awards them high information value, that is, predicative position. In contrast, adjective phrases that denote situation in the Victorian material occur foremost in attributive position, which means that the quality is attributed to the character more in passing (cf. Hene 1984: 30).

Four different sub-domains are distinguished in the semantic domain of Situation: Classifying, Grading or Locative Position; Nationality/Ethnicity; Relation; Skills, Societal/Professional Position and Economy. The first sub-domain comprises adjective phrases in classifying rather than descriptive function (e.g. *the last man*, VIC: peter), those that grade the meaning of the term they modify (e.g. *real mother*, VIC: leila)⁷⁴ and those denoting locative position (*the woman opposite*, BNCsub: ABX). The adjectives in this sub-

⁷² The raw figures are 10/33 negative vs 4/33 positive for Victorian female, 4/18 negative vs 3/18 positive for contemporary female; 10/52 positive vs 5/52 negative for Victorian male, and 7/21 positive vs 0/21 negative for contemporary male characters.

⁷³ Predicative position accounts for 29% (25/85), and postpositive adjectives/predicative adjuncts for 5% (4/85) in the Victorian material. Attributive position accounts for 26% (10/39), and postpositive adjectives/predicative adjuncts for 5% (2/39) in the contemporary material.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of *real father* and other uses of *real*; see Magnusson (2003).

domain are given in List 9. Adjectives denoting nationality or ethnicity are given in List 10.

List 9. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Classifying, Grading or Locative Position from the semantic domain of Situation. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
<i>alone</i>	chief 2	<i>big</i>	close
present 2	last	late 5	due
real	<i>right</i>	opposite	like
same	unlike		
<i>sure</i>			
<i>true</i>			
t/t ratio 0.86 (6/7)	t/t ratio 0.80 (4/5)	t/t ratio 0.43 (3/7)	t/t ratio 1.00 (3/3)

List 10. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Nationality/Ethnicity from the semantic domain of Situation.⁷⁵

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
white	civilised 2	Indian	black 2
	Irish 3	Japanese	coloured
	white		Japanese
			Sikh 2
t/t ratio 1.00 (1/1)	t/t ratio 0.50 (3/6)	t/t ratio 1.00 (2/2)	t/t ratio 0.67 (4/6)

Owing to the scarcity of instances in the above two sub-domains (cf. Lists 9 and 10), no conclusive observations about their role in the material can be made, in contrast to the next two sub-domains, which reveal some findings regarding distribution and variation. As explained in 3.4.1, the sub-domain of Relation contains adjective phrases that denote qualities related to both private and public relations. These properties are often a result of an act involving two people, and the character described is the affected party. The adjectives in the sub-domain of Relation are given in List 11.

⁷⁵ *Civilised* in the Victorian material occurs in the sense of ‘from the Western world’, an antonym of *native* in the adventure stories for boys from the 19th century.

List 11. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Relation from the semantic domain of Situation. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
<i>alone</i> 4	absent	welcome	<i>alone</i> 4
deserted	<i>alone</i>		free 2
desolate	lost		safe
forsaken	well known		well-cared
free			
married 2			
unknown			
t/t ratio 0.64 (7/11)	t/t ratio 1.00 (4/4)	t/t ratio 1.00 (1/1)	t/t ratio 0.50 (4/8)

A large share of adjective phrases in this sub-domain describe Victorian female characters. The most striking feature is that many of them denote the state of being abandoned; see e.g. (12).

(12) And then the mistress told her what she had now found out about the life of misery the *poor forsaken child* had led in her home. (VIC: ministering)

The final sub-domain in the domain of Situation concerns qualities related to position in society in a broad sense. Adjective phrases in this sub-domain denote skills, financial status or social position, for instance in school or in society overall (see further 3.4.1). The adjectives from the sub-domain of Skills, Position and Economy are given in List 12 (p. 126).

From List 12 it is apparent that many of the adjective phrases denoting skills, position or economy describe Victorian male characters. The majority of these refer to social status, for instance within the schooling system (e.g. *high, new* and *upper*). It can also be noted that there is a greater variety of positive than negative adjective phrases (e.g. *good, powerful, rich* compared to *inferior, poor* and *short of money*) among the adjectives in this sub-domain.

List 12. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Skills, Societal/Professional Position and Economy from the semantic domain of Situation. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.⁷⁶

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
busy	accomplished	<i>brilliant</i>	busy
<i>great</i>	busy 2	<i>good</i> 4	<i>good</i>
new 2	educated	new 2	rich 2
nottable	<i>great</i> 2	short	
<i>old</i>	high 2		
<i>poor</i> 7	idle 2		
rich	inferior		
	low 2		
	new 11		
	<i>old</i> 2		
	<i>poor</i> 4		
	powerful		
	principal		
	rich		
	upper 2		
	well off		
	well to do		
t/t ratio 0.50 (7/14)	t/t ratio 0.46 (17/37)	t/t ratio 0.50 (4/8)	t/t ratio 0.75 (3/4)

In conclusion, the findings from the domain of Situation regarding syntactic function show that adjective phrases denoting situation are given a higher information value, by virtue of occurring in predicative function, in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. The distribution across sub-domains reveals that adjective phrases denoting skills, position in society or economy are particularly frequent with Victorian male characters, suggesting that such features were considered important for Victorian males.⁷⁷ Finally, a distinct gender pattern was discerned considering the evaluative meaning. Male characters were often described with positive adjective phrases. Female characters, on the other hand, were often described with negative adjective phrases. For instance, the adjective phrases denoting relations for Victorian female characters primarily have negative meaning, suggesting that Victorian female characters in the present material are often portrayed as being at the mercy of other characters.

⁷⁶ *Good* and *brilliant* in this sub-domain denote a certain skill, indicated by the complementation in the adjective phrase, e.g. *good at fungi* (BNCsub: AC4). *Old* in this context is the non-inherent use, where the antonym of *old* is *new*. All instances of *old* in this sub-domain modify the term *friend*.

⁷⁷ The same conclusion is reached by Bäcklund (forthcoming).

5.9 Sociability

The semantic domain of Sociability comprises three sub-domains: Conduct, Stance/Behaviour and Acceptability Comments, based on Hene (1984: 199). An approximately equal share of adjective phrases describes the four groups of characters in this domain; see Table 5.20.

Table 5.20. Proportion of adjective phrases in the semantic domain of Sociability for male and female characters in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian		Contemporary	
Male	53/397	13%	55/392	14%
Female	64/461	14%	35/247	14%

A difference between the sub-domains is primarily that of difference of perspective. Acceptability comments are evaluative comments about a character's ability to interact, from the receiving end, that is, another character or focalised through the narrator, e.g. *unlikable*. Adjective phrases denoting Conduct refer to norms of behaviour established by society, e.g. *civil*. Finally, adjective phrases denoting Stance/Behaviour describe the attitude or stance of the character towards the surrounding society, e.g. *beastly*. The distribution across sub-domains is shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21. Distribution of adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability across sub-domains for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Conduct	19	16	24	27
Stance/Behaviour	55	47	28	31
Acceptability	43	37	38	42
Total	117	100	90	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 6.26$

Some diachronic variation can be discerned in distribution across sub-domains. Stance/Behaviour is the largest sub-domain in the Victorian material (47%), whereas Acceptability Comments (42%) is the largest in the contemporary material. Conduct is the smallest sub-domain overall in both sets of material (16% and 27% respectively in the Victorian and the contemporary material). The adjectives in the sub-domain of Conduct are given in List 13.

List 13. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Conduct from the semantic domain of Sociability.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
altered	careful	casual	careful
careful	civil	cute	cocky
decent	gentlemanly 2	peculiar 2	different
inattentive	queer	rum	impertinent
lively 3	strange	snooty	neat
neglectful		transformed	normal
obedient 2		well trained	ok
obstropolous			ordinary
tidy			polite
unresisting			sexist
			slippery
			strange 3
			violent
			well-primed
t/t ratio 0.77 (10/13)	t/t ratio 0.83 (5/6)	t/t ratio 0.88 (7/8)	t/t ratio 0.88 (14/16)

The sub-domain of Conduct comprises adjective phrases that denote three different aspects of conduct. Primarily, conduct concerns the characters' behaviour according to set norms (e.g. *gentlemanly*, *obedient*). In addition, since normative behaviour is also related to the level of originality that the character exhibits, adjective phrases denoting originality are also found in this sub-domain (e.g. *ordinary*, *strange*). The remaining adjective phrases denoting conduct refer mainly to the aspect of liveliness, e.g. *lively*, *careful*. Such adjective phrases are related to conduct since the norm often requires prudent conduct, in contrast to lively, unmanageable behaviour.

A closer look at the adjectives in this sub-domain suggests that there has been a change over time in the attitude of the children portrayed in children's fiction; the contemporary material reflects conduct in children which opposes authority, e.g. *snooty*, *impertinent*, and *slippery*, while such examples are non-existent in the Victorian material. The sub-domain of Conduct is also a larger domain in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, though marginally so for the female characters (23% or 8/35 of the sociability adjective phrases denote conduct for contemporary female characters, and 20% or 13/64 for Victorian female characters).⁷⁸

The adjectives in the next sub-domain, Stance/Behaviour, describe the characters' stance or attitude towards the surrounding environment, as well as their behaviour. Three groups of adjective phrases denoting stance can be distinguished: adjective phrases relating to admiration/humbleness (e.g. *estimable*, *patronizing*), adjective phrases relating to kindness/unfriendliness (e.g. *kind*, *nasty*) and lastly, adjective phrases relating to openness/reserve

⁷⁸ The corresponding figures of sociability adjective phrases denoting conduct for male characters are 29% or 16/55 for contemporary, and 11% or 6/53 for Victorian male characters.

(e.g. *tongue-tied, unsociable, welcoming*). The adjectives in this sub-domain are given in List 14.

List 14. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Stance/Behaviour from the semantic domain of Sociability. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
affectionate 2	dry	beastly	articulate
amiable	generous	easy 2	beastly
blunt	kind 12	important 2	grateful 3
charming	lovable	mean 2	kind 3
<i>cold</i>	merciful	quiet 2	nasty
confidential	sarcastic	secretive	quiet
desirable	<i>sharp</i>	silent	silent 3
estimable	shut up	warm	speechless
frightful	silent 2	welcoming	tongue-tied
gentle	speechless		willing
gracious 3	stanchest		
kind 7	strict		
open	unkind		
patronizing	unsociable		
quiet			
reserved			
silent 2			
timid			
warm			
t/t ratio 0.66 (19/29)	t/t ratio 0.54 (14/26)	t/t ratio 0.75 (9/12)	t/t ratio 0.63 (10/16)

A qualitative examination of List 14 suggests that the adjective phrases in this sub-domain tend to denote qualities on the friendly/unfriendly continuum in the Victorian material, for both female and male characters. The most frequently used adjective is *kind*, but the subgroup also includes instances such as *affectionate, gracious* or *unkind*. In the contemporary material, in contrast, the instances refer more often to qualities on the open/reserved scale for both female and male characters, e.g. *quiet, secretive* or *welcoming*. The type/token ratios suggest that there is greater diversity among the adjectives in this sub-domain for female than male characters in both the Victorian and the contemporary material.

The final sub-domain in the category of Sociability, namely Acceptability Comments, was discussed and contrasted with the domain of Attitude in 3.4.1. Adjective phrases in this sub-domain primarily denote qualities of characters as they are considered in interaction with other characters, and subsequently evaluated. The adjectives in the sub-domain of Acceptability Comments about behaviour are given in List 15.

List 15. Adjectives in the sub-domain of Acceptability Comments from the semantic domain of Sociability. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
beloved 2	bad	bad	bad 2
<i>good</i> 10	beloved 2	boring	<i>brilliant</i> 2
lovely 2	excellent 2	<i>brilliant</i> 2	dangerous
nice	false	extraordinary	genuine
perfect 2	favourite	<i>good</i> 2	<i>good</i> 4
uninteresting 2	fun	interesting	hopeless
unworthy	<i>good</i> 8	popular	nice 3
useful 2	interesting	unlikable	popular 2
	notorious	valuable	reasonable
	perfect	wonderful 4	<i>silly</i>
	wicked		unbearable
	wretched		useful
			wicked
			wonderful 2
t/t ratio 0.36 (8/22)	t/t ratio 0.57 (12/21)	t/t ratio 0.67 (10/15)	t/t ratio 0.61 (14/23)

List 15 shows that the majority of adjectives in Acceptability Comments have positive (*brilliant*) rather than negative (*false*) meaning. This suggests that the behaviour of characters is primarily evaluated in positive rather than negative terms, in both sets of material. A comparatively small share of the adjective phrases denoting sociability occurs in Acceptability Comments for Victorian female characters. The share of instances representing Acceptability Comments in the Sociability domain is 34% or 22/64 for Victorian female characters, compared to 40% or 21/53 for Victorian male, 43% or 15/35 for contemporary female and 42% or 23/55 for contemporary male characters. Consequently, the sociability of Victorian female characters is evaluated to a slightly lesser extent than the sociability of the other three groups of characters.

For the quantifiable parameters in the Sociability domain, Table 5.22 presents the distribution of the adjective phrases across evaluative meaning.

Table 5.22. Distribution across evaluative meaning for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	71	61	39	43
Negative	17	15	24	27
Neutral	29	25	27	30
Total	117	101	90	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 7.18$

As shown in Table 5.22, adjective phrases that denote sociability tend to be positive in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. However, the preponderance of positive adjective phrases is considerably greater in the

Victorian material (61% compared to 43% in the contemporary material). Moreover, only 15% of the Victorian instances in Sociability are negative, compared to 27% in the contemporary material. Hene (1984: 254) found that male characters in boys' books tended to have a negative attitude to the surrounding environment. In contrast, both male and female characters in my contemporary material are described with more positive than negative adjective phrases denoting sociability, although the distribution is slightly more even for the male characters (17 positive vs 8 negative for female characters, and 22 positive vs 16 negative for male characters).

The distribution across syntactic function for the adjective phrases in the Sociability domain is given in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23. Distribution across syntactic function for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Attributive	56	48	16	18
Predicative	49	42	70	78
Postpos./adjunct	12	10	4	4
Total	117	100	90	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 26.86$

The Sociability domain shows great diachronic differences regarding the distribution of syntactic function. An overwhelming majority, 78%, of the adjective phrases in the contemporary material are found in predicative function. In contrast, the distribution between attributive and predicative adjective phrases is much more even in the Victorian material, although attributive adjective phrases predominate overall (48% compared to 42%).⁷⁹ Thus, adjective phrases denoting sociability occur in a syntactic function that promotes the information conveyed by the adjective phrase to a considerably greater extent in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, following the general pattern in the material (see 4.6). In other words, sociability is one of the aspects given a higher information value in the contemporary than in the Victorian material (cf. 4.6; see also Hene 1984: 30; *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* 1990: 64–5).

The final quantifiable variable considered for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability is permanence, displayed in Table 5.24.

⁷⁹ For Victorian female characters, predicative function is slightly more common than attributive (44% or 28/64 vs 42% or 27/64).

Table 5.24. Distribution across permanent/temporary features for the adjective phrases in the domain of Sociability for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Permanent	87	74	55	61
Temporary	30	26	35	39
Total	117	100	90	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 1$, $\chi^2 = 4.14$

Table 5.24 shows that a higher share of adjective phrases denoting permanent sociability features are found in the Victorian compared to the contemporary material, 74% vs 61%. Presenting a quality as a permanent feature may be taken to indicate that the characters do not develop during the course of the narrative, which may be indicative of a more shallow portrayal (cf. the flat/round or static/dynamic distinction of characters; see Culpeper 2001: 93–4 or Chatman 1993: 60). A shallow portrayal is related to the notion of stereotyping discussed in Chapter 4, in that a less deep portrayal may contribute to the perception of a character as a stereotype rather than resembling a dynamic individual. In (13) we find a typical example of a permanent feature denoting sociability for a mother character in the Victorian material, while example (14) shows a temporary feature denoting sociability for a mother character in the contemporary material.

(13) Robert was out in the little garden fixing the linen poles; And Thomas, the second boy, chopping wood and filling the coal-scuttle, while the *good mother* fried bacon for the father's breakfast, and made the coffee. (VIC: ministering)

(14) She decided that every time her father or her *mother* was *beastly* to her, she would get her own back in some way or another. (BNCsub: CH4)

In sum, the sub-domain of Stance/Behaviour is the largest one in the semantic domain of Sociability for the Victorian material, whereas Acceptability Comments is the largest sub-domain for the contemporary material. In the sub-domain of Stance/Behaviour, adjective phrases foremost denote qualities of kindness/unfriendliness for Victorian characters, and qualities of openness/reserve for contemporary characters. The adjective phrases in the Sociability domain are generally positive in both sets of material investigated, especially in the Victorian material. Further, the majority of adjective phrases denoting sociability occur in predicative function in the contemporary material, whereas the distribution between attributive and predicative function is more even in the Victorian material. There is also a diachronic difference concerning the variable of permanence. The majority of adjective phrases in the Sociability domain denote permanent qualities in both sets of material examined. However, permanent features are especially frequent in the Victorian material.

5.10 Summary

In this section I will summarise the distribution of adjective phrases across the semantic domains of Age, Appearance, Mental Property, Physical State, Attitude, Situation and Sociability, as accounted for in the present chapter. The most important finding was that the distribution of adjectival descriptions across semantic domains for female characters either exhibited great diachronic change between the Victorian and the contemporary material or practically none. In contrast, the distribution of adjectival descriptions across semantic domains for male characters covered the middle ground between these two extremes, and showed slight differences between the Victorian and the contemporary material in most domains (see Figures 4 and 5). Consequently, the aspects of male characters typically described are relatively stable between the Victorian and the contemporary material. The descriptions of female characters, on the other hand, either focused on the same aspects in both sets of material investigated, or showed great diachronic development.

The domains that showed great diachronic differences for female characters were Age, Mental Property and to a certain extent Attitude (see Table 5.4). Age and Attitude exhibited a decrease over time in the proportion of instances used to describe these properties. Mental Property, on the other hand, showed the most significant increase in the proportion of instances. The large proportion of adjective phrases denoting age and attitude for Victorian female characters is accounted for by a few extensively used adjectives, namely *little* and *young* denoting age, and *dear* and *poor* denoting attitude. *Dear* and *poor* were used frequently not only with Victorian female, but also with Victorian male characters, whereas they were non-existent in the contemporary material. Thus, the differences in the Attitude domain are primarily diachronic and not gender-related. On the other hand, the small proportion of adjective phrases used to denote mental qualities for Victorian female characters is likely to be a sign of such properties being considered of little importance in the description of female characters in Victorian children's fiction.

The largest diachronic differences for the male characters were that appearance was more rarely described for Victorian than for contemporary male characters, while Situation was described considerably more often. The kinds of adjective phrases that account for the large share of instances denoting situation for Victorian male characters primarily denote the character's social status. Consequently, social status seems to have been an important feature to describe for male characters in Victorian children's fiction. In contrast, the appearance of male characters was a less important feature to describe in Victorian than in contemporary children's fiction, as suggested by the present study.

A further salient difference between the Victorian and the contemporary material is that the distribution across domains revealed a much more similar pattern for male and female characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. An important diachronic similarity concerns the relative proportion of adjective phrases as distributed across domains. Mental Property and Age were the two largest domains for both male and female characters in both sets of material, which suggests that these features are considered important to mention in descriptions of characters in general.

A closer study of the semantic domains revealed what kinds of descriptions were used within each domain. Differences were more common than similarities in the present investigation, and noticeable variation was found between the descriptions of all four groups of characters. In the domains of Appearance and Sociability, it was shown that good looks (*beautiful*) and stance (*kind*) were frequently described for Victorian female characters. Further, adjective phrases denoting negative situational relations (*deserted*) were typical of Victorian female characters. For Victorian male characters, on the other hand, characteristic mental features were described to a great extent, and strikingly often the trait of being honourable. Descriptions of the contemporary female characters often denoted (negative aspects of) cognition (*stupid*) in the Mental Property domain. For contemporary male characters, the descriptions tended to focus on interpersonal qualities, such as conduct (*cocky*). In consequence, the micro-analyses of the adjectival descriptions of characters revealed that in cases where the same aspects of characters were described, as shown in the distribution across domains, some diversity was shown among the kinds of descriptions used.

Moreover, gender-linked differences regarding the quantifiable variable of syntactic function were evident between the two sets of material. It was shown that the use of attributive versus predicative function in the domains varied to a greater extent between male and female characters in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. Attributive function was more common with female than male characters, and predicative function more common with male than female characters in all domains in the contemporary material except two. Mental Property exhibited an equal proportion of attributive adjective phrases for female and male characters, and in the Sociability domain attributive function was more common with male than with female characters. Interestingly enough, the Sociability domain also exhibited the greatest variation in the Victorian material, with attributive position being more common with male than female characters, and predicative position more commonly used with female than male characters. Consequently, features denoting Sociability were presented in a prominent position in the clause for female characters in both sets of material, indicating that such features are given a high information value in the description of female characters. Additionally, the patterns in the Victorian material showed that predicative function was slightly more common in the descriptions of female than

male characters primarily in the domain of Situation.⁸⁰ Predicative function was more common with Victorian male than female characters in the Physical State domain.

The quantifiable variable of evaluative meaning also showed considerable variation. Gender differences were more prominent than diachronic differences, and primarily found in the domains of Attitude and Situation. These domains showed similar patterns for female and male characters between the two sets of material, with negative adjective phrases prominently used in the descriptions of female characters, and positive ones in the descriptions of male characters. As the micro-level analyses showed, the Victorian differences in the domain of Situation pertained to situational relations being described negatively for female characters, and social status being described positively for male characters. Diachronic differences were most pronounced in the Mental Property domain, where the Victorian material exhibited prominent use of adjective phrases with positive meaning and the contemporary material favoured adjective phrases with negative meaning. This finding is related to the idealistic/realistic dichotomy, hypothesised to be of importance in the description of characters in Victorian and contemporary children's fiction. A realistic portrayal entails descriptions of less pleasant mental properties as well, as part of a complex, fully-realised character. In contrast, for characters functioning as role models, the description may be formulaic, focusing primarily on pleasant aspects of the character. An exception in the sub-domain of Emotion is that Victorian male characters were attributed more negative than positive emotions, which is possibly a token of negative emotions traditionally being considered manly (Hene 1984: 136).

Further, in two semantic domains, one group of characters deviated from the other three groups regarding the evaluative meaning of the adjective phrases. In the domain of Appearance, the descriptions of contemporary male characters typically had negative meaning (in contrast to positive meaning for the other three groups of characters), suggesting that negative aspects of appearance were pointed out in the descriptions of contemporary male characters. This is probably linked to a realistic portrayal, where characters with positive mental qualities may nevertheless have flaws in their appearance, that is, the traditional connection between appearance and mental properties is dissolving (see Nikolajeva 2002: 183). In contrast, in the domain of Physical State the descriptions of Victorian female characters typically had positive meaning (although the descriptions of the other three groups of characters were typically negative), indicating that good health

⁸⁰ Predicative function was also more common with female than male characters overall in the Mental Property domain in the Victorian material. However, the distributions in the Mental Property sub-domains yielded a different result, with predicative function being more common in the descriptions of male rather than female characters in both the sub-domains of Cognition and Emotion, whereas the sub-domain of Characteristics exhibited an equal proportion of predicative adjectives for female and male characters.

was an important physical aspect in the descriptions of Victorian female characters. Finally, the majority of descriptions in the domain of Sociability comprised adjective phrases with positive meaning, for all groups of characters. This finding suggests that when the sociability of characters was described in British children's fiction, the aspects receiving attention were primarily those denoting positive qualities.

In conclusion, the present chapter has investigated the distribution of adjectival descriptions of female and male characters in Victorian and contemporary children's fiction across semantic domains. The purpose was to reveal which aspects of characters were described extensively and which ones moderately in the different time periods, and in the treatment of male and female characters. Further, by studying the adjective phrases more closely, I intended to examine how the qualities were described, for example the type of adjective used, syntactic function and evaluative meaning. The most important result from this investigation was that while the focus on certain aspects of description remained relatively stable for male characters between the Victorian and the contemporary material, the descriptions of female characters were either subject to great change, or remained conspicuously similar between the two time periods examined. The gender differences were also considerably more pronounced in the Victorian compared to the contemporary material.

6 Part description

6.1 Introduction and initial observations

As mentioned in Chapter 3, part description is another means of describing characters in children's fiction. In the present chapter I will discuss the results of a study of adjectival part descriptions of male and female characters in Victorian and contemporary British children's fiction.⁸¹ One aim is to reveal further differences and similarities between the groups of characters described and the two sets of material. A further aim is to examine how the part descriptions relate to the overall descriptions discussed in previous chapters, that is, descriptions of characters as a whole (by way of adjective phrases modifying a noun/pronoun referring to a character).

The part descriptions investigated in the present study are noun phrases referring to a part of a character that are modified by one or several adjective phrases, e.g. *black hair*, *angry mouth*, *loving arms*, *methodical mind*. The part-referring nouns examined in the present study amount to 465, and include those referring to parts of the body (e.g. *finger*), parts of the face (e.g. *eyes*) and non-visible parts (e.g. *mind*) (see also 3.2.4). Most of the part descriptions were found in the contemporary material, 63% (291/465), compared to 37% (174/465) in the Victorian material. In both sets of material, a somewhat greater share of the part descriptions is used to describe male (57% or 99/174 in the Victorian, and 52% or 152/291 in the contemporary material) than female characters (43% or 75/174 in the Victorian, and 48% or 139/291 in the contemporary material). The adjectives in part descriptions occur in one of the following syntactic functions: attributive, predicative or postpositive function. The descriptions of parts tend to be most frequent in attributive function (76% or 133/174 in the Victorian, and 68% or 197/291 in the contemporary material),⁸² which is similar to the finding from Hene's study (1984: 246–7). Most of the part descriptions are used only once for each of the four groups of characters, that is, Victorian female, Victorian male, contemporary female and contemporary male characters.

⁸¹ As stated in 1.4.2, only statistically significant results are presented in tables, while figures relating non-statistically significant variation may be presented in the text.

⁸² Predicative function accounted for 16% (28/174) in the Victorian, and 23% (67/291) in the contemporary material, and postpositive function for 7% (13/174) in the Victorian and 9% (27/291) in the contemporary material.

Another initial observation concerns the distribution across evaluative meaning for part descriptions, shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Distribution of part descriptions across positive, negative and neutral meaning in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	47	27	20	7
Negative	28	16	84	29
Neutral	99	57	187	64
Total	174	100	291	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 38.99$

The Victorian material comprises more positive than negative adjective phrases (27% vs 16%), whereas negative adjective phrases are more common than positive ones in the contemporary material (29% vs 7%). This pattern is similar to that of evaluative meaning for overall descriptions, except that in the contemporary material the part descriptions comprise even fewer positive adjective phrases, and instead more neutral ones (cf. 4.2). Consequently, features of parts are even less described in positive terms than features of the character as a whole in the contemporary material (7% positive for part descriptions, and 17% for overall descriptions; see Table 4.2). In the Victorian material, many of the positive adjective phrases denote positive mental qualities, e.g. *truthful eyes* (see further 6.3.3), but also positive aspects of appearance (*beautifully-shaped arms*), and other evaluative comments (*dear face*). The description of characteristics and appearance in positive terms probably has the function of presenting the characters as ideals, since offering fictional role models was one of the didactic purposes of Victorian children's fiction (see 2.2.1).⁸³ In the contemporary material, on the other hand, quite a few of the negative adjective phrases denote states of being injured, e.g. *broken leg/nose*, *bruised body*, *swollen face*, which might be related to contemporary texts often being action-oriented (cf. Peddicord 1980). In addition, *voice* is often used in negative part descriptions in the contemporary material, e.g. *silly voice*, *choked voice*, *mocking voice*.

The rest of the chapter will be structured as follows. First, section 6.2 accounts for quantitative findings regarding the distribution of part descriptions across nouns referring to different kinds of parts of characters (6.2.1), and across adjectival density (i.e. the number of adjectives describing a noun) in 6.2.2. I will also address qualitative and quantitative findings regarding modifiers within the adjective phrases describing parts, and collocation patterns in part descriptions. Second, I turn to the semantic aspects of part description. In sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, the classification and overall distribution of adjective phrases in part descriptions across the semantic domains

⁸³ Note Nikolajeva's observation that negative descriptions of appearance may be attributed to characters with negative mental qualities in particular (2002: 183).

distinguished are presented. Finally, the Mental Property domain is subjected to a closer look in 6.3.3. The chapter concludes with a summary in 6.4.

6.2 Overall quantitative and qualitative findings

6.2.1 Distribution across different kinds of nouns referring to parts

The nouns modified by adjective phrases in part descriptions are classified in three categories, based on the kind of part that the noun is referring to (see also 3.2.4). The three categories are Body, Face and Non-visible. Parts belonging to Body and Face are visible, such as *arm*, *hair* or *smile*, whereas non-visible parts are represented by examples such as *heart*, *manner* and *voice*.⁸⁴ The distribution of adjective phrases across the three types of heads is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Distribution of part descriptions across the categories of heads in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Body	42	24	101	35
Face	78	45	136	47
Non-visible	54	31	54	19
Total	174	100	291	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 11.34$

Table 6.2 shows that, of the kinds of parts examined in the present study, facial parts are described with adjective phrases to the greatest extent in both the Victorian and the contemporary material (45% and 47% respectively). However, there is an interesting difference considering the other two kinds of parts. The Victorian material favours descriptions of non-visible rather than bodily parts (31% vs 24%). In the contemporary material, on the other hand, a larger share of the adjectival part descriptions focuses on parts of the body than on non-visible parts (35% vs 19%). This finding might be related to prudery as a powerful motive in the 19th century (see Görlach 1999: 132), which may entail the use of a variety of euphemisms to refer parts of the body, or an avoidance of mentioning them altogether. An additional ground for this claim is that the adjective phrases that do modify nouns referring to body parts in the Victorian material seem to primarily describe parts of animals, which were not included in the present study. Thus, attitudes in society

⁸⁴ Observe that the distinction visible and non-visible is not exactly the same as that between abstract and concrete nouns (Quirk et al 1985: 247); for instance, although not normally visible, *heart* would be considered a concrete noun since it is a physically tangible object.

towards mentioning physical attributes seem to be reflected in the language used in descriptions of characters from the two periods investigated.

The distribution of descriptions across the categories Body, Face and Non-visible reveals some interesting differences between the four groups of characters considered, that is, Victorian female, Victorian male, contemporary female and contemporary male characters. Body parts for contemporary male characters are considerably more often described than any of the other three groups of characters (44% or 67/152, compared to 32% or 24/75 for Victorian female, 24% or 34/139 for contemporary female and 18% or 18/99 for Victorian male characters; note also the kinds of adjectives used to describe the nouns discussed in 6.3). This finding suggests that the part descriptions of contemporary male characters are more physically oriented than the descriptions of the other three groups of characters. A comparison of the descriptions of male characters between the two sets of material shows that non-visible part descriptions are more common with Victorian than contemporary male characters (34% or 34/99 vs 14% or 21/152). In other words, body parts such as *hands* and *hair* are more often described for contemporary male characters, whereas for Victorian male characters descriptions of parts such as *voice* and *heart* are more common. Finally, facial parts are more often described for contemporary female than male characters (52% or 72/139 vs 42% or 64/152). This finding tallies with a traditional view that appearance is considered a more important feature to describe for female than male characters (cf. Hene 1984: 9), since Face is the kind of part description primarily relating to the appearance of a character.

6.2.2 Adjectival density in part description

The adjectival density in part descriptions concerns the number of adjective phrases that are used to describe the same noun referring to a part of a character (cf. 4.4). Examples with nouns referring to parts of characters being described by one, two, or more than two adjective phrases are given in (1)–(3), and the distribution of adjective phrases across adjectival density for the Victorian and the contemporary material is shown in Table 6.3.

(1) **1 Adj:** All right for Jazz, cap or not, for his *dark body* had a natural grace and he could swim far better than anyone had suspected. (BNCsub: AT4)

(2) **2 Adjs:** She was beautifully fair, with *blue, truthful eyes*, in which it was impossible guile could ever find a dwelling-place. (VIC: peter)

(3) **4 Adjs:** His *long, narrow face* was *tight* and *angry*. (BNCsub: AC4)

Table 6.3. Distribution of part descriptions across adjectival density in the Victorian and contemporary material.

No. of adjs.	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
1	108	62	125	43
2	50	29	136	47
3	12	7	21	7
4	4	2	4	1
5	0	0	5	2
Total	174	100	291	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 4$, $\chi^2 = 20.31$ (rows four and five = expected values below 5). When categories of three or more adjectives are collapsed: $p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 16.90$

The most salient result shown in Table 6.3 is the difference in distribution for part descriptions with one and two adjectives between the Victorian and the contemporary material. Part descriptions containing one adjective phrase are more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, 62% vs 43%. Instances occurring in descriptions with two adjective phrases constitute a larger proportion in the contemporary (47%) than in the Victorian material (29%), while instances occurring in descriptions with three or more adjective phrases account for approximately an equal proportion in the Victorian (a combined 9%) and the contemporary material (a combined 10%). This pattern is opposite to the adjectival density pattern for overall descriptions, where descriptions comprising one adjective phrase were more common in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, and descriptions comprising two adjective phrases more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (see 4.4). Nevertheless, the same interpretation cannot be made for density in part and overall descriptions. The most important finding regarding density for overall descriptions was that two adjective phrases modifying the same noun often represented collocations, such as *dear young*, for Victorian female characters (see 4.2 and 4.3). In contrast, no such patterns are distinguished among the part descriptions (see 6.2.4). For the nouns being modified by two adjective phrases, both adjective phrases contribute to the description of the character, especially in the contemporary material. Examples include *voice seemed cold and hostile* (BNCsub: BPD), *thin bruised body* (BNCsub: CAB), and *big golden eyes* (BNCsub: AC4).

The higher density of adjectives in part description in the contemporary than in the Victorian material is further indicated by a calculation of the number of adjective phrases per noun in the Victorian and the contemporary material. Each noun referring to a part of a character is modified by 1.26 (170/135) adjective phrases on average in the Victorian material, whereas the figure for the contemporary material is slightly higher, 1.45 (289/200).

The distribution of part descriptions across adjectival density for female and male characters in the two sets of material once again shows the most deviating pattern for female characters in the Victorian material. The descriptions of Victorian female characters exhibit a marked use of part de-

scriptions containing one adjective phrase (73%, compared to 54% for Victorian male, 47% for contemporary male and 39% for contemporary female characters).⁸⁵ Several of the single adjective phrases describing Victorian female characters seem to present self-evident or given information more in passing, for instance by virtue of occurring in definite noun phrases. This results in low information value being attributed to these descriptions (cf. 4.6). A few examples include *the ministering hand* (VIC: peter), *Ethel's short-sighted eyes* (VIC: daisy), *her powdered hair* (VIC: overtheway), and *that gentle hand* (VIC: eric). Further, the part descriptions of Victorian female characters show considerably less use of two conjoined adjective phrases (21% compared to 34% for Victorian male, 45% for contemporary male and 49% for contemporary female characters).⁸⁶ Once again, this is a striking difference between the overall descriptions and part descriptions, since Victorian female characters were typically described with an adjectival density of two adjective phrases, and comparatively rarely with single adjective phrases in overall descriptions (see 4.4). However, as stated previously, the function of two conjoined adjective phrases seems to be different between overall and part descriptions.

To sum up, the feature of adjectival density displayed a directly opposite pattern for part descriptions compared to overall descriptions (see 4.4). In overall descriptions, an adjectival density of one adjective phrase was typical of the contemporary material, and a density of two adjective phrases typical of the Victorian material. In part descriptions, one adjective phrase modifying a noun was typical of the Victorian material, and two adjective phrases modifying a noun typical of the contemporary material. These differences were especially striking in the descriptions of Victorian female characters. The opposing patterns for part descriptions compared to overall descriptions are possibly indicative of two alternative ways of describing characters (i.e. overall description and part description) being used to supplement each other, and rendering the portrayal of characters in various ways.

6.2.3 Collocation patterns and the most frequent adjectives

To be able to discern any collocation patterns in the present material, relatively frequent items need to be studied. The five most frequent adjectives used in part descriptions for the Victorian and the contemporary material together are: *blue* (13 x), *white* (12 x), *little* (11 x), *black* (10 x) and *long* (9 x). The most salient collocation feature concerns the adjective *blue*, which

⁸⁵ The raw figures are 55/75 for Victorian female, 53/99 for Victorian male, 71/152 for contemporary male and 54/139 for contemporary female characters.

⁸⁶ The raw figures are 16/75 for Victorian female, 34/99 for Victorian male, 68/152 for contemporary male and 68/139 for contemporary female characters.

will be discussed first. The other frequent adjectives and their collocates, together with a few other collocations will be dealt with second.

As regards *blue*, all instances describe *eyes*, which makes *blue eyes* the most frequent collocation in the material (13 x). Most of the instances of *blue eyes* are further modified by an additional adjective, which in many cases has an evaluative element incorporated, e.g. *fine blue eyes* (VIC: daisy) or *wishy-washy blue eyes* (BNCsub: AT4). The collocation *blue eyes* is thus coloured by either positive or negative meaning (cf. the discussion of *old woman* in 4.3, and Persson 1990: 56). By way of comparison, it can be noted that other colour adjectives modifying eyes do not have this added meaning. For instance, when the phrase *brown eyes* (5 x) is modified by an additional adjective, it primarily describes the shape or size of the eyes, e.g. *brown oval eyes* (BNCsub: CAB).⁸⁷ The distribution of *blue eyes* is similar for the Victorian and the contemporary material with 6 and 7 instances respectively. For the gender distributions, mainly male characters were attributed *blue eyes* in the Victorian material (4 x compared to 2 x), and female characters in the contemporary material (2 x male and 5 x female).

The other four most frequent adjectives, *white*, *little*, *black* and *long*, occur mainly in the contemporary material. This further suggests less diversity in the contemporary than in the Victorian material for part descriptions. The patterns found for these four adjectives in the contemporary material show that *white* and *little* mostly describe *face* (6 x and 5 x respectively). *White* describes male more often than female characters (7 x compared to 4 x). *Black* almost always describes *hair* (9 x), primarily for male characters. Finally, *long* modifies a range of nouns, and no typical collocations can be discerned. Other frequent combinations of adjectives and nouns include the lexicalised phrase *in a low voice* (7 x), used in the Victorian material to mean 'quietly,' as well as *mouth shut* (5 x), and *pale face* (5 x).

In sum, there is too little data to support any definitive conclusions as regards collocations. The adjectives and nouns that frequently occur together do not necessarily constitute lexical stereotypes or formulaic descriptions. In addition, no particular patterns as regards diachronic or gender variation were discerned. The most interesting collocation feature was the prominent use of *blue eyes* together with a modifying adjective with evaluative meaning.

6.2.4 Modification within the part descriptions

Adjective phrases that modify nouns referring to parts of characters are rarely modified or complemented themselves in the present material. Only

⁸⁷ Note also the ordering of premodifiers, with evaluative adjectives preceding the colour adjective, e.g. *wishy-washy blue eyes* (BNCsub: AT4) and shape-denoting adjectives following, e.g. *brown oval eyes* (BNCsub: CAB); cf. Bache (1978).

12% (57/465) of the adjective phrases occurring in part descriptions have phrase-internal modification⁸⁸, e.g. *her hand was deadly cold* (VIC: leila) or *her voice came out quite steady* (BNCsub: AC4). The kinds of phrase internal modifications observed in the present survey of part descriptions vary from degree modifiers (amplifiers and downtoners), such as *too*, to descriptive modifiers, e.g. *weirdly*, and complementary prepositional phrases, such as *with anger* and *from fatigue* (cf. 4.5).

The proportion of modified adjective phrases describing parts of characters is larger in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (16% or 27/174, compared to 10% or 30/291). Further, the part descriptions of female characters are phrase-internally modified to a greater extent (Victorian 19% and contemporary 14%) than the part descriptions of male characters (13% Victorian and 7% contemporary), in both sets of material.⁸⁹ This is in direct opposition to the overall descriptions, where adjective phrases describing male characters are modified to a greater extent than phrases describing female characters. The greatest contrast between overall and part descriptions is found among female characters in the Victorian material, in that adjective phrases describing Victorian female characters are most rarely modified in overall descriptions while most frequently modified in part descriptions. As stated in 4.5, modified adjective phrases are considered to render the description less formulaic, since the meaning of the adjective phrase is elaborated in the modification. In other words, the Victorian part descriptions may possibly be considered less formulaic compared to the part descriptions in the contemporary material, since Victorian part descriptions are modified to a greater extent than contemporary part descriptions. Consequently, description of parts is possibly considered more important and thus worthy of elaboration in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

As regards gender variation, the adjectival part descriptions of female characters seem to be the object of modification of a more descriptive kind in both the Victorian and the contemporary material. Compare for instance the female part descriptions in (4) and (5) comprising descriptive adverbs, with the male part description in (6) comprising a downtoner; see also 4.5.

(4) She had a delicately *curved nose*; splendid teeth, too, and showed them when she smiled. (VIC: overtheway)

(5) My *eyes* are muddy *brown*. (BNCsub: FSD)

⁸⁸ In what follows, modification is used to cover both modification and complementation within the adjective phrases in part descriptions.

⁸⁹ Adjective phrases with phrase-internal modification constitute 14/75 for Victorian female and 13/99 for Victorian male characters, 19/139 for contemporary female and 11/152 for contemporary male characters.

(6) His *manner*, though *kind*, was *rough*, and his *voice* was rather *harsh*.
(VIC: ursula)

This observation may suggest that phrase-internal modification is likely to add to the descriptive value of the adjectival part description itself for female characters; see (4) and (5), whereas the attributed quality is typically modified or graded for male descriptions; see (6). However, there are too few instances to make any conclusive observations.

In conclusion, the phrase-internal modification of adjective phrases describing parts of characters shows a quantitatively opposing pattern to the phrase-internal modification of adjective phrases describing characters as a whole: a larger proportion of modified adjective phrases occur in part descriptions in the Victorian material, and a larger proportion of modified phrases in overall descriptions in the contemporary material. The predominance of modified adjective phrases in the Victorian material suggests that the description of parts was more elaborated, and thus possibly more at the centre of attention in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

6.3 Part descriptions across semantic domains

6.3.1 Classification

Like the overall adjectival descriptions, the part descriptions were classified into semantic domains, in order to reveal what kinds of properties were attributed to characters by way of part descriptions. The semantic domains distinguished for part descriptions were Classifying, Colour/Light, Evaluative, Mental Property, Physical State, Physiological Change and Size/Shape/Volume. The category of Classifying contains part descriptions in which the adjective phrases classify which part is intended (e.g. *left arm*), or which state of a limited set that the part is in (e.g. *mouth open*), as well as other non-descriptive adjective phrases (e.g. *familiar voice*).

The category of Colour/Light includes primarily adjective phrases that describe *eyes* or *hair*. These descriptions denote visible qualities and the semantic domain resembles that of Appearance in Chapter 5. Some of the instances placed in the domain of Colour/Light could alternatively belong to the domain of Physiological Change, e.g. *bright eyes* or *white/red face*, since the noun phrases as a whole may be considered to indicate a mental state of the character (see further below). However, those instances where it was difficult to distinguish whether the colour primarily denoted a visible feature or indicated a mental condition were classified in the Colour/Light domain. In (7), for instance, the *white face* may possibly signal the character's nervousness, rather than simply describing the colour of her face.

(7) He gave her a secret, sideways look; her **face** was *white* and *tight*, like paper stretched over a frame. (BNCsub: A1C)

Part descriptions that constitute an evaluation of the character were placed in the category of Evaluative, e.g. *lovely face*, *charming smile*, *nasty mouth* and *excellent head*.

Adjective phrases that denote mental properties or states, although the property or state is attributed to a part of the character rather than the character as a whole, are classified as belonging to the category of Mental Property, e.g. *hopeful face*, *thankful heart*; cf. transferred epithets, also known as hypallage, in Huddleston and Pullum, e.g. *insane cackle* (2002: 558). This domain also includes a few interpersonal adjective phrases (e.g. *lively manner*), since they were too few to warrant a separate category of Sociability (cf. 3.4.1).

As mentioned above, in the part descriptions classified as Mental Property, the adjective phrases themselves denote a mental property or state of the character. In contrast, in the category of Physiological Change, the quality referred to by the entire part description (i.e. noun and modification) is to be interpreted as a sign of a mental property possessed by the character, although the adjective by itself does not necessarily denote the same quality; see an example in (8).⁹⁰

(8) When Mr Wormwood arrived back from the garage that evening his **face** was as *dark* as a thunder-cloud and somebody was clearly for the high-jump pretty soon. (BNCsub: CH4)

The adjective *dark* in (8) cannot be used to describe the whole person with the same meaning preserved. Instead, in this case it is clear from the context that Mr Wordwood's *dark face* is to be interpreted as referring to the mental state of anger that he is in. Compare also the illustrative exchange in (9), where different uses of *heart* in part descriptions are exemplified: the first describes a physical state and the second, as explained in the example, a mental condition, and classified in Physiological Change.

(9) Hoomey, desperate, said, "I've got a *weak heart*, sir." "You haven't, Rossiter. *Faint heart*, perhaps -- a mental condition. But physically -- this type of exercise will do you the world of good. Build you up." (BNCsub: AT4)

The category of Physical State includes adjective phrases that denote a physical state of the part described, e.g. *cold hand*, *bruised body*. The three instances denoting age are also classified in this category (*ageing*, *old*,

⁹⁰ The category of Physiological Change is adopted from Hene (1984: 177). She states that descriptions classified as physiological changes indirectly describe a mental property or state, as suggested by the context, which is the reasoning I have used for the present classification.

young), since in the context of part description, these adjective phrases are considered to denote a physical state, as well as the age of the part described. Finally, the category of Size/Shape/Volume comprises adjective phrases that denote the appearance (or audible qualities) of a part, such as *large eyes*, *curved nose*, *high voice*, and a few other appearance-related ones, e.g. *freckled face*. Thus, by virtue of describing appearance this domain resembles that of Colour/Light. Each domain is exemplified in (10)–(16).

(10) **Classifying:** Tom just grunted in his *usual manner*. (BNCsub: CAB)

(11) **Colour/Light:** She’s got *long fair hair* and a *little white face* and she sucks her thumb a lot. (BNCsub: FSD)

(12) **Evaluative:** And as the *pale sweet face* of the mother met the bright and rosy child-face, each of them was wet with a rush of ineffable tears. (VIC: eric)

(13) **Mental Property:** Her face was set, her *mouth angry*. (BNCsub: BPD)

(14) **Physical State:** Then he said “No” quite firmly, and pushed the *wrinkled old hand* away. (BNCsub: A1C)

(15) **Physiological Change:** “My own mamma,” he said, “and how beautiful! and those *laughing eyes* -yes, I remember now she used to look in that way, when she was playing with us all. (VIC: leila)

(16) **Size/Shape/Volume:** She had a *lovely pale oval madonna face* with blue eyes and her hair was light-brown. (BNCsub: CH4)

6.3.2 Distribution

The distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains for the Victorian and the contemporary material is shown in Table 6.4 and Figure 7.

Table 6.4. Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Classifying	12	7	31	11
Colour/Light	30	17	68	23
Evaluative	28	16	24	8
Mental Property	41	24	32	11
Physical State	10	6	39	13
Physiological Change	17	10	35	12
Size/Shape/Volume	36	21	62	21
Total	174	101	291	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 1401.50$

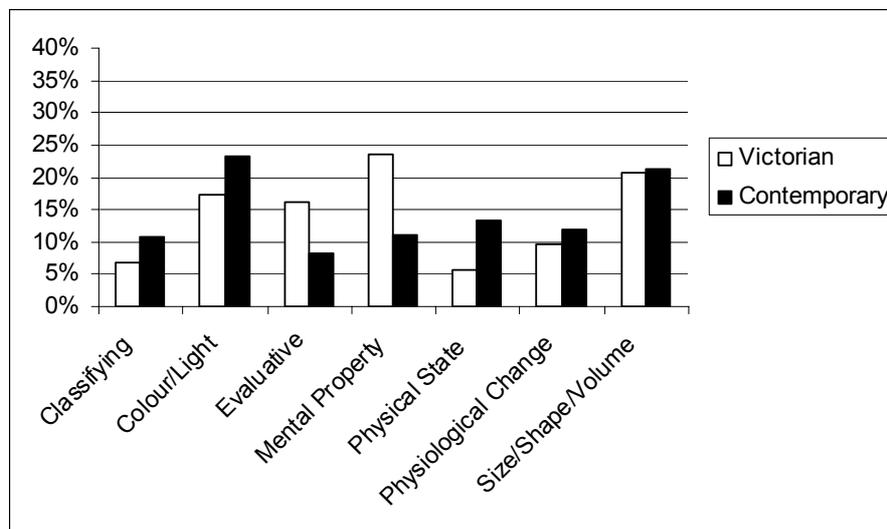


Figure 7. Distribution of part descriptions (based on raw figures) across semantic domains in the Victorian and contemporary material.

Above all, differences between the Victorian and the contemporary material are found in the domains of Colour/Light, Evaluative, Mental Property and Physical State. Evaluative and Mental Property are domains of twice the proportionate size in the Victorian compared to the contemporary material (16% vs 8%, and 24% vs 11%). In contrast, Colour/Light accounts for a larger share in the contemporary than in the Victorian material (23% vs 17%). Another great difference in the material is found in the distribution for the Physical State domain, which is more than twice as large a domain in the contemporary as in the Victorian material (13% vs 6%). These results suggest that in part descriptions internal qualities are more in focus in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, as displayed in the proportion of instances in the Mental Property domain (e.g. *thankful heart*, VIC: ministering). Conversely, external qualities are described more in part description in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, as shown in the domains of Colour/Light and Physical State (e.g. *squashed-pekinese face*, BNCsub: AC4). This contrast suggests that part descriptions have different functions in the Victorian and the contemporary material. In the Victorian more than in the contemporary material, the part descriptions are often used metonymically, to express mental qualities such as *ministering hand* (VIC: ministering) compared to *wrinkled old hand* (BNCsub: A1C). One of the reasons might be a wish to avoid describing physical or visible properties of the body, which could be related to the prudish attitudes of the 19th-century society (see Görlach 1999: 132, cf. also James 1890: 437). Evaluative adjective phrases were more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary

material for the overall descriptions as well, thus showing a similar pattern between overall and part descriptions.

The distributions across female and male characters in the Victorian and the contemporary material are shown in Tables 6.5 and 6.6.

Table 6.5. Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in the Victorian material.

	Female	%	Male	%
Classifying	5	7	7	7
Colour/Light	12	16	18	18
Evaluative	15	20	13	13
Mental Property	16	21	25	25
Physical State	9	12	1	1
Physiological Change	5	7	12	12
Size/Shape/Volume	13	17	23	23
Total	75	100	99	99

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 541.64$ (the expected value in Physical State for female characters is below 5)

Mental Property is the largest domain for both female and male characters in the Victorian material (21% and 25%, respectively). Although the raw figures are low, the findings displayed in Table 6.5 show that male characters in the Victorian material are more often described with adjective phrases from the Size/Shape/Volume domain than are female characters (23% vs 17%). Since this domain of part description is related to the overall domain of Appearance, the present finding suggests a difference between overall and part descriptions. Parts of male characters are extensively described with adjective phrases denoting size, shape or the like, such as *long skinny arms* (VIC: tom), while overall descriptions of appearance were rarer for Victorian male than female characters (see 5.4). For the Victorian female characters, on the other hand, a similarity between the part and overall descriptions was found. Female characters score higher than male characters in the Evaluative domain of part descriptions in the Victorian material (e.g. *dear face*, VIC: leila). Similarly, evaluative adjectives were more common with female than male characters in the overall semantic domains of Attitude and Appearance, for instance.

The distribution across female and male characters in the contemporary material resembles the Victorian material in that Evaluative is a larger domain for female than male characters (11% vs 6%) and Size/Shape/Volume is a larger domain for male than female characters (25% vs 17%), although the raw figures are low; see Table 6.6. Apart from these similarities, the distribution between female and male characters in the contemporary material deviates from the Victorian material.

Table 6.6. Distribution of part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in the contemporary material.

	Female	%	Male	%
Classifying	10	7	21	14
Colour/Light	27	19	41	27
Evaluative	15	11	9	6
Mental Property	23	17	9	6
Physical State	17	12	22	14
Physiological Change	23	17	12	8
Size/Shape/Volume	24	17	38	25
Total	139	100	152	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2 = 866.95$

Table 6.6 shows that, for once, the gender differences are more pronounced in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. The greatest gender difference is found in the Mental Property domain, which is a larger domain for female than male characters in the contemporary material (17% vs 6%). This tallies with the result for the overall descriptions, in which contemporary female characters were described with adjective phrases from the Mental Property domain slightly more often than contemporary male characters (see 5.5.1).

The proportions of instances across domains for female and male characters in both sets of material will also be compared, in order to trace diachronic stability or change. The proportions from Tables 6.5 and 6.6 for female and male characters are displayed together in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7. Percentages of adjective phrases in part descriptions across semantic domains for female and male characters in both sets of material investigated.

	Vic. female	Cont. female	Vic. male	Cont. male
Classifying	7	7	7	14
Colour/Light	16	19	18	27
Evaluative	20	11	13	6
Mental Property	21	17	25	6
Physical State	12	12	1	14
Physiological Change	7	17	12	8
Size/Shape/Volume	17	17	23	25
Total	100	100	99	100

$p < 0.05$, $df = 6$, χ^2 based on the raw figures: for the female-female comp. = 854.26, χ^2 for the male-male comp. = 629.37

For the female-female comparison, the domains of Evaluative, Mental Property and Physiological Change show differences between the Victorian and the contemporary material. Evaluative adjective phrases seem to be a feature typical of Victorian female characters (cf. 5.7). In contrast, the distributions in the domains Classifying, Physical State and Size/Shape/Volume are strikingly even between the two sets of material, 7% each in Classifying, 12% in

Physical State and 17% in Size/Shape/Volume. The similarities for Size/Shape/Volume further supports the finding presented in 5.2, namely that appearance being extensively described for female characters remains a stable feature between the two time periods investigated. Consequently, both considerable differences and relative stability were found in the comparisons of adjectival part descriptions as distributed across semantic domains for Victorian and contemporary female characters.

The comparison of the distributions for male characters shows differences between the Victorian and the contemporary material for all the domains, suggesting that there is no stability as regards the aspects which the part descriptions tend to focus on.

In sum, the results reveal both similarities and differences between part descriptions and overall descriptions. Similar patterns of distribution are found in the more factual, non-descriptive, and state-denoting domains, that is, Classifying, Evaluative and Physical State for the part descriptions, which are related to the overall semantic domains of Situation, Attitude and Physical State. First, qualities denoted by adjective phrases in the domains of Classifying and Situation are primarily attributed to male characters. Second, adjective phrases in Evaluative and Attitude describe Victorian female characters the most, and contemporary male characters the least.

In contrast, the more descriptive domains show dissimilar distributions between male and female characters, and the two sets of material. For male characters in both the Victorian and the contemporary material, appearance is described extensively with part descriptions, as shown in the domains of Colour/Light and Size/Shape/Volume, in contrast to the overall domain of Appearance, where female characters score higher in both sets of material. The greatest contrast between part descriptions and overall descriptions concerns the distribution in the Mental Property domain. Overall descriptions of mental properties and states are more common in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, whereas part descriptions denoting mental qualities are more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material. A reason may be that mental properties and states are important in the construction of fictional characters (cf. 5.2), although there was a tendency not to attribute mental qualities extensively to female characters directly in the Victorian material, considering the status of women in 19th-century society (see e.g. Norbelie 1992). Thus, the lack of overall descriptions of mental qualities for Victorian female characters especially (see 5.5) is compensated for by attributing mental qualities by way of part description. A reason for the preference for describing the appearance of male characters with part rather than overall descriptions may be that it is considered less important to describe the appearance of male characters (cf. Nikolajeva 2002: 189). Therefore, the alternative way of part description is preferred instead of direct overall description. Consequently, to a certain extent the distribution of

part descriptions across semantic domains can be seen as balancing the distribution across semantic domains for overall descriptions.

Finally, similar patterns of stability and change were found for part and overall descriptions. For female characters, both stability and change were found regarding the distribution across domains. For instance, change was traced in the Mental Property domain, and stability found among adjective phrases denoting appearance. The descriptions of male characters showed change in all domains, for both part and overall descriptions.

6.3.3 The Mental Property domain: a closer look

In the present sub-section, I will look more closely at the Mental Property domain for part descriptions. The part descriptions in the other domains are found in the Appendix, together with frequency information. The Mental Property domain warrants a separate discussion since it is the one with the most bearing on the overall descriptions; properties which belong to the internal life of a character can be expressed by different means, that is, by overall or by part descriptions (cf. *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* 1990: 79). The distribution of adjective phrases denoting mental qualities in overall descriptions showed that the proportion of instances in the Mental Property domain is higher for the contemporary than for the Victorian material (see 5.2), whereas in part descriptions, adjective phrases denoting mental properties and states constitute a larger proportion in the Victorian than in the contemporary material (see 6.3.2). As pointed out by Hene (1984: 29), the choice between a part description and an overall description denoting mental qualities can sometimes be one of point of view. When mental properties and states are attributed to visible parts, such as *eyes* or *hands*, the description is externally oriented. In contrast, when a mental property or state is attributed to a character as a whole, the description is more internally oriented, since it presupposes that the reader has access to the mind of the character and knows his or her feelings. A comparison of the mental part description in (17) and the mental overall description in (18) will illustrate the difference. In (17) someone sees the angry face of the character, and assumes that the character is experiencing emotions of anger. However, since the description is externally oriented, we cannot know for certain that the character is experiencing anger, only that he looks as if he is. In (18) on the other hand, the description of anger is internally oriented, since the emotion is attributed to the character by way of *angry* describing the referent of *he*.

(17) He had caught a glimpse of the scene without understanding it, and seeing the new boy's red and *angry face*, he only said, as he passed by, "What, Williams! fighting already? Take care." (VIC: eric)

(18) But he didn't think about that now. *He* was *angry*, really *angry*. The boy was kicking like crazy to get free of him but Philip held on. (BNCsub: ABX)

Nikolajeva (2002: 182) suggests that externally-oriented description is a feature of older texts, compared to the more internally-oriented contemporary children's fiction. The findings of my survey support this claim. Mental properties and states are attributed to characters by way of part description more frequently in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, and by way of overall description to a greater extent in the contemporary than in the Victorian material.

All the part descriptions classified in the Mental Property domain are given in List 16 (p. 154). As indicated by the type/token ratios for each group of character, a great variety of adjectives in part descriptions are used to denote mental qualities, especially in the contemporary material.

List 16 shows that the Mental Property domain of part descriptions includes adjective phrases denoting emotions, such as *thankful* and *glad*, characteristics, such as *tough* and *intelligent*, as well as adjective phrases relating to cognition, e.g. *accustomed*. A few interpersonal instances such as *lively* and *friendly* are also found (see 6.3.1 and 3.4.1). Further, a difference as regards the choice of nouns to describe mental properties by way of part description is discerned. *Heart* is used only in the Victorian material.⁹¹ In addition, no instances of *manner* were found in the Mental Property domain in the contemporary material, compared to seven instances in the Victorian, to be contrasted with only one instance of *mind* in the Victorian material, compared to six in the contemporary. Although the figures are low, this difference suggests a change in nouns used when describing mental properties and states by way of part descriptions between the Victorian and the contemporary material: *heart* and *manner* seem to be typical of the Victorian material, and *mind* of the contemporary material.

Next to be considered are the evaluative meaning and the variable of permanence. The distribution across evaluative meaning is shown in Table 6.8 (p. 154).

⁹¹ In fact, there are only two instances of *heart* in the contemporary material overall, and they occur in the same context, exemplified in section 6.3.1, example (9).

List 16. Adjectives and nouns comprising part descriptions in the semantic domain of Mental Property. A figure following the part description indicates how many time it is used, if more than once.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
agitated (voice)	accustomed (eyes)	alert (face)	angry (face)
cheerful (voice)	angry (face)	angry (mouth)	anxious-looking (face)
downcast (face)	excited (manner)	cross (face)	calm (voice)
eager (hands)	fearless (eyes)	distant (voice)	dismissive (voice)
gentle (hand, voice)	frank (face)	distraught (face)	friendly (smile)
inquiring (mind)	glad (voice)	eager (face)	hopeful (face)
kind (heart) 2	good-humoured (face)	hard (eyes)	hostile (voice)
mild (eyes)	good-natured (manner)	holy (voice)	quick (mind)
ministering (hand/s)	grim (smile)	innocent (eyes)	tidy (mind)
piteous (manner)	hearty (manner)	lazy (hand)	
sorrowful (heart)	honest (face)	methodical (mind)	
thankful (heart)	indignant (voice)	neat (mind)	
truthful (eyes)	intelligent (eyes)	nimble (mind)	
	kind (manner)	sad (voice)	
	lively (manner)	scornful (eyes)	
	loving (arms, heart)	self-mocking (voice)	
	rough (manner)	severe (voice)	
	sarcastic (smile)	sour (smile)	
	sardonic (smile)	sun-dazed (mind)	
	serious (voice)	suspicious (face)	
	sorrowful (face)	tough (face)	
	tender (heart)	watchful (eyes)	
	trustful (arms)	wild (eyes)	
	weary (head)		
t/t ratio 0.81 (13/16)	t/t ratio 0.96 (24/25)	t/t ratio 1.00 (23/23)	t/t ratio 1.00 (9/9)

Table 6.8. Distribution of part descriptions across evaluative meaning in the Mental Property domain for the Victorian and contemporary material.

	Victorian	%	Contemporary	%
Positive	21	51	7	22
Negative	12	29	13	41
Neutral	8	20	12	38
Total	41	100	32	101

$p < 0.05$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 6.83$

As shown in Table 6.8, positive is more common than negative meaning in the Victorian material (51% vs 29%), whereas the contemporary material demonstrates use of more negative than positive adjective phrases (41% compared to 22%). As is evident from List 16, especially contemporary female characters exhibit a great share of negative part descriptions, such as *angry mouth*, *distraught face*, and *sad voice*. The distribution across evalua-

tive meaning for part descriptions denoting mental properties resembles the distribution for overall descriptions of mental properties, shown in 5.5.1.

Similarly, the variable of permanence, that is, whether the property is presented as a permanent or a temporary feature, shows the same pattern for part descriptions as for overall descriptions in the Mental Property domain. Temporary features are often emotions (e.g. *cross face*), whereas permanent features tend to describe characteristic traits (e.g. *honest face*). As stated in 5.5, the distinction between temporary and permanent features is also related to the distinction between properties (permanent features) and states (temporary features). As with the result for overall descriptions, the distribution between permanent and temporary mental part descriptions is much more even in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, where temporary features are more common than permanent ones.⁹² Although the result is non-significant for part descriptions, this may further emphasise differences in the attribution of permanent and temporary qualities, linked to the distinction between static and dynamic characters (cf. Chatman 1993: 60 and sections 5.5 and 5.9), between the Victorian and the contemporary material.

6.4 Summary

One of the most important findings from the investigation of adjectival part description was that the differences found between the Victorian and the contemporary material mostly showed a pattern contrary to the overall descriptions. Aspects of characters that were described extensively using overall descriptions in either the Victorian or the contemporary material were described less with adjective phrases modifying parts of characters, and vice versa. This finding, which suggests that the two sets of material exhibit alternative ways of describing the same qualities, implies that the descriptions of characters are more similar between the Victorian and the contemporary material than the results from the overall descriptions alone would suggest (see Chapters 4 and 5). Thus, to some extent, the part descriptions complemented the ways in which descriptions of characters were presented in overall descriptions, by comprising alternative ways of presenting information.

The quantitative findings for the Victorian and the contemporary material concerning the adjectival density of part descriptions and modification within the adjective phrases describing parts demonstrated opposite patterns for the part descriptions compared to the overall descriptions. In overall descriptions, single adjective phrases were typical of the contemporary material (especially for male characters), whereas two adjective phrases modify-

⁹² In the Victorian material, the relation between temporary and permanent features is 49% (20/41) compared to 51% (21/41). In the contemporary material, the distribution is less even, 69% (22/32) denote temporary, and 31% (10/32) permanent features.

ing a noun were typical of the Victorian material (especially for female characters). In contrast, for part descriptions, single adjective phrases modifying a noun (e.g. *cheerful voice*, VIC: leila) were more common in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, and most typical of Victorian female characters. Two adjective phrases modifying the same noun (e.g. *rough brown hand*, BNCsub: CAB) was a feature more common in the contemporary than the Victorian material, especially for contemporary male characters. Phrase-internal modification in part descriptions was the most common for Victorian female characters, and the least common for contemporary male characters, compared to the phrase-internal modification for the overall descriptions, in which Victorian female characters showed the lowest proportion of modified phrases. Consequently, part descriptions were more elaborated, and thus possibly had higher information value in the Victorian than in the contemporary material.

As regards the distribution across semantic domains, it showed that internal qualities from the Mental Property domain were attributed to Victorian characters in an alternative fashion, by way of part description rather than direct description of the character as a whole, e.g. *intelligent fearless eyes* (VIC: eric) instead of *intelligent fearless boy* (constructed example). In the contemporary material, on the other hand, the part descriptions were used to describe external qualities, as shown in the domains of Colour/Light and Physical State, e.g. *ageing, lined face* (BNCsub: ACB). In this, the part descriptions do not support Nikolajeva's claim that contemporary children's fiction is more internally oriented, and older children's fiction more externally oriented (2002: 182). This finding can, once again, be seen as a token of part descriptions balancing the results for overall descriptions presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Furthermore, for the part descriptions, the gender differences were more pronounced in the contemporary than in the Victorian material, in contrast to the findings for overall descriptions, where the Victorian material showed the greatest gender differences. However, as with overall descriptions, the most diverging patterns of distribution were usually found between Victorian female characters and contemporary male characters. In addition, the distributions across evaluative meaning showed similar patterns between the overall and part descriptions in that positive rather than negative descriptions were typical in the Victorian material, and negative rather than positive descriptions in the contemporary material. This may be related to the didactic purposes of Victorian children's fiction, where characters were presented as sympathetic ideals with positive qualities. In contrast, the negative qualities attributed to characters in the contemporary children's material may present characters as closer to real-life individuals, thus producing an element of recognition.

7 Summary and conclusions

This corpus-based survey has focused on adjectival descriptions of female and male characters in Victorian and contemporary children's fiction. It presented a systematic linguistic examination from a diachronic perspective; so far gender differences in children's fiction have been thoroughly examined primarily by literary scholars. By taking a corpus linguistic approach I was able to obtain sufficient data for a comprehensive study, and to select items for investigation on the basis of frequency. The use of syntactic classifications enabled a systematic and quantifiable study, while the semantic classifications helped bring out interesting differences and similarities between the Victorian and the contemporary material, and between male and female characters. The methodology was applicable to both overall descriptions (Chapters 4 and 5), and part descriptions (Chapter 6), which indicates its usefulness for quantitative and qualitative studies of character description.

In this chapter the general trends found in the study are summarised and related to my hypotheses (see 1.1), and I also suggest areas for further research. The primary research questions I addressed in the present study were: *what* aspects of characters are adjectivally described, and *how* are they described? I found that age, appearance, mental qualities, and sociability were the aspects most extensively described in both sets of material (see Chapter 5, particularly section 5.2.1). To answer the question of how the characters were described I operated within a continuum of descriptions ranging from highly to non-formulaic as regards frequency, diversity, collocations, information value as shown by syntactic function, and elaboration within the adjective phrases (see Chapter 4). The descriptions of Victorian female characters were distinctly more formulaic than the descriptions of the other characters in the material, with a type/token ratio as low as 0.34, compared to 0.51–0.57 for the other groups of characters. Finally, the study of overall descriptions was complemented by a study of part descriptions, that is, adjectives modifying a noun referring to a part of a character instead of the character as a whole (see Chapter 6). The study of part descriptions complemented the results for overall descriptions in that they mostly yielded distinct contrary patterns, and thus balanced the overall descriptions to provide more diverse portrayals of characters.

My hypotheses were based on previous (primarily literary) research. I predicted that gender differences would be more pronounced in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, owing to gender being a more important

defining factor in Victorian than in contemporary society (see Townsend 1990: 39). This was confirmed by the present study, although the part descriptions showed a pattern contrary to this overall pattern, with gender differences being more prominent in the contemporary than in the Victorian material. In overall descriptions, Victorian male characters resembled contemporary characters, unlike Victorian female characters. Further, the gender differences in what aspects the descriptions focused on related more to traditional gender roles in the Victorian material (see below). In the contemporary material, on the other hand, the descriptions of female and male characters were, for the most part, equally diverse.

Another expected diachronic difference concerned the level of formality in the Victorian and the contemporary texts. As regards the adjectival descriptions in their function as indicators of the level of formality, it was shown that the descriptions in the Victorian material displayed more formal and complex features in how the aspects were described than the contemporary material, on the basis of the syntactic function (4.6) and the adjectival density (4.4).

Most of the hypotheses for the present study were related to a proposed dichotomy between an idealistic and a realistic portrayal of characters, typical of Victorian and contemporary children's fiction respectively. Idealistic portrayals, where characters function as role models, can be rather simple, promoting a few traits only, whereas realistic portrayals tend to be complex and layered. The idealistic portrayal of characters is linked to the didactic purpose of Victorian children's fiction (see 2.2.1), while a realistic portrayal is a part of realistically oriented contemporary children's fiction overall (see 2.2.2). The idealistic/realistic dichotomy was manifested in various ways. Positive descriptions were more frequent in the Victorian material, and negative descriptions in the contemporary material, since an idealistic portrayal would focus on positive qualities, whereas a realistic portrayal would need to take into account negative as well as positive aspects of characters (see 4.2). The descriptions were more diverse in the contemporary material resulting from the attempt at a realistic portrayal (shown by type/token ratios, and the distribution across semantic domains). Conversely, the descriptions were more formulaic in the Victorian material, linked to the function of characters as role models in an idealistic portrayal. The Victorian characters were also frequently found to be described with adjective phrases indicating permanent properties, and contemporary characters with adjective phrases denoting temporary properties and states, which relates to the distinction between portrayals of the characters as static (permanent qualities) or dynamic (temporary properties); see Culpeper (2001: 93–4).

I will now summarise the descriptions typical of the different groups of characters. I will account for the general trends found in the descriptions of the Victorian female and the Victorian male characters separately, since they were shown to differ, and contrast the trends found in descriptions of Victo-

rian characters with those in the contemporary material. For the contemporary characters, few distinct gender patterns were found, making it more relevant to account for the findings regarding the descriptions of contemporary male and female characters together rather than separately.

The descriptions of Victorian female characters emerged as the most formulaic and stereotypical, both regarding the aspects described and how they were described. Consequently, Victorian female characters were seldom complex characters, resembling real-life individuals; instead their function in the texts was to represent ideal types. Although Victorian female characters were described with the greatest number of adjectives (see 4.2), this was not necessarily a result of an author's wish to describe the characters extensively; instead, it is perhaps more representative of "an instinctively lavish use of adjectives," prominent among certain language users, especially "those who aspire to the best society" in the 19th century (Phillipps 1984: 40–1). The descriptions also functioned as lexical stereotypes, reinforcing an image of a character with certain attributes. The descriptions of Victorian female characters invariably scored high on formulaic features: little diversity (4.2), extensive use of a limited number of adjectives (4.3), collocations involving two adjectives (4.3) and little elaboration within the adjective phrases (4.4). In addition, descriptions of Victorian female characters occurred predominantly in attributive position (4.6), had positive rather than negative meaning (4.2 and Chapter 5), and were often of a permanent nature, implying a portrayal of the character as static. Chapter 5 also illustrated that the aspects attributed to Victorian female characters reflected a traditional picture of femininity; mental qualities were described sparingly (5.5), thereby reflecting an attitude in society that mental abilities, properties and states of women were of little importance. In contrast, a pleasant appearance was frequently attributed to Victorian female characters (5.4). Adjectives denoting age were also frequently used with Victorian female characters; this was probably more a result of formulaic descriptions such as *young lady* or *little girl* than a preoccupation with the age of Victorian female characters by the authors (5.3). Interestingly, the complementary study of part descriptions revealed almost the opposite pattern to the overall descriptions with regard to how the descriptions are attributed (Chapter 6). The analysis of part descriptions of Victorian female characters showed the least formulaic features of description. In addition, part descriptions of mental properties were proportionally the most frequent with Victorian female characters. Consequently, part descriptions seem to represent an alternative way of attributing qualities considered to be of less relevance to characters, which complements the overall descriptions.

The primary function of the descriptions of Victorian male characters was to portray the characters as ideals or role models. The descriptions were not as formulaic as for Victorian female characters, but still tended to be positive, occur in attributive position and denote permanent qualities, for in-

stance with regard to mental properties (see 5.5.5). Such formulaic descriptions resulted from the idealistic portrayal of characters, in which they are more likely to be described as types rather than individuals. In addition, the focus on mental characteristics for Victorian male characters was linked to the characters' function as role models. Features presented as typical of these characters are effective as means of offering role models. For instance, Victorian male characters were frequently attributed the characteristic trait of being honourable (see 5.5.4). Attitudes prevalent in Victorian society were also mirrored in the descriptions; for instance, descriptions of position in society were noticeably frequent for Victorian male characters (5.8). In contrast, the appearance of Victorian male characters was rarely described (5.4), suggesting that this was a feature of less importance in the portrayal of a male ideal.

One of the most striking diachronic differences is the development of descriptions of mental properties for female characters. Descriptions of mental properties are important in more person-based narratives (i.e. the contemporary material), which was evident in the descriptions of mental qualities for contemporary characters. The proportion of instances that belonged to the Mental Property domain amounted to 37% for contemporary female characters, compared to 16% for Victorian female characters. This reflects a change in the societal attitude, namely that mental properties were considered to be features as important to attribute to female as to male characters in the contemporary material, in contrast to the Victorian material, in which mental qualities were considered of little importance to attribute to female characters. Within the Mental Property domain, the greatest diachronic differences were found in the sub-domain of Emotion, which is related to what is appropriate in an idealistic or realistic portrayal. Ideals are not supposed to experience strong negative emotions, whereas it is necessary in a realistic portrayal of a character to account for all aspects of emotional life. Another diachronic difference relating to the idealistic/realistic dichotomy concerned evaluative meaning. The domains of Attitude and Evaluative for part descriptions were described to a greater extent in the Victorian than in the contemporary material, as a token of evaluative meanings being more important in an idealistic than in a realistic portrayal. In contrast to the development in the Mental Property domain, the appearance of female characters was described to a similar extent in the Victorian and the contemporary material.

In sum, the idealistic/realistic dichotomy offered an explanation for most of the differences found between the Victorian and the contemporary material. The most important findings were that gender differences were pronounced in the Victorian material, with descriptions of Victorian female characters being the most formulaic, and describing aspects of appearance to a great extent, while the description of Victorian male characters focused on mental characteristics and position in society. In contrast, the descriptions of female and male characters in the contemporary material were equally di-

verse. The descriptions of male characters showed change in all semantic domains, whereas the descriptions of female characters showed change in the attribution of mental qualities, but not in the proportion of adjectival descriptions denoting appearance. Finally, the part descriptions generally showed a contrasting pattern to overall descriptions, suggesting that they functioned as alternative ways of describing characters, complementing the portrayal offered by the overall descriptions in both periods.

Naturally, there are more aspects to explore in the present data than those covered by the present study. For instance, it would be interesting to compare the descriptions of characters according to groupings other than male/female, such as children/adults, or the different categories of terms, that is, central, kinship and epicene terms, personal names and pronouns (see e.g. Lilja forthcoming; Norberg 2002; Wallin-Ashcroft 2000) in the Victorian and the contemporary material. Owing to the different attitudes towards the referents of the nouns, for instance family members or adults, such groupings could further reflect how attitudes in society are mirrored in the literature. Other aspects of characterisation could also be taken into account, such as studying the speech of the characters (see e.g. Stephens 1999; Culpeper 2001), or the processes they engage in or their participant roles, based on Halliday's systemic-functional grammar (see e.g. Knowles 1995; 1998; Asplag 1999). Studying the speech of characters relates them to a sociolinguistic paradigm, treating them as if they were real-life people. The theory of processes and participants can help bring out different roles played by characters in the texts and in different texts; for instance Knowles found mental processes to be typical of characters in contemporary children's fiction, in contrast to Victorian children's fiction (1998: 162–3). Both these methods are proposed as part of stylistic analyses of texts (see e.g. Leech and Short 1981; Toolan 1996). Adjectival description of characters as examined in the present study is one aspect of stylistic analysis; however, it would be useful to widen the scope to encompass other aspects of characterisation, which would shed further light on both diachronic and gender differences.

Another interesting area for further research would be to expand the material of the present study to comprise children's fiction from other points in history, in order to be able to trace diachronic change or stability in more detail. A contrastive study of translated children's fiction could provide interesting insights into the use of adjectives to describe characters (cf. Malmkjær 1993). More data would also enable a more in-depth study of the lexical choices made to attribute similar qualities, for instance with the use of co-hyponyms, to characters (see Persson 1990).

In conclusion, the present study has shown that the language of children's fiction offers a wealth of material for studies of linguistic aspects of characterisation.

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Appendix

This appendix comprises the adjectival part descriptions as distributed across semantic domains (except for the adjectival part descriptions in the Mental Property domain, which are given in List 16, section 6.3.3). The nouns that the adjectives modify are also given. The figures displayed indicate the number of instances found, when more than one. The t/t ratio signals the number of tokens of adjectival part descriptions over types, for each group of character.

List A1. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Classifying. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
female (hands)	back (hair)	different (voice)	bare (feet)
left (hands)	familiar (manner)	left (arm) 2	closed (eyes) 2
same (hand) 2	<i>full</i> (mouth)	neutral (voice)	familiar (face, voice)
shut (eyes)	<i>open</i> (eyes) 2	official (smile)	free (hand)
	Scottish (face)	<i>open</i> (mouth)	<i>full</i> (mouth, nose)
	usual (manner)	shut (mouth) 2	left (arm, leg)
		whole (body)	<i>open</i> (eyes, mouth 2)
			right (finger)
			shut (eyes, mouth 2)
			upper (arm)
			usual (manner)
			whole (body, face)
t/t ratio 0.80 (4/5)	t/t ratio 0.86 (6/7)	t/t ratio 0.78 (7/9)	t/t ratio 0.57 (12/21)

List A2. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Colour/Light.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
black (eyes)	black (hair)	auburn (hair)	black (hair) 6
blue (eyes) 2	blue (eyes) 4	black (hair) 2	blue (eyes) 2
bright (eyes)	bright (eyes) 3	blonde (hair)	bright (hair)
fair (face)	bronzed (face)	blue (eyes) 5	brown (eyes, hand)
glossy (hair)	brown (eyes) 2	brown (eyes 2, hair)	corn-coloured (hair)
jet-black (hair)	fair (hair)	fair (hair)	dark (body, hair)
pale (face) 2	grey (hair)	golden (eyes)	fair (hair)
red (hair)	light (hair)	grey (hair)	glossy (head)
white (hair)	lightcoloured (eyes)	greying (hair)	grey (face) 2
	red (face)	hazel (eyes)	mouse-coloured
	rosy (face)	iron-grey (hair)	(hair)
	sallow (face)	light-brown (hair)	pale (face) 2
		pale (face)	green (face)
		pink (nose)	pallid (head)
		red (eyes, hair)	pasty (face)
		white (face 3, hands)	red (face 2, hair, hand)
			ruddy (face)
			sandy (hair)
			silver (hair)
			slate-grey (eyes)
			tanned (body)
			waxen (face)
			white (face 3, hair 3, head)
t/t ratio 0.82 (9/11)	t/t ratio 0.67 (12/18)	t/t ratio 0.59 (16/27)	t/t ratio 0.54 (22/41)

List A3. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Evaluative. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
beautifully-shaped (arms)	beautiful (face)	beady (eyes)	charming (smile)
dear (face)	childish (face)	famous (eyes)	dangerous (voice) 2
fine (voice)	delicate (hand)	fragile (body)	excellent (head)
good (voice)	fine (eyes)	<i>little</i> (voice) 2	good (hair)
<i>little</i> (face)	handsome (face) 2	lovely (face)	odd (voice)
odd (face)	<i>little</i> (heart)	nasty (mouth) 2	ugly (face)
peculiar (manner)	pleasant (smile)	peculiar (face)	wishy-washy (eyes, face)
pleasant (face)	right (mind)	pitiful (face)	
poor (feet)	sweet (eyes, face)	plain (face)	
pretty (face) 2	taking (voice)	refined (voice)	
sweet (face) 2	well-made (hand)	silly (voice) 2	
well-turned (mind)		sweet (voice)	
winning (smile)			
t/t ratio 0.87 (13/15)	t/t ratio 0.85 (11/13)	t/t ratio 0.80 (12/15)	t/t ratio 0.78 (7/9)

List A4. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Physical State. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
bad (feet)	dirty (body)	ageing (face)	arthritic (hands)
clasped (hands) 2		bowed (head)	bald (head)
<i>cold</i> (hand)		<i>broken</i> (leg, nose)	bandaged (head)
powdered (hair)		cocked (head)	bowed (head)
short-sighted (eyes) 2		crippled (hand)	bruised (body) 2
tender (feet)		cut (face)	cut (hand)
well (feet)		inclined (head)	grease-streaked (head)
		lined (face)	grimy (finger)
		magnified (eyes)	jarred (face)
		pinched (face)	old (hand)
		puffy (eyes)	red-rimmed (eyes)
		quivering (finger)	scratched (hand)
		slack (mouth)	shrunken (face)
		swollen (face)	<i>stiff</i> (arm, face)
		tilted (head)	strong (hair) 2
		wet (mouth)	weak (heart)
			wiry (body)
			wrinkled (hand)
			young (face)
t/t ratio 0.78 (7/9)	t/t ratio 1.00 (1/1)	t/t ratio 0.94 (16/17)	t/t ratio 0.86 (19/22)

List A5. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Physiological Change. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
<i>broken</i> (heart)	<i>broken</i> (voice)	bitter (voice)	blank (face)
buried (heart)	<i>cold</i> (smile)	blazing (eyes)	bright (smile)
firm (mouth)	faint (voice)	bright (smile)	choked (voice)
laughing (eyes)	firm (face)	<i>broken</i> (voice)	cold (voice)
piercing (eyes)	flaming (eyes)	choking (voice)	cool (voice)
	flashing (eyes)	clipped (voice)	dark (face)
	<i>full</i> (heart 2, mind)	controlled (voice)	<i>faint</i> (heart)
	<i>open</i> (face)	cracked (voice)	frowny (face)
	shaken (heart)	defeated (voice)	<i>full</i> (head)
	steady (hand)	measured (voice) 2	mocking (voice)
		precise (voice)	tense (smile)
		set (face)	tight (face)
		steady (hands, voice)	
		steadying (hand)	
		<i>stiff</i> (mouth)	
		straight (face)	
		subtle (mind)	
		tense (mouth)	
		tight (face)	
		wavering (smile)	
		white-hot (eyes)	
t/t ratio 1.00 (5/5)	t/t ratio 0.83 (10/12)	t/t ratio 0.91 (21/23)	t/t ratio 1.00 (12/12)

List A6. Adjectives and nouns in part descriptions from the semantic domain of Size/Shape/Volume. Adjectives that occur in other domains as well are italicised.

Vic. female	Vic. male	Cont. female	Cont. male
curved (nose) 2	aquiline (nose)	big (eyes) 2	beefy (arms)
large (eyes)	deep (voice)	cropped (hair)	big (face, smile)
<i>little</i> (body)	<i>faint</i> (voice)	curly (hair)	cropped (hair) 2
long (nose)	harsh (voice)	enormous (feet)	curly (hair)
low (voice) 3	large (eyes)	high (voice)	deep (voice)
low toned (voice)	<i>little</i> (body)	large (eyes)	flat (voice)
round (face)	long (arms, nose)	<i>little</i> (eyes, face) 2	freckled (face) 3
short (nose)	loud (voice)	long (hair) 3	great (hand)
small (hands)	low (voice) 4	oval (face)	hairy (face)
weak (voice)	marked (face)	quiet (voice) 2	knee-length (hair)
	quiet (voice)	skinny (face)	<i>little</i> (face) 2
	rough (voice)	slim (body)	long (face,
	shock (head)	small (nose)	finger, hair)
	skinny (arms)	squashed (face)	loud (voice)
	small (hand)	squashed-pekinese	narrow (face)
	sonorous (voice)	(face)	oval (eyes)
	thickly-curling	squeaky (voice)	rough (hand)
	(hair)	tiny (smile)	short (hair) 2
	thin (face)	wispy (hair)	small (smile) 2
	trembling (voice)		soft (voice) 2
			spotty (face)
			squashed-up (face)
			thick (finger, hair 2)
			thin (body, face)
			thinning (hair) 2
t/t ratio 0.77 (10/13)	t/t ratio 0.83 (19/23)	t/t ratio 0.75 (18/24)	t/t ratio 0.63 (24/38)

Index

character descriptions

formulaic 19, 63, 75, 80, 104, 117
internally oriented 18, 87, 104, 152, 156
reflecting cultural values 17, 19, 128, 139, 158

characters

dynamic 18, 68, 80, 132, 155, 158
female 93, 108, 118, 144, 150, 161
 contemporary 93, 134, 140, 154, 160
 Victorian 74, 79, 81, 96, 98, 102, 106, 121, 125, 130, 133, 135, 141, 144, 159
male 93, 114, 115, 118, 151, 161
 contemporary 98, 100, 110, 134, 135, 140
 Victorian 113, 114, 125, 133, 140, 159
resembling real-life individuals 18, 80, 105, 156, 159
role models 18, 31, 66, 119, 135, 138, 158, 159
static 18, 60, 117, 132, 155, 158, 159

corpora 34

BNC subcorpus 34
Victorian 34

evaluative meaning 58, 138

negative 19, 59, 65, 135, 138
neutral 59, 65, 138
positive 19, 59, 65, 135, 138

features of the texts

implied audience 25, 29, 34, 36, 37
protagonist 25, 33, 34, 36, 70
theme 29, 32, 33, 119
 adventure 31, 33, 124
 family 19, 34, 37, 66, 71
 growing up 33

gender roles 17, 23, 158

constructed 26
defined 20
femininity 24, 99, 159
masculinity 24

linguistic features

collocations 22, 69, 81, 142
density 71, 140
diversity 48, 65, 67, 73, 92
formality 19, 81, 158
frequency 40, 64, 66
information value 63, 77, 134, 142, 156
modification within the AdjP 74, 143
permanence 59
 permanent 52, 101, 132, 155, 158
 temporary 101, 132, 155, 158
type/token ratio 64, 173

part description 48, 137, 157, 173

participles 21, 51

portrayal

category-based 60, 105
idealistic 18, 32, 66, 107, 114, 135, 158, 160
person-based 60, 105, 160
realistic 18, 33, 63, 104, 107, 110, 135, 158, 160
stereotyped 18, 23, 28, 60, 63, 74, 132

purpose of children's fiction

aesthetic 25, 37
didactic 18, 30, 66, 71, 119, 138, 156
entertainment 30
moralising 18, 30, 119

mirror attitudes in society 18, 32, 87,
160, 161

semantic domains 54, 83, 145, 173
age 55, 85, 95, 146
appearance 55, 69, 86, 97, 135, 151,
159
attitude 56, 86, 120, 151
colour/light 145, 174
evaluative 146, 175
mental property 55, 85, 101, 146, 152
physical state 55, 117, 146, 175
physiological change 146, 176
situation 56, 86, 89, 122, 151
size/shape/volume 147, 150, 177
sociability 56, 86, 127

semantic sub-classifications
acceptability comments 56, 129
behaviour 56, 128
characteristics 55, 102, 111, 116, 153,
160
classifying 21, 56, 123, 145, 150, 173
cognition 55, 102, 105, 153
conduct 56, 128
emotion 55, 101, 102, 107, 116, 135,
152, 160
good looks 98, 134
nationality 21, 56, 123
position in society 56, 125, 160
relation 56, 124, 134

syntactic function 49, 77, 134, 137
attributive 20, 49, 63, 77, 137
postpositive 49, 78, 137
predicative 20, 49, 63, 77, 137
predicative adjunct 50, 78

variation
diachronic 43, 84, 120, 127, 131
gender 76, 87, 90, 121

words referring to characters 40
central terms 41
epicene terms 42
kinship terms 42
parts 48, 139
personal pronouns 45
proper names 41n, 46
titles 46