



Snap, Crackle and Pop in British Rice Krispies advertising.

Fig. 1 Heaps of Fun.

Fig. 2 'Someone's coming!'

Fig. 3 'Each one is made from a single grain of rice, and contains Vitamin D, which helps build bones!'



Fig. 3



Fig. 2



Fig. 1

Whatever happened to the pixies? The shrinking role of Snap, Crackle and Pop in British Rice Krispies advertising

Louise Jolly

Snap, Crackle and Pop have been bringing fairy themes into advertising since the 1930s, when they were first created in the US as a trio of pixie mascots for the breakfast cereal Rice Krispies. Their names onomatopoeically capture the sound the cereal makes when milk is poured on it, and have been translated into a whole range of equivalents for different cultures, such as Cric, Crac and Croc in France, Pif, Paf and Puf in Denmark and Knisper, Knasper and Knusper in Germany.

The historic role of the trio in Rice Krispies advertising shows just how culturally pervasive fairy-tale themes are. Cropping up in all kinds of contexts – marketing and advertising as much as literature, film and art – these themes show a continuing mutability and endurance that befits their origins in folk and oral tradition.

But despite their capacity for survival, they also encounter cultural moods which can be more or less supportive of their flourishing. For instance, in British advertising today, various pressures have shrunk the space available for Snap, Crackle and Pop to bring fantasy to the breakfast table. The story I want to tell here is about how an advertising ethos steeped in fantasy and magic met a cultural return to ideas of parental authority, realism and familial cohesion – with the role of the pixies being diminished as a result.

Of course, British culture in the wider sense remains enthralled by fantasy productions of every kind; this essay is by no means trying to construct a grand narrative of fantasy decline. The example of Snap, Crackle and Pop nevertheless highlights an interesting shift of mood in a very specific pocket of cultural expression, worth registering for the cultural dynamics it reveals.

Until recently, the trio played a big part in Rice Krispies advertising. In true pixie style, they enriched breakfast time with merry pranks and anarchic behaviour. In its advertisements, the cereal brand gave them full rein to express their pixie personalities, allowing them to pour explosive powder into cereal bowls, skid around the table on banana skins, and unleash all manner of havoc.

In more recent advertising, that's changed. The pixies have been sidelined in favour of realistic scenes of parents and children enjoying the famous sound of the cereal together. This shift in emphasis might sound simply like a new creative direction from the brand's advertising agency, but there's a more far-reaching cultural change going on here, revealing changing attitudes towards the family, parental authority and the relationship between fantasy and advertising. When these advertisements are set in the context of ethical changes in marketing discourse, Snap, Crackle and Pop become problematic – even, perhaps, a bit of an embarrassment. This isn't just about their own waning star either: there are wider implications here for the general status of fairy-tale and fantasy themes in marketing and advertising.

To begin, let's go back to the glory days of the trio. A close look at a couple of adverts from the 1990s shows what the pixies symbolised at this point – and how their antics affected family dynamics.

For instance, a 1999 advert shows the trio trying to throw Krispies through a moving target: a toast rack spun in the air by Crackle. Snap and Pop then skid across the table on a banana skin to illustrate the ad's theme, 'having heaps of fun' (Fig. 1). This quintessentially pixie-ish behaviour stems from age-old lore about the misbehaving spirits of the home – the tricksterish hobs and familiars who are both a help and a hindrance to the woman of the house.¹

The difference here is that the woman of the house is nowhere to be seen, nor does any kind of parental figure appear to be on the premises. Instead, the pixies offer the child a 'home alone' fantasy, in which the normal rules of breakfast-time behaviour are suspended, and free play can reign.

The absence of the parental figure is crucial here, as it relates directly to the presence of the pixies. The pixies don't just allow the child to dream of freedom and anarchy – they're actually symbolically oppositional to the parent. Pixies and parents stand in an antagonistic relationship to each other: where pixies are, parents cannot be – and where parents are, pixies must surely disappear.

This mutually exclusive relationship emerges clearly in a 1996 advert focusing on the cereal's nutritional benefits. At first, it seems something completely different is happening in terms of the pixie-parent relationship. The pixies jump out of the box and begin to address 'Mum', saying they've come to put the record straight about the cereal's perceived lack of nutritional value. But the mother isn't there to listen; in fact, she's nowhere to be seen. And after the pixies deliver their little presentation on nutrition, they're startled by the sound of approaching footsteps (surely HER), which causes them to run off and jump back into their box (Fig. 2).

The same happens in a 1994 advert based on the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice. A mother asks her son, Frankie, to tidy his room after breakfast – for which purpose he

enlists the magical help of Snap, Crackle and Pop. The trio try to help out, but their irrepressible tendency to anarchy gets in the way – tidying just isn't in their nature (and again, we can see here the admixture of help and hindrance which Diane Purkiss describes as a feature of many household sprites). The important point here is that, as soon as the mother's voice is heard calling her son – “FrankEE!” – the pixies rush off into the cupboard to hide. Just the sound of her voice is enough to send them scurrying.

The implicit antagonism between mothers and pixies in these advertisements is charged with symbolic meaning. Even when we don't see the pixies avoiding the mother, we know the two parties are incompatible from the way they don't occupy the same frame (there may be exceptions – but this is definitely a strong pattern). The mother's presence may be off-stage or imminent but, however distant she is, the pixies flee as soon as she makes her presence felt.

This antagonism can be explored from a number of perspectives. Diane Purkiss, in *Troublesome Things*, provides a striking account of the fear with which mothers in the Middle Ages beheld supernatural beings – a fear with origins in changeling and abduction stories. There's a long tradition of the fairy (and pixies can be included under the fairy category here, as Purkiss does) being perceived by the mother as a 'threat to the nursery', Purkiss writes.² Babies and children were seen to be vulnerable to fairies: like fairies, the very young occupy the liminal symbolic space between life and death and so, like fairies, were felt to be somewhere outside the domain of the fully alive and the fully human.³ This symbolic affinity meant fairies were always liable to snatch back their own.

If this is one of the ancient themes reverberating through Rice Krispies advertising, it follows that the pixies would need to run away from the mother. She mustn't know they are there, engaging in secret interaction with her children. For her to find out would almost certainly mean no more Rice Krispies in that particular household.

So the pixies represent a secret: a secret they share with the child, but that absolutely excludes the parents. With the 1996 advert on nutrition, things again seem to be different. The pixies seem to want to mediate between child and parent, defending a breakfast favourite to the mother on account of its healthy properties. But this step into new narrative territory is foiled when the pixies still run from the mother's approaching step at the end. There seems little doubt that their presence must be kept a secret from her.

Snap, Crackle and Pop therefore come to stand for a secret world carved out within the family home, a world all the more special to the child for the fact that parents don't know about it. The pixies offer something very exciting, but also dangerous: a close bond with the child that excludes and evades parental authority.

It's true that children themselves aren't always present in the pixie advertisements, but it's also fair to argue that they are assumed to be there: these adverts were created for them, so their gaze and responses are 'built in' as a virtual presence. Moreover, various

symbolic factors lead the viewer to read this special relationship into the adverts, as culture has long configured a close bond between children and the supernatural. I've already referred to Diane Purkiss's research into the way both children and supernatural beings were felt to occupy the liminal zone of the 'not fully alive', and this affinity became charged with additional, sometimes contradictory, layers of meaning in Victorian Britain. Then the supernatural and childhood merged into a strange symbolic alliance, due to the fact that both represented values (play, irrationality, fancy) antithetical to the brutal new social and economic realities introduced by the industrial revolution. Purkiss joins up the narrative:

The link between children and fairies came naturally.
Children were associated with fairies anyway;
childhood is a boundary of life, and many folktales,
as the Victorians well knew, told of children stolen by fairies.
Increasingly, the Victorians came to see such stories not as
horrific abductions, but as signs that children and fairies
were somehow akin.⁴

In denial of the reality of child labour and exploitation (although supporting efforts to end it), Victorian culture idealised images of children as completely 'non-functional' and 'non-productive': given over to dream, fantasy and vision, and closer to the portals of faerie than any adult.⁵

This affinity between child and supernatural goes even further, leading to an interchangeability between the two domains. Today, we see many examples of day crèches or children's clothing shops called 'Little Pixies' or 'Pixies': child and pixie are of the same world, and the boundaries between them are blurred. The same discourse is at work in contemporary New Age circles, which term supposedly psychically gifted children able to talk to spirits 'Indigo Children'. In fact, New Age discourse draws heavily on Romantic antecedents in seeing all children as special in their affinity with the supernatural:

So next time your little one doesn't want to go to
sleep because there is someone in their room, or
when you hear them sitting by themselves, chatting
away to an invisible friend, or even next time you see
that shadow in the corner of your eye, stop and think
about it for a moment. There may be such a thing as
ghosts after all.⁶

Given this back story of close association between children and supernatural beings, it's possible to understand further why Snap, Crackle and Pop ally themselves with the child. It

is even possible to argue that the trio represent the dimensions of childhood closed off to adulthood. The pixies may provide a metaphor for the human children in the household – and in fact, Snap, Crackle and Pop were originally created as a fairy-tale triad of brothers, superimposing figures of childhood onto their supernatural status from the start. But if they *are* children, they symbolise those aspects of childhood which are inaccessible to parents and adults.

That sense of inaccessibility and intra-familial division is deepened by the continued reverberations of another Victorian legacy: the idea that exclusion from contact with the supernatural was a defining feature of adulthood itself. Becoming an adult meant losing your ability to see and talk to supernatural beings. 'The idea that in growing old people lose the ability to see the fairies acquired enormous power in this period,' writes Nicola Bown.⁷ Her observation is echoed by Purkiss, who notes that in Victorian Britain 'an inability to hear or see fairies is the mark of the adult'.⁸

In this way, the Victorians created a clear boundary line dividing childhood from adulthood – a boundary marked by, among other factors, whether or not you could see supernatural beings. The effect was to place a considerable burden on children: their role was to keep open the gates of other worlds, a task adults now felt unable to assume. In other words, it was emotionally important for adults to know that children believed in fairies.⁹

But, while the Rice Krispies adverts featuring Snap, Crackle and Pop reveal a clearly demarcated boundary between childhood and adulthood – and one in which the presence of pixies requires the absence of adults – they're not framed by adult fantasies and desires. Many adverts play on adult fantasies of childish cuteness and otherness; these don't. The pixies refuse to be assimilated into any kind of adult-approved framework; instead they offer the child the magical succour of fun, mischief and subversion defined against official familial power structures. Even when they purport to liaise with 'Mum' about nutrition, they strut around parodying the gestures of authority and televisual expertise. We can't take their attempt to be serious seriously (Fig. 3).

The old, sometimes ancient, fairy themes above provide a kind of unconscious context for interpreting what Snap, Crackle and Pop are up to in that suburban kitchen, just as they would have done for the adverts' original TV audience in the 1990s. The pixies create a symbolic rift in the family, defining the difference between parents and children, and furthermore their anarchic behaviour undermines parental authority, giving children models of resistance, subversion and imaginary freedom in the confined space of the suburban home.¹⁰

But, as the first decade of the 21st century unfolded and cultural values moved on, the pixies could not continue to play their trickster role. By separating parents from children, and usurping legitimate authority within the home, the pixies eventually came up against a changing moral climate in which these narratives became problematic.

The most obvious of these changes affected attitudes towards marketing to children. Since these adverts were aired in the 1990s, marketers and advertisers have faced increasing regulation in the way they're allowed to communicate child-orientated products. The codes they now endorse highlight the need to curb 'pester power', which inevitably means steering away from addressing children directly, and making sure no division is stirred up between them and their parents: 'advertising must not directly exhort children to buy a product or service'.¹¹ Different companies also write their own codes and principles to reflect and sometimes exceed the requirements of independent regulatory bodies. Unilever, for example, makes explicit not just that it will 'not encourage pester power', but also that it will 'not undermine parental influence'.

As outlined above, the pixies used to advertise Rice Krispies represent a very clear example of 'undermining parental influence'. And they do so in the best fairy-tale tradition of offering power to the powerless, chances to outwit authority, and a general overturning of traditional power structures.¹³ This connection helps us see the attraction for advertisers: fairy-tale themes and characters offer particular seductions, those of autonomy and subversion, to relatively vulnerable and powerless audiences.

In other words, there are symbolic affinities between advertising in general and fairy tales. Examples like 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' and 'Hansel and Gretel' show how commonly child seduction figures as a theme within fairy stories, as well as being an effect of the tales themselves. And if fairy tales display affinities with advertising's own quest to seduce and fascinate, the converse is also true: the world of the supernatural is far from innocent of themes of greed, profit and commerce (however much many Victorians wanted to see it as such). Christina Rossetti's 1859 poem 'The Goblin Market' explicitly couches the seduction of the supernatural in terms of commerce:

*Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy [...]"*

Of course, the exploitation of children cannot be justified by a fairy-tale tradition, but it is worth pointing out the connections between seduction, subversion and fairy tale. These connections provide clues as to why Snap, Crackle and Pop have all but disappeared from Rice Krispies advertising. Today's more regulated and ethically-aware marketing climate has made the seductions of the supernatural much more culturally awkward.

Advertising regulations are only part of the story here. The sidelining of the pixies in Rice Krispies advertising reflects a wider cultural transition towards a more conservative promotion of family stability and unity. There are no simple political and social judgements

to be made here: social desires to protect children from commercial exploitation have also been the occasion of a restatement of 'traditional family values'. While these are not necessarily related concerns, it's easy to see how they might dovetail. For instance, as we've seen, Unilever's wording of its advertising code includes a commitment 'not to undermine parental influence', protecting children but also opening the way to a restatement of more conservative notions of parental power and authority.

The idea that a third party, someone from outside the family, can speak directly to a child has also come under threat from wider social anxieties over child seduction. The thought of an outside voice intervening between parent and child with an alluring proposition now elicits heightened levels of suspicion. Whatever the nature of that seduction, deeper fears of the 'lurability' of the child still come into effect.

And yet, 'luring' is precisely what pixies and other sprites often do, with a whole host of unreliable 'special offers' from dangerous fairy food to illusory gold. Reviewing this complex mesh of factors – the ethics of child marketing, wider fears of child seduction, and nostalgic attempts to reinstate family structure – we can more fully understand why the fairy tale can no longer wreak its playful subversive magic in advertising as it used to do.

But what will replace it? Recent 'post-pixies' Rice Krispies advertising shows how some of the cultural anxieties described above are surfacing.

In 'Catching Sounds', a 2010 advert, a little boy catches the magical sound of the crackling cereal in his hands and passes it to his mum, surly teenage sister (who's not interested) and then to his pet hamster (Fig. 4). The still shows that a significant change has taken place in the symbolic landscape of advertising: from being absent, the mother is now central. And, of course, remembering the point made earlier about the mutually exclusive relationship between mother and pixies, the mother's central presence pushes the pixies to the sidelines.

In fact, the only time we see the pixies in this advert is at the end – the 'pack shot' moment. Far from careering around anarchically, they now only appear as two-dimensional illustrations on the box. Snap enjoys a brief flicker of animation at the end,¹⁴ but it's no more than a passing flutter. And taking a closer look at the pixies' poses, we can see that they're in passive 'listening' mode, rather than being cheeky and riotous as they were before. Snap even urges children to be quiet so they can hear the crackle of the cereal (Fig. 5). So, from the explosive chaos of the 1990s adverts, there's been a complete turnaround: the pixies now urge controlled, quiet, 'good behaviour' from children.

A closer look at the child himself reveals that he's dressed in a typical child's outfit from the 1970s (I used to wear exactly the same clothes myself in those less gendered times!). His dungarees and Scandinavian knitwear don't feel in the least bit contemporary. It's not just a fashion oversight: his attire tells us that the advert is primarily targeted at the mother, likely herself to have been a child in the 1970s, and therefore likely to feel nostalgic for her own childhood on seeing this little boy (Fig. 6).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

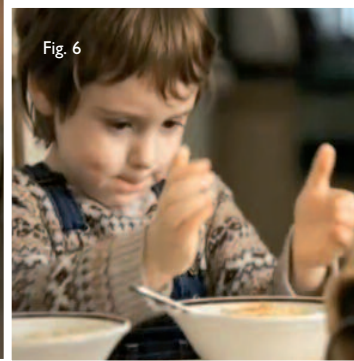


Fig. 6

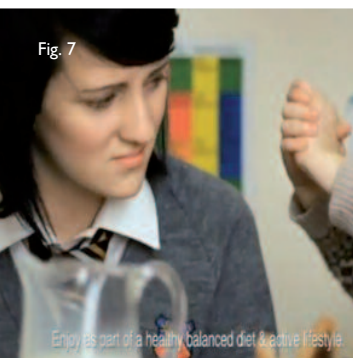


Fig. 7

Enjoys part of a healthy balanced diet & active lifestyle

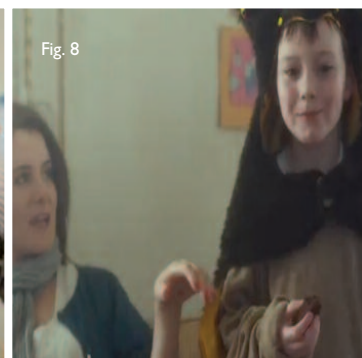


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

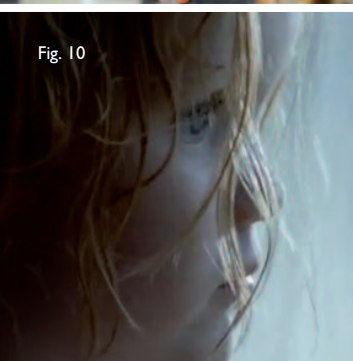


Fig. 10

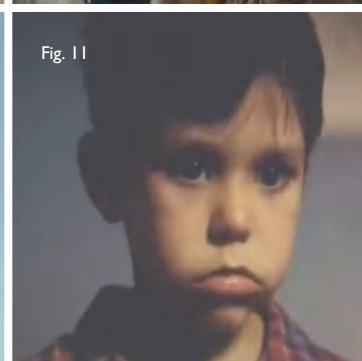


Fig. 11

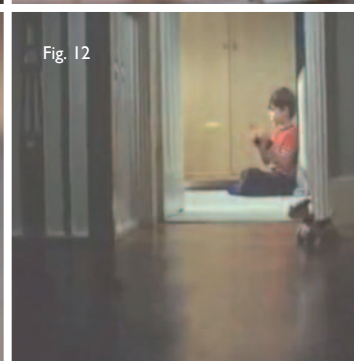


Fig. 12

Fig. 4 Catching Sounds.
Fig.5 Catching Sounds.
Fig. 6 Catching Sounds.
Fig. 7 Catching Sounds.
Fig. 8 Mr Kipling.

Fig. 9 Sainsbury's.
Fig. 10 Rice Krispies – Beautiful Rain.
Fig. 11 John Lewis Christmas advert.
Fig. 12 John Lewis Christmas advert.

Because this nostalgic vision is clearly targeted at the 30- or 40-something mother, we can see the effects of the ban on 'pester power' in action: the advert now speaks to the mother, not to the child. So there's no more need to invoke the seductions of the supernatural, with its potential to overturn the order of the home. Now it's precisely that domestic order which the advert needs to protect and reinforce. The mood of Rice Krispies advertising has changed from anarchic magic to the secure, comforting nostalgia of a family scenario which doesn't seem to have changed since the 1970s.

This isn't just one brand's change in tone: it's part of a wider cultural transition towards nostalgia, order, and stasis, away from the seductions and subversions of fantasy. Mother and child are reunited in this advert; they're no longer kept apart by the secrets and divisions of supernatural intervention in the family home. There is a suggestion of family discord in the form of the sulky teenage sister, but her role is tangential. She's there to provide 'emotional authenticity' and to add a pinch of salt to an otherwise sweet dish (Fig. 7).

Despite this hint of dissent, the really important relationship – mother and child – has been restored to unity. A dream of domestic cohesion, anchored in the mother-child bond and unbroken inter-generational transmission (the 'passing on' of the Rice Krispies experience), has replaced the pixies and their troublesome ways.

So far, this article has explored various factors behind the sidelining of the pixies in Rice Krispies advertising and its implications for fantasy and fairy tale in consumer culture. There is one more major theme to examine in this regard: the quest, in mainstream British culture, for maximum emotional authenticity, and for a true flavour of 'everyday magic'.

These values are constructed in advertising through various executional devices: close-ups,¹⁵ intimately lit domestic interiors (just like the one in 'Catching Sounds'), detail, texture and so on. The end goal is to create an intimate and real connection with ordinary life, showing that the advertiser 'shares' their audience's daily lives, rather than 'entertaining' them, which would imply too much separation and distance.

It's clear that this quest for 'everyday authenticity', even if it involves a romantic idea of the 'magic' of everyday moments, comes into conflict with fairy-tale and fantasy themes. When Rice Krispies presented its young audience with Snap, Crackle and Pop, its role was 'entertainer': the pixies' pranks and tricks were, in part, a show to delight and amuse the child.

But, as the cultural tide increasingly turns towards authenticity, many brands are now deserting their former 'magical' role as entertainers and conjurers of the fantastical. Instead, they want to be Vermeers, painting intimate domestic settings rich with emotionally compelling details. 'Catching Sounds' is typical of this new flavour. It reveals a love affair with ordinariness which leaves little room for pixies.

This tendency is currently gaining cultural traction. A book published earlier this year, *Embracing the Ordinary* by Michael Foley, strikes a resonant chord with its paean to the magic

of everyday banality, whether that be domestic, corporate or urban.¹⁶ The book takes the reader on long forays into Proust and Joyce, showing how they transfigured the banal everyday world into something magical and mysterious. It's fascinating to see how Foley's exploration of the banal stuff of everyday life reflects the way advertising is moving towards a glorification of the same theme.

Interestingly, Foley also celebrates Vermeer for his visions of intimate interiority suffused with the value of 'everydayness'.¹⁷ Even where the visual language may not be absolutely identical, there are clear affinities between painters of bourgeois domesticity, like Vermeer, and the way many advertisers today try to affirm the values of authenticity and ordinariness in the depiction of the family home (Figs 8 and 9).

This new ethos in advertising and culture shrinks the space available for the expression of fantastic and fairy-tale themes. In fact, supernatural beings and worlds are excluded by this affirmation of the 'domestic everyday'. It's very much an ethic, as well as an aesthetic: in the images above, the life of the child is closely framed by the presence and care of the adult. It is this framing which prevents the possibility of other worlds, visions and creatures leaking into the family home.

As we've seen, culture has given the supernatural an important relationship with childhood, but that's not something easily shared with adults. So, for the child's imaginary friends to enter the scene, he or she needs some measure of alienation. Snap, Crackle and Pop were able to wreak havoc in a home already beset by a certain fracturedness: possibly parents at work, out, the child alone, maybe making their own breakfast, and in need of magical assistance. These are the conditions favourable for magic and fairy tale to do their work. But when advertising transitions towards the celebration of everyday intimacy, which involves restoring a sense of unity and proximity to the family, there's less space for the fantastic to creep in.

Another recent publication, this time in the business field, reinforces this sense of a shrinking space for fantastic themes in advertising and marketing. *Tell the Truth*, by Sue Unerman and Jonathan Salem Baskin, urges marketers to move away from trying to 'entertain' consumers with creative scenarios, and instead to try to share their everyday reality.¹⁸ The authors don't explicitly assert authenticity against the worlds of magic, illusion and the fantastic, but the implication is there. Running through their book are repeated messages to forget the idea that marketing is about 'hype' (in other words, illusions, magic tricks and conjurings) and move towards 'truth' instead. 'Truth', for them, means the emotional and practical realities of consumers' lives, while communicating authentically involves sharing in these realities, not addressing an audience with fictions, fables and entertainments.

The book reflects transitions already taking place in the marketing and advertising world, such as the sidelining of Snap, Crackle and Pop, and it will inspire more marketers and

advertisers to move in a similar direction. Of course, the adverts looked at as examples of this new interest in 'authenticity' are fictions in their own right: we've seen how authenticity is constructed through various aesthetic tricks and tropes, such as the close-up. They're still entertainment, and still seductive (even though they're using the seductions of nostalgia to lure adults, rather than the supernatural to attract children). But nevertheless, the pressure is on for brands to drop overt expressions of fantasy and magic, and instead to explore authenticity as a way of demonstrating intimate proximity to people's lives.

To bring this essay to a close, I'd like to discuss the most recent Rice Krispies advertisement (at the time of writing). 'Beautiful Rain' shows images of a rainy British summer holiday, with children trapped inside caravans and cars, bored and miserable (Fig. 10). Rice Krispies saves parents from the trials of the situation with a special 'rescue pack', which allows children to colour in the pixies on the front.

This advert demonstrates one further step in the direction of 'embracing ordinariness' and away from the world of magic and fairy tale. Until recently, it would have been rare to see rain in an advertisement. Advertising was traditionally the world of dreams and fantasies – where the sun always shone and magical transformations were always possible. So the very introduction of rain is a sign that this advert wants to take 'embracing the ordinary' to a heightened level.

Unsurprisingly, the pixies are nowhere to be seen. They do not rescue the child from boredom as they might have done in the past, but only appear as blank silhouettes to be coloured in. So, again, from being an expression of youthful anarchy and subversion (outwitting parents), the pixies have become a way to subdue them into 'good behaviour', quiet and controlled. From being the magical helper of the child, they've become the (very un-magical) helper of the parent. The Rice Krispies colouring-in pack brings to mind Diane Purkiss's comment on *The Flower Fairies Activity Book* – a comparable way of turning supernatural beings into ways of quietening the child and ensuring 'good behaviour' – which 'features pages of the kind of pencil-and-paper games that a "good", "quiet" child might use to keep herself amused'.¹⁹ From anarchy to controlled, quiet behaviour, the pixies have come a long way since those days of playing chuck-the-krispie-through-the-toast-rack. Purkiss describes the Flower Fairies as a logo for the 'good middle-class girl'; could it be that Snap, Crackle and Pop are heading the same way?

This advert also brings to mind a similar example, equally striking in its transition from the fantastic to an embrace of ordinariness: last year's John Lewis Christmas advertisement. Here, we see a young boy counting down the days until Christmas, bored and impatient as he waits for the big day to arrive. The advert breaks radically with traditional Christmas advertising, usually overflowing with magical symbols and stories, by exploring themes of *ennui*, everyday banality and 'empty time' (Figs 11 and 12). These desolate images aim almost to shock when set against what we expect from Christmas advertising: children gluttoned on

magic, dream, fantasy and joy. Of course, it's exactly this clash which allows the advertiser to lay claim to 'emotional authenticity', signalled through emotions which break with expected patterns.

So both these adverts, 'Beautiful Rain' from Rice Krispies and last year's Christmas advert from John Lewis, show us childhoods cut off from the magical succour with which advertising used to surround them. As we've seen, there are complex cultural and ethical reasons at the root of this development. Increased concern over the ethics of advertising to children has put pressure on advertisers to reinstate adult authority, appealing to parents through nostalgic images of family and home and leaving behind the subversive anarchy of magic and fantasy.

But there are also bigger cultural forces at work, beyond specific issues relating to marketing to children. The transition towards authenticity and realism spills beyond the bounds of advertising aesthetics to reflect a society increasingly fascinated by the minutiae of everyday life (with social media undoubtedly playing a huge role). Of course, fantasy plays a huge role in British cultural life – we only have to look at the huge anticipation surrounding the cinematic release of 'The Hobbit' to see that. But in advertising, while fantasy themes remain strong, cultural pressures have combined to push creative expression towards realism and authenticity. For this reason, I see the sidelining of Snap, Crackle and Pop as significant beyond specific developments in one brand's approach. Fantasy and magical themes won't be conjured away overnight in advertising, owing to their long-standing connections with consumer culture. But they no longer have the unproblematic status they once had – and that story tells us a lot about how culture is changing today.

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References

1. Diane Purkiss, *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories* (London: Penguin, 2000), 154.
2. *Ibid.*, 66. This crucial insight adds a further resonance to Nicola Bown's point about fairies being loved by men but disliked by women in Victorian Britain. See *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18.
3. *Ibid.*, 60.
4. *Ibid.*, 254.
5. Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 151. Cunningham tells us that the domain of the child was the spiritual realm of 'fancy', the imagination unfettered and uncontaminated by any contact with reality.
6. <http://www.minti.com/parenting-advice/3899/Children-and-the-supernatural-An-invitation-to-sceptics/>
7. Bown, 171.
8. Purkiss, 239.

9. This insight forms the backbone of Jacqueline Rose's work, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).
10. Hugh Cunningham describes lack of freedom as a defining feature of contemporary childhood. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, 'their access to the world outside their own home was sharply diminished', he writes (p.231).
11. Clause 5.9, UK advertising codes as defined by the Committee of Advertising Practice (www.cap.org.uk).
12. <http://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/Respondingtostakeholderconcerns/marketing/>. I've chosen Unilever as an example, rather than Rice Krispies manufacturer Kellogg's, because of the interest of its language here.
13. 'The liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with liberated man', writes Walter Benjamin in 'The Storyteller', *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 83-107, 101.
14. <http://www.leoburnett.co.uk/our-work/kellogg/>
15. For more on close-ups and authenticity in advertising, see my piece on 'Extimacy', <http://www.semionaut.net/extimacy/>
16. Michael Foley, *Embracing the Ordinary: Lessons from the Champions of Everyday Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012).
17. *Ibid.*, 89-90.
18. *Tell the Truth: Honesty Is Your Most Powerful Marketing Tool*, Sue Unerman and Jonathan Salem Baskin (Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2012).
19. Purkiss, 311.