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Silences and Censorship in Contemporary Children's Publishing

It is often assumed that children's writers are free to write whatever they want. Children's literature is often described as an 'experimental and playful genre' that is free from cultural constraints. However, in this paper, I'll be highlighting some of the covert and overt censorship that exists within contemporary UK children's publishing, as well as exploring some of the overlooked taboos. Using my dual location as a literary theorist within higher education and a children's writer with publishing deadlines, I will offer some insights into the demands of the industry, as well as the potential narrative strategies that can be employed in order to produce marketable but simultaneously 'subversive' (ie., politically or thematically 'controversial') picture book texts within what is a largely conservative industry.

Wendy O'Shea-Meddour is a Senior Lecturer and an internationally best-selling children's writer at the University of Exeter. Since her debut was shortlisted for the 'Branford Boase Award for Outstanding First Novel' (2012), she has published fifteen award-winning children's books, many of which have been published into seventeen languages. With an established reputation for 'tackling challenging topics with sensitivity', her latest book about the refugee crisis (*Lubna and Pebble*), was listed by *Time Magazine* as 'one of the best children's books of 2019'. Dr O'Shea-Meddour's current research focuses the relationship between picture books and child mental health. Recent Publications include: *Tibble and Grandpa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), *Lubna and Pebble* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) and *How the Library (Not the Prince) Saved Rapunzel* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2015).

