

A Textual Analysis of Stephanie Rambukwelle's *Mythil's Secret*

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The Gratiean Prize is one of the most prestigious local awards for Sri Lankan Creative Writing in English and Stephanie Rambukwelle is the youngest writer, up to date, to have won this award, in the novel category, with *Mythil's Secret* (2009), one of the very few Sri Lankan children's novels in English. This paper discusses the evolution of the Sri Lankan English novel, in relation to this book, in the hope of highlighting the contribution of a young writer, to a young readership. To see whether there has been an evolution in the Sri Lankan English novel, a brief comparison between *Mythil's Secret*, and some of the earlier novels which have won the Gratiean Prize is carried out. This will be mainly through an analysis of the use of Sri Lankan English, as given in the novels under discussion. To analyze the contribution of *Mythil's Secret* to the genre of Sri Lankan English fiction for children, the book is compared with some classics like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, as well as more recent works like J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, and the study discusses what aspects in Rambukwelle's book make it a *Sri Lankan* children's novel, *per se*. Two main factors are discussed in the study: 1) *Mythil's Secret* is commendable. It shows that there is a vast evolutionary progress in the Sri Lankan English-language novel. It predicts that this is a work well on its way to the international level. 2) As one of the pioneering Sri Lankan English novels for children, it fills a void in good books for young readers of English in our country. Although a children's book, adults, too, may find it an enjoyable read. Its winning the Gratiean Prize was a boost to the genre of children's fiction in English in Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Children's fiction; Evolution; novel; Sri Lankan English novel; Textual analysis.*