

These two, like *Mary Poppins in the Park*, are not stories of additional visits, but episodes to be understood as happening earlier, both during book 2 (*Mary Poppins Comes Back*) or book 3 (*Mary Poppins Opens the Door*) as they have the new baby Annabel in them and *House Next Door* is about a reappearance of the Holy Terror Euphemia Andrew, both of those characters first appearing in book 2.

On the last page of an article entitled “The Interviewer,” originally published in *Parabola* and reprinted in *What the Bee Knows: Reflections on Myth, Symbol and Story* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press, 1989; London: Penguin, Arkana, 1993; pp. 203-9), Pamela Travers gives an insightful description of the process by which she wrote the Mary Poppins books, which is the same process that every reader goes through in responding to them: “C S Lewis, in a letter to a friend, says, ‘There is only one Creator and we merely mix the elements He gives us’ — a statement less simple than it seems. For that ‘mere mixing’, while making it impossible for us to say ‘I myself am the maker,’ also shows us our essential place in the process. Elements among elements, we are there to shape, order, define, and in doing this we, reciprocally, are defined, shaped, and ordered. The potter, moulding the receptive clay, is himself being moulded.” As Travers indicates elsewhere, every reader is also a co-author of what is read, because reading involves more than recognizing the words printed on a page. It also involves understanding the meaning of those words, and every reader’s understanding will be uniquely his or her own, shaped by the past experiences of personal history and changing as passing time changes the reader.

The point just made is also stated in an April 13, 2012, *Times Literary Supplement* book review entitled “English Made Me: We Are Different People When We Read a Book a Second Time — and We Are Often Reading a Different Book.” The review ends (p. 4) thus: “As we revisit the objects of our reading, like recognizable but weathered landmarks, there can be no full going back, because we are not exactly the same people we were; but the consolation of rereading is the knowledge that we are these different people in part because of what those books have made of us.”

Pamela Travers also emphasizes in many ways that life is a mixture of opposites, a fact graphically illustrated by the Chinese cosmological symbol of the “Great Ultimate” *Tai Chi*: