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Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Forty days of mourning • The Arab world in children's books: Finding Palestine • A chat with Ibtisam Barakat • Children of Palestine tell their stories • Face to face: Self and other in Israeli children's literature • Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" • Fantasy as philosophy in children's literature • Memories of meeting worlds • Profile of Ted van Lieshout

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IBBY

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TO SIT AND DREAM, TO SIT AND READ, TO SIT AND LEARN ABOUT THE WORLD

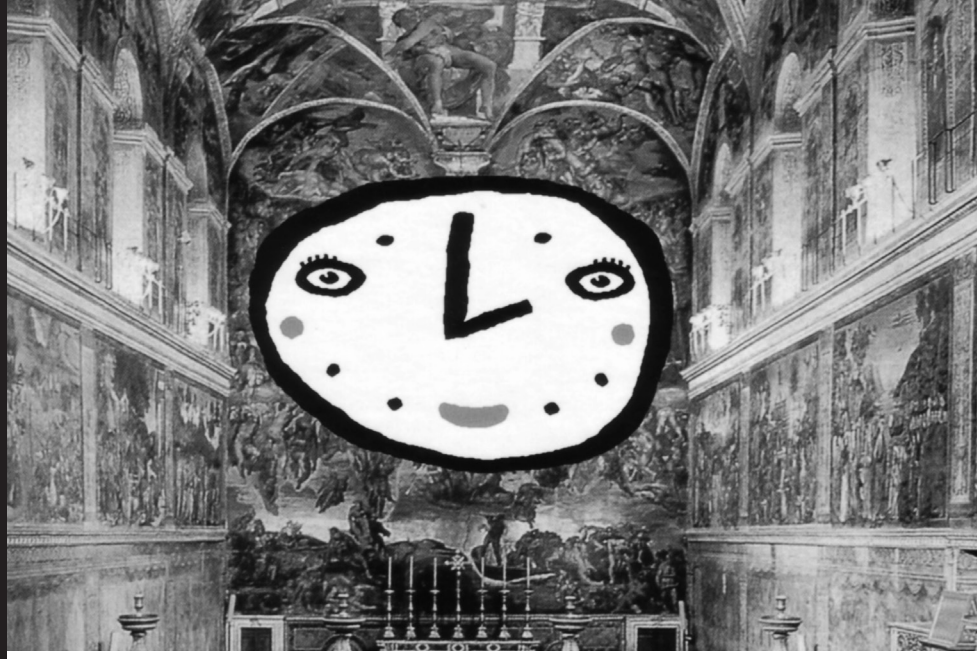
OUTSIDE OUR WORLD OF HERE AND NOW – OUR PROBLEM WORLD

TO DREAM OF VAST HORIZONS OF THE SOUL; THROUGH DREAMS MAKE WHOLE

UNFETTERED FREE – HELP ME! ALL YOU WHO ARE DREAMERS, TOO

HELP ME MAKE OUR WORLD ANEW. I REACH OUT MY HANDS TO YOU.

Editorial



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Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

Understanding that the world's children are innocent was a powerful source of inspiration to Jella Lepman's work. This issue of *Bookbird* focuses primarily on the children's literature of the Middle East with this idea in the forefront. A converging theme that ribbons through the articles here includes the importance of writing and literature as a way to establish identity and hold on to one's dreams and hopes. Literature offers the promise of providing the self and the other with a shared frame of reference to promote understanding and dialogue. Other intersecting ideas include the important role literature can play in helping us to see ourselves in others, to acknowledge different ways of being, and to recognize the interdependence of self and other as crucial to survival.

Feature articles

The first three articles serve as a trilogy that highlight the work of two authors of literature about the Arab world; Palestinian born author, Ibtisam Barakat and U.S. author, Elsa Marston. **In forty days of mourning** we step into the shoes of author Ibtisam Barakat as she reveals her journey remembering her Palestinian roots while mourning her father's death. In this process, she describes how she came to terms with the pain and humiliation of her Palestinian childhood and how she began to heal through remembering and writing *Tasting the Sky*. Prolific U.S. author, Elsa Marston explores the Arab world as depicted in children's books and shares her quest to write books in which Arab Americans and those of Palestinian heritage can see themselves represented. In **The Arab world in children's books: Finding Palestine**, Marsten reviews books with themes of reconciliation, ones in which conflicting peoples find a common ground and friendship, as well as books that show shattered lives, devastation and hopelessness inflicted

by war. In Marston's *Santa Claus in Baghdad*, a book of short stories portraying teenagers from various Arab societies, she hopes that readers will see her protagonists within their particular cultural contexts as young people who have the same concerns as young people everywhere. The last article in this trilogy, **A chat with Ibtisam Barakat** by Elsa Marston with Ibtisam Barakat presents an enlightening conversation between these two fellow authors. In particular, this piece provides background information on Barakat's resilience and ability to find inner peace and healing through the telling of what she refers to as "heart" stories.

In the second trio of articles, themes of multifaceted and interdependent relationships between self and others are considered. Evocative drawings and stories created by children are featured in **Children of Palestine tell their stories** based on the "First Book" project sponsored by the Tamer Institute for Community Education in Palestine. Like Ibtisam Barakat, a professional author who found writing a way to "own a piece of her childhood," the stories presented in this article serve as a way for children to remember and maintain their hopes and dreams. In **Face to face: Self and others in Israeli children's literature**, Israeli author Celina Maschiach describes a peace initiative in which texts are written both in Hebrew and Arabic. A convincing case is made that both inner peace and outer peace is possible when we see the "other" as residing within ourselves. Ahmed K. Al-Rawi's article, **Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and its possible Arabic influences** presents the possibility that "Le Petit Poucet" or "Little Thumbling" was influenced by an Arab folktale popular among the Bedouins or the oral tradition in Spain, arguing persuasively that it has roots in several different cultures.

The idea of seeing ourselves in others without denying differences, acknowledging our interdependence with each other as crucial to our survival, is brought to the forefront in **Fantasy as philosophy in children's literature: The multicultural landscape of *The Clockwork Forest*** by Kate McInally. McInally's powerful analysis of this text makes the compelling argument that fantasy can help us to negotiate futures in a way that realism cannot. For those of us who were not privileged to attend the biennial Dorothy Briley lecture presented at the IBBY Regional conference hosted by USSBY in October 2009, we have the pleasure of reading **Memories of meeting worlds or close encounters of the fourth kind** by Carmen Diana Dearden. We encounter a universe of multicultural worlds which overlap, sometimes clash, and sometimes merge. Dearden, a strong and fiery publisher at Ediciones Ekaré in Venezuela and former IBBY President, presents a humorous and poignant speech which provides a dynamic historical cross-section of many intersecting worlds including those worlds found in books. Finally, Toin Duijx offers an enticing **Profile of Ted van Lieshout**, the poet, author, and artist, on the occasion of his winning the Dutch Theo Thijssenprize.

The departments

In **Books on Books** you won't want to miss six professional book reviews from four countries. Elena Kilian reviews an anthology of the selected talks, essays and newspaper articles celebrating the contributions of Belgian scholar, Michel Defourny. Ines Galling reviews two works from Germany. The first celebrates a book by the former director of the International Youth Library, Barbara Scharioth's book, *The fish, the piano, and the wind. An imaginary library*, based on an exhibit of imaginary books dreamed up by 75 illustrators from around the world. The second review highlights former director of the Frankfurt Institute of Studies in Children's Literature, Klaus Doderer's tribute to James Krüss in *Islander and Cosmopolitain*. Jutta Reusch reviews Rachel Falconer's provocative book The Crossover novel; *Contemporary children's fiction and its adult readership* from the United Kingdom. Then Claudia Söffner spotlights William Gray's *Fantasy, myth, and the measure of truth; Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffmann*. And from the United States, Victori Flanagan provides a review of *The gothic in children's literature; Haunting the borders* edited by Anna Jackson, Karen Coats and Roderick McGillis.

Glenna Sloan keeps us abreast of newly published children's books with reviews of nine titles from the continents of North America, Europe, Australia and Asia in the **Postcards from Around the World**. The selected books will appeal to a range of audiences. Two informational books from Canada celebrate diversity as well as help readers see a bigger global picture. For younger readers, you will find poetic, playful, fantastical and poignant stories. And for young adults there are two novels, a historical fiction novel from the United Kingdom and a realistic fiction novel with historical and political components from Ireland.

Liz Page, at IBBY headquarters, provides us with the latest information about International Children's Book Day 2010, the upcoming World Congress in Spain, the 22nd Biennale of Bratislava, as well as about the projects selected for support from the IBBY-Yamada Fund in 2010 in Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Peru and Zambia. A tribute to poet Sergei Mikhalkov, founder of IBBY Russia, concludes her **Focus IBBY** column.

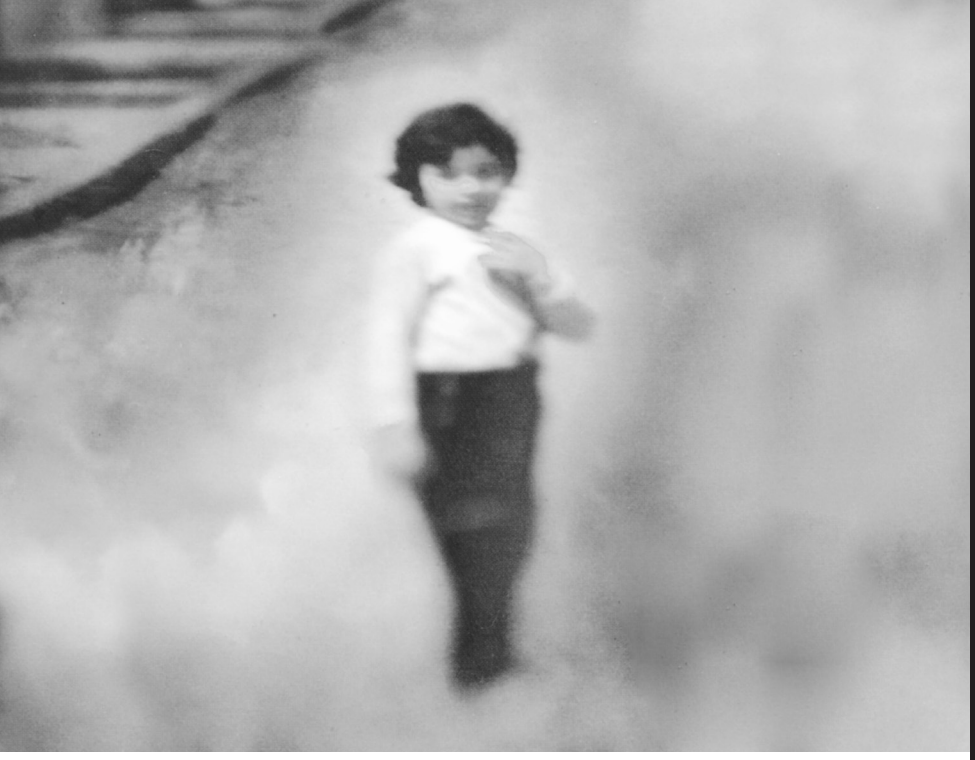
Our "back-page" **Poem** in this issue features a bilingual poem by Ibtisam Barakat, "Palestine," in both English and Arabic. As a matter of fact, you can also find a Spanish translation of this same poem on the IBBY website. This is a first step in our effort to reach out to readers in multiple languages, and we hope to do more of this in the future via the Web.

Speaking of poetry, you will also notice that we have chosen a new poem to feature interlaced among the article titles in our table of contents. This is a classic poem from the U.S. by Langston Hughes, "To You". It's a lovely, lyrical poem about the power of dreams to shape a better world. We also wanted to share the poem as it was originally written here.

To You
by Langston Hughes

To sit and dream, to sit and read,
To sit and learn about the world
Outside our world of here and now—
Our problem world--
To dream of vast horizons of the soul
Through dreams make whole,
Unfettered free—help me!
All you who are dreamers, too,
Help me make our world anew.
I reach out my hands to you.

We hope you find much to think about in this issue, as we move into a new year and a new decade. We are pleased to feature articles from Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, Buddhist, Gothic, and even imaginary and conflicting perspectives. What a mix! *Bookbird* continues to be a place where multiple points of view are welcomed and dialogue can flourish. We hope you share this issue with colleagues over coffee and conversation—and consider writing for us this year, too.



Forty Days of Mourning

The author writes about the death of her father, her period of mourning for him during the Arab tradition of 40 days, and the surprising results that followed.

by IBTISAM BARAKAT

On February 3, 2004, at 10:35 p.m. Ramallah time, my father died. When the phone rang with this message, I was stunned. How could he not be alive? In Missouri, where I lived, it was only half past two. So if he died at 10:35 p.m., was he still alive in America? I bargained with God for eight more hours of his life, then set my alarm clock and waited.

One by one, the hours escaped like moths fluttering towards the light. And as they did, I saw the face of my father. A quiet man, he was tall and strong – but afraid of the darkness, afraid of graveyards and their lonely silence. Living on the West Bank in increasingly harsh economic conditions following the 1967 Six-Day War and the occupation of Palestinian cities that followed, he was also afraid that he could neither protect nor provide for us.

My father was the one with the least schooling in our family, having finished only the first grade. And so as a teenager in the late 1970s, at the end of every week, I sat with him and added up his work hours and helped him figure out his pay.

As I did this I was aware of his hands resting on the table near me. Weathered and wounded, they revealed the harsh reality of his life. When the work hour numbers did not add up to what my father

Ibtisam Barakat is a frequent speaker and author of *Tasting the Sky, A Palestinian Childhood*. For more information, go to http://www.ibtisambarakat.com

hoped, those hands clenched into fists. Snatching the pencil from me, he demanded a recalculation; then cried when my total remained the same. This meant that family purchases like meat or olive oil would need to be postponed.

My father was the one with the least schooling in our family, having finished only the first grade. And so as a teenager in the late 1970s, at the end of every week, I sat with him and added up his work hours and helped him figure out his pay.

What was never postponed throughout the years of my childhood and adolescence, however, were the daily little treats my father brought with him at the end of each day. Sesame, popcorn, candy, salted seeds, nuts. They cost money, but he bought them anyway. "The children need clothes more than they need these treats," Mother would tell him. "But these treats put happiness on their faces, even if just for a moment or two," he insisted.

Now the clock announced 10:35 p.m. My father was dead in both Ramallah time and American time. I felt a glimmer of a desire to die, too. "Dad, do you want me to go with you?" I asked what I imagined was my father's soul venturing into the darkness alone. I remembered that the one thing my father was never sure about was whether anyone would think about him after he died. The last time I saw him he gave me his *hatta* scarf and prayer rug, and, tilting his head, said, "*It-thakkareeni*." Remember me.

Now I wanted to give my father exactly what he would have asked for. I wanted to think of him, and to think of him in a way that honored the traditions he believed in. My father would not expect me to follow these traditions. In fact, he would be shocked! He knew me to be his free-spirited daughter who at age 22, and in spite of his protestations, left for the West, an ocean away from home. Perhaps I broke my father's heart a thousand times by challenging his traditional ways.

But today I would respect these traditions. I decided to mourn for forty days, the traditional mourning period for Arabs. I cancelled all of my appointments, set aside my work, put on my dark clothes and recorded an out-going voice-mail message telling anyone who called me that I was in a period of mourning. For the next 40 days, no shopping, no sugary foods for comfort, no movies or television to distract myself. Thinking about my dad would get my full attention.

I made a play dough sculpture of my father, and began a forty-day conversation with him. I covered my walls with paper in order to draw large family scenes from my memory and to write giant letters on the wall. A stack of Kleenex boxes that I bought for the strong rush of tears that had begun stood near the forty tall candles I would light – one every day. I hoped they would conquer the dark and light up the road of the other world for my dad.

I put an extra set of plates on my table and as I served the food, I hummed the only song that I knew my dad loved, "*Night, cover up the world like a tent; I am not afraid of your darkness. For after the darkness always will come a morning of love that rises and rises."*

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As I progressed deeper and deeper into the days of mourning, I found myself going on a journey into the past. No amount of grief could stop me. Suddenly I was willing to feel again the events of my life, which had often seemed unbearable. Now, to remember was to think of my dad. To remember was to keep him alive in my life.

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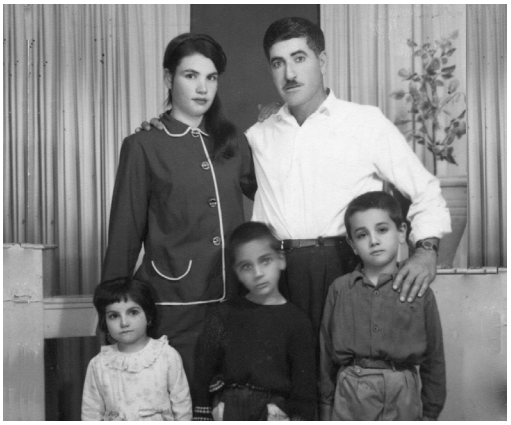
On day forty, I wrote a farewell letter to my father, thanking him for his life, and forgiving him for having let me down at times. I drove to a creek at the edge of land owned by a friend because my father loved running water. My friend had left a shovel by the creek. "Feel free to play the piano in my house afterwards," the yellow sticky note on the shovel read.

I dug the earth. I put in it the hardened play dough sculpture of my father, the farewell letter and the scarf that he had given me. I cut the prayer rug into two halves. Keeping the half where his feet used to stand five times a day, I buried the other half where he had put his forehead down in prayer. I wanted to honor that my father and I had come from the same foot place, the same roots, but our minds diverged into different worlds.

I faced the creek and once again sang his favorite song: "*Night, cover up the world like a tent; I am not afraid of your darkness."* I sang it over and over until there was only silence in me. Then I closed the earth as if it were an envelope, patted it affectionately, kissed it, and went inside my friend's house.

I sat down at the piano and played with abandon. I did not feel even a whisper of unfinished sadness. I had cried all of my tears, felt all of my feelings, said all of my words. I played and played, swaying back and forth, the sunlight streaming on my fingers.

As I drove home I felt closer to my dad than I ever had felt during his life. I also became aware of a new place in me that had opened up, allowing new depths of my past to become accessible. The next day, when the forty days of mourning were over, a stunning birth occurred. I began to write the book I had always wanted to write, but could not bear to write until then.



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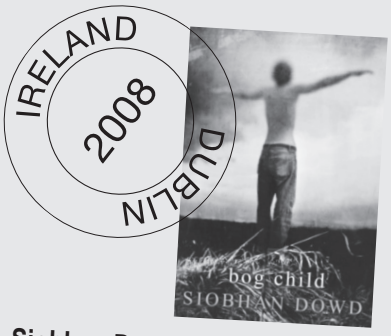
It was about my childhood and war. This story that I called *Tasting the Sky, A Palestinian Childhood* began with the first night of the Six-Day War which took place between Israelis and Arabs in June, 1967. I was 3½ and was accidentally separated from my father and my mother, hidden in a tent of darkness. Previously I had not been able to find these memories, no matter how hard I tried.

The next day, when the forty days of mourning were over, a stunning birth occurred. I began to write the book I had always wanted to write, but could not bear to write until then.

Now I began to write. I wrote a chapter every two days, continuing until I finished two months later, writing as though I had entered a mourning that never ends. And my father's song is still with me. "*Night, cover up the world like a tent; I am not afraid of your darkness. For after the darkness always will come a morning of love that rises and rises."*



Siobhan Dowd

Bog Child

Oxford, UK/New York, USA: David Fickling Books/ Random House, 2008.

336 pp. ISBN:10:0385751699 (fiction, 14+)

This acclaimed work by an Irish author is set in Northern Ireland. When Fergus McCann first discovers the body in the peat bog, he imagines that it involves a murder, perhaps by the Irish Republican Army. It's not surprising that he might think this; it is 1981 and tensions are high, especially here on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Fergus's own brother is jailed because of involvement with the provisional IRA; the prisoners have started a hunger strike, sacrificing themselves for the cause. What follows is a beautifully told tale of two ages. The story of Fergus, who is dealing with family, politics, and first love, intertwines with the story of Mel, a young woman from a very different Ireland 2000 years in the past. The stakes are high for both, and the themes intersect in powerful ways. Fergus is manipulated into making runs across the border, and Mel is caught up in politics and superstition. The intricacies of family and romance add to the richness of the narrative, while there is enough action and intrigue to make this a page-turner.

Ernest Bond

Mary Hooper

By Royal Command

London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing, Plc, 2008.

240 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7475-8885-6 (historical fiction, 12+)

This novel continues the adventures of Lucy, housemaid to Dr. Dee, court magician and consultant to Queen Elizabeth I. Having previously saved the Queen's life in *At the House of the Magician*, Lucy has been asked to remain in the household of Dr. Dee as a spy for Her Majesty. When Lucy hears ghostly moans reverberating through the house, she quickly realizes that Dr. Dee and his associates are up to further mischief.

Lucy's curious nature and adventurous spirit will resonate with modern teens, but also remains consistent with the qualities of an Elizabethan character. The formal writing style feels stiff at times, but effectively conveys the setting and should not daunt the more advanced reader. Hooper provides a satisfying balance of intrigue, magic, and a touch of romance interwoven with authentic period details. Historical notes, some recipes, a glossary, and a bibliography are also included.

Tanja Nathanael

The Arab World in Children's Books:

Finding Palestine

In this article based on a talk given at an international conference on children's literature sponsored by the Lebanese Association of Women Researchers, Marston writes about the depiction of Arabs and Palestinians, in particular, in books for young people, including her own attempts at writing their stories as an outsider author.

by ELSA MARSTON

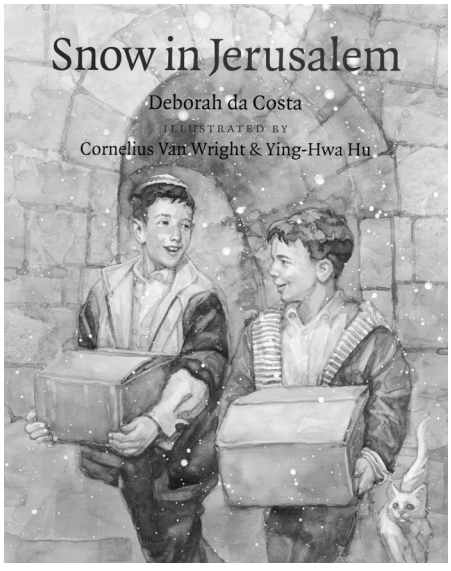
Elsa Marston incorporates a lifelong interest in Middle Eastern cultures in her fiction and nonfiction writing for young readers.

What is it like for a child to want a good book – yet never find one about "someone like me"? Just a generation ago, that was true for most children of ethnic minorities growing up in the U.S. In books for young people, they found few if any faces with coloring, eyes, and hair like theirs . . . as though they somehow weren't quite authentic "American" children. Fortunately, times have changed, and there are now many excellent books and stories about characters from diverse countries or cultures. But what about Arab Americans, and those of Palestinian heritage in particular? Are there books for children that might offer an introduction to their cultures and the realities of their lives that are fair, accurate, and positive?

As a children's book author, a New England Yankee who often writes about the Middle East, I have been able to make many trips and sojourns in the Arab world thanks to my Lebanese husband, whose family ties and work as a scholar took him overseas frequently. Writing about Egyptians both ancient and modern, Muhammad the founder of Islam, children in war-torn Lebanon, and so forth, I soon found a mission in my work: helping to bridge the fissures of ignorance and misunderstanding that block a great many Americans from positive attitudes toward the Arab peoples and their cultures.

Are there books for children that might offer an introduction to their cultures and the realities of their lives that are fair, accurate, and positive?

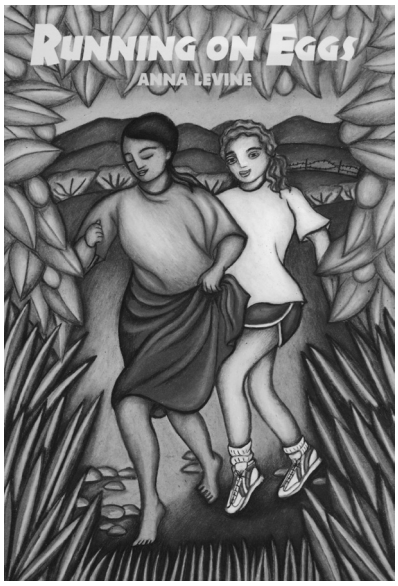
Fortunately, neither books nor attitudes are written in stone. In the last two decades there has been a remarkable increase in books of high literary quality, by any standard, that present the people of the present-day Arab/Muslim world in an accurate, positive light. To a large extent, we can thank the 1990s' emphasis on multicultural education and literature. Another major influence, I believe, stems from events on the world stage: the Palestinian uprising from 1987 to 1992 and the Oslo Accords of 1993, which focused international attention on the Palestinian cause as never before. Very possibly this development encouraged a more open-minded attitude regarding publication of the Palestinian viewpoint.



Depicting Palestine in children's books

In the mid-1990s Naomi Shihab Nye, already highly regarded as a poet, opened doors with her picture book *Sitti's Secrets* (1994) and her novel *Habibi* (1997), each written appealingly in the voice of a Palestinian-American girl visiting her father's natal village in the West Bank. Then followed several other books with themes of reconciliation and personal courage, by other authors. For instance, a charming – and scrupulously fair – picture book by Deborah DaCosta, *Snow in Jerusalem* (2001), is about two young boys, Israeli and Arab, who have unknowingly been feeding the same stray white cat. When they both happen to discover her with a new litter, they squabble over who gets the kittens and finally decide to share. Daniella Carmi's *Samir and Yonatan*, translated from the Hebrew (2000), takes us with an injured Palestinian boy to the children's ward of an Israeli hospital. Though constantly worried about his family under military occupation, Samir eventually finds common ground and friendship with two of the Jewish boys. *Running on Eggs* (1999), by Israeli writer Anna Levine, describes two girls in Israel on a school track team, one Jewish and the other Arab, who train secretly on a rough hillside because each fears the disapproval of her own community. What I especially like in this story is the emphasis on working together (physically *working*) on a project

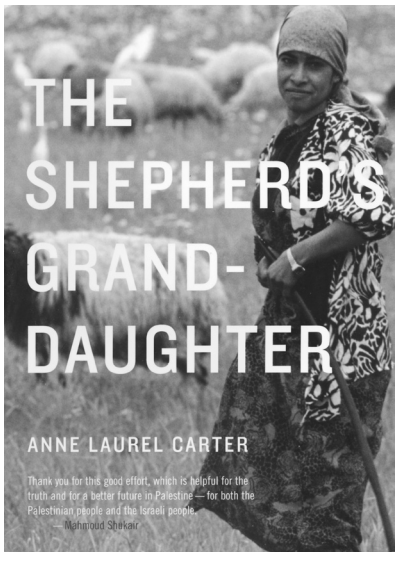
that will ultimately benefit both sides – in this case, a safe track for running.



A more somber note is struck by *A Stone in My Hand* (2002) by Cathryn Clinton, set in Gaza during the first Palestinian uprising, showing us a young girl coping with the loss of her beloved father and her brother's growing involvement in violent resistance. Marilyn Levy's young-adult novel *Checkpoints* (2008), which explores a suicide bombing's psychological effects on an Israeli girl and her family, likewise foresees no promising resolution. This author suggests that only the determination of individuals to maintain their personal relationships with Palestinian friends, and vice versa, holds out hope for the future. *Dreaming of Palestine* (2002) by Randa Ghazy, a book for older teens about a group of young Palestinians living together, conveys a grim, but powerful picture of utter frustration and hopelessness. And of course Ibtisam Barakat's *Tasting the Sky* (2007) offers a powerful, personal memoir of terror and escape.

Some books from the Palestinian viewpoint, published in the last few years, are surprisingly forthright in "telling it like it is." A simple picture book story, illustrated by children in a Palestinian refugee camp, *The Boy and the Wall* by Amahl Bishara (2006) presents without acrimony or bitterness a child's view of the so-called separation wall that is virtually imprisoning many Palestinian villagers and destroying their land. Elizabeth Laird's novel *A Little Piece of Ground* (2003) is about a young Palestinian boy living under harsh military curfew who risks danger and death as he tries to claim a spot where he and his friends can play soccer. On publication in Britain, this outstanding book initially drew some criticism because there were no "good" Israelis depicted. Although the defense of the book (including a statement by Lynne Reid Banks) was much more vigorous, the criticism did delay an American edition for a few years. Then there's *The Shepherd's Granddaughter* by Anne Carter (2008). It's hard to imagine this remarkable book, which does not flinch from describing the brutal treatment inflicted on Palestinians by Israeli settlers and soldiers, having been published – let alone honored – even five years ago.

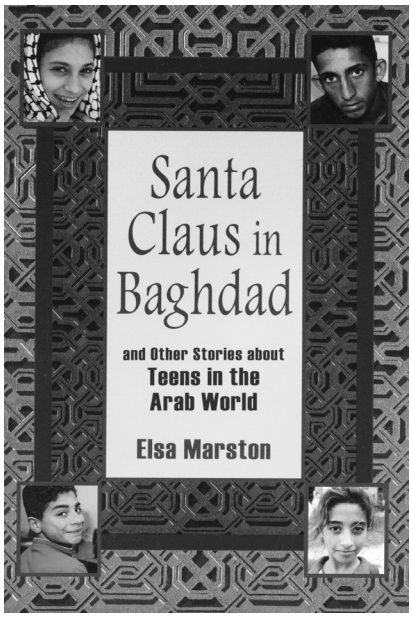
What I especially like in this story is the emphasis on working together (physically working) on a project that will ultimately benefit both sides – in this case, a safe track for running.



Santa Claus in Baghdad

Just fifteen years ago, I was told emphatically by a noted scholarly writer with much experience in the Middle East, "Don't even *think* of writing a children's book about kids in a Palestinian camp. You will never get it published. *Never*." Happily, time, and the courage of increasing numbers of writers and publishers, has proven otherwise. In the real world, viable political resolutions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and – at the center of everything – the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are still

remote. Yet in this small but vital corner of human activity – literature for young people that helps shape their understanding of the world in positive ways – I still see reason for hope.



And that continues to guide my own work. That's why I wrote the stories for *Santa Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories About Teens in the Arab World*, a book that serves a unique role by introducing several different Arab societies of the Middle East and North Africa through short fiction about teenagers. The settings – all locations where I have lived or visited over the years – include an Egyptian village, Baghdad, Damascus, Lebanon, a refugee camp, Tunisia, the West Bank, and Jordan. Although political background is an essential ingredient in some of the stories, I chose not to write about the sort of things that most people in the U.S. often associate with the "Middle East" – war, violence, oppression, and poverty. Rather, I wanted the stories to provide a bridge between cultures by focusing on life experiences familiar to teenagers nearly everywhere. The young people in my stories are concerned with fitting in at school, finding a good friend, dealing with parents' divorce, "proving themselves," helping a down-hearted friend or sibling, balancing parents' wishes with their own dreams, resisting the dead hand of custom. While the cultural framework may be particular to the Middle East, the basic concerns can ring true far and wide.

For example, "The Plan" takes place in a large and notorious refugee camp in Lebanon, where tens of thousands of Palestinians struggle just to keep going. I could have emphasized the harsh conditions of their lives, or perhaps the lure of radical resistance militias and fundamentalist religious movements. But I wanted readers – especially American readers – to feel an emotional connection with the young protagonist, a boy of about twelve or thirteen named Rami, on the cusp between childish optimism and the downturn of adolescence. So I decided to write the unexpected: a love story. Rami takes it upon himself, through elaborate schemes, to bring together his pretty art teacher and his handsome, but discouraged, older brother. Formerly a bright engineering student, until the U.N. scholarship money dried up, now the young man has no future except as a pushcart vendor. His plight illustrates the desperate situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, where education too often leads nowhere. While Rami's plan works out in the end, this is not a story of happily-ever-after fluff.

I wanted the stories to provide a bridge between cultures by focusing on life experiences familiar to teenagers nearly everywhere.

The story set in Amman, Jordan, deals with "honor crime." I chose this topic because for my earlier book, *Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change,* I had learned about human rights activists, mostly women, concerned with this problem in Jordan. For years they have been trying to expose and combat this horrendous "honor and shame" mindset,

which demands the death of a woman or girl whose family suspects her of improper behavior. Rather than writing about a girl who is a victim – which would have been a story much too heavy and dark in company with all the other stories in the book – I decided to show the effects of an "honor" situation on families. The plot develops through the contrasting viewpoints of two girls who have become acquainted at school: Wafa from an extremely conservative family for whom the code of "male honor" is still all-powerful, and Yasmine, whose mother is a crusading journalist. Should Yasmine betray Wafa's confidence and tell her mother about the dreadful problem in Wafa's family? Or should she mind her own business and very possibly let a terrible crime take place? Thus the story is at least as much about friendship and trust, as about the scourge of "honor crime."

Thus the story is at least as much about friendship and trust, as about the scourge of "honor crime."

In the title story, "Santa Claus in Baghdad," Amal hopes to regain social status in school by volunteering to buy a class gift for the departing literature teacher. Then she learns that her emotionally fragile little brother, confusing the idea of "Santa Claus" with the forthcoming visit of an uncle from the U.S., is fixated on the notion that "Santa" is going to bring him a little toy car. But because they are living in Saddam's Baghdad, where ordinary people were so financially squeezed by the U.S.-imposed economic sanctions that they had to sell almost all their possessions, Amal finds that even a modest gift may require a major sacrifice.

By focusing on a problem or challenge in the young person's life, something that would likely resonate with many readers' own experiences, I hope to encourage a feeling of empathy. But along with that, I hope the reader will be curious to know more about what the protagonist is facing in her or his particular situation. Why can't Rami's smart, hardworking brother get a decent job? Why can't Amal's parents afford medical treatment for their children? Why, in some people's minds, is a young woman held responsible for a grown man's "honor"? What are the cultural, or political, or historical backgrounds to these dilemmas?

We all like to see ourselves, even if just a glimpse, in the mirror of literature. And when we have that reassurance of the familiar, then it's easier to look farther afield and test the unfamiliar.

In my view, if a story shows characters confronted with a dreadful situation over which they have little or no control, there's a danger that the dreadful situation itself may set up a psychological barrier for the reader. It may be too big, too alien, and too difficult to incorporate into the world that the young reader can deal with. A deeper, more intense and lasting response may arise when the reader can identify with the people in the story. We all like to see ourselves, even if just a glimpse, in the mirror

This story, "Santa Claus in Baghdad," has been made into a film by an independent film producer, Raouf Zaki of RA Vision Productions, near Boston. Suitable for viewers from about age ten up, the film has won a number of distinctions, and is available on DVD. For further information, including the quite amazing story of how Zaki managed to create "Baghdad" in Boston, see the website: www.santaclausinbaghdad.com.

of literature. And when we have that reassurance of the familiar, then it's easier to look farther afield and test the *un*familiar.

I hope young readers in the Arab world (and elsewhere, of course) will increasingly find good stories that say something true about their lives – and at the same time, widen their own horizons. Indeed, someday these young readers may become the writers who guide future generations.

The author will provide her extended list of recommended books and stories about the Arab world. Contact her directly at elsa.marston@gmail.com

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A Chat with Ibtisam Barakat

Ibtisam in Oman in a school with children of more than 70 nationalities

Elsa Marston brings her experiences as a writer and frequent speaker to this interview with author Ibtisam Barakat about writing, childhood, culture, trauma, memoir, and more.

by ELSA MARSTON
with IBTISAM BARAKAT

Elsa Marston begins:
As we are both authors who write about young people in the Arab world, I considered the many things we could discuss – and realized that we have something else in common, something quite surprising. At the very time that you and your family were fleeing from the Israeli assault on your town in Palestine in June 1967, my family and I were fleeing from the Israeli attack on Egypt. We had been there for nearly a year for my husband's research, and we watched the storm-clouds of war gathering all that spring. Finally, just in time, I left for Lebanon with my little boy – exactly the same age that you were, Ibtisam – and with the research results stuffed in my suitcase, my husband following separately.

There the similarity between our stories ends. Your life was filled with turbulence and uncertainty, while mine was safe, but filled with dismay over what had happened during those few days, producing a catastrophe that has only been getting worse ever since. Fine writing often is inspired by the simplest details of human experience; sometimes the worst follies of human misjudgment produce superb

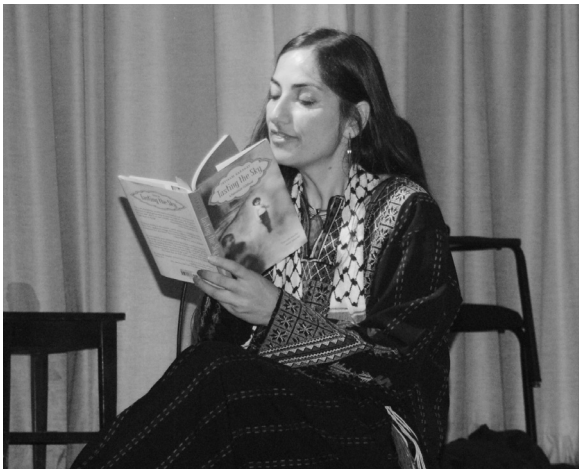
written records – straight from the hearts of simple individuals. Your memoir has revealed both, with great eloquence . . . and this is where we meet again.

In Tasting the Sky, we encounter you as a young child and later as a teenager. What were some of the major steps from your young adulthood, still in Occupied Palestine, to your life as a writer in Missouri in the United States?

Ibtisam responds: My adolescent years, the subject of the sequel to *Tasting the Sky* which I am currently writing, had intensity of a different nature from what I experienced and described in my first book. Adolescence is a tumultuous stage of life anywhere, with huge transitions; but to live those years under military occupation challenged everything. Not only my body was changing, but the whole country was always changing – restless every minute, unknowing what the future would bring. Luckily I grew up – though Palestine is still in the turmoil of a country attempting to be birthed into a life of freedom and choice. I am hoping to help that effort in a kind and peaceful way that does not add to the injuries of anyone. I think telling stories helps greatly because the truth of a story opens up the heart.

I think telling stories helps greatly because the truth of a story opens up the heart.

After I finished high school, I studied English literature at Birzeit University, near Ramallah in Palestine, then came to the U.S. for an internship at *The Nation* magazine in New York City. At the University of Missouri, I earned a master's degree in journalism, and then another master's in Human Development and Family Studies. I wanted to know what a "normal" childhood is like, and what a normal family is like in normal circumstances. Of course I didn't find that out from studying! But while in Columbia, Missouri, I realized that "nothing" happens here in this quiet U.S. town – that is, no wars happen – and that realization



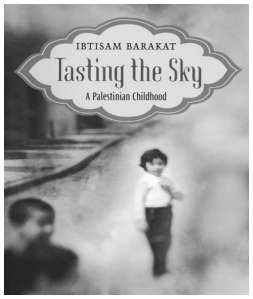
Ibtisam reads to the audience in traditional Palestinian dress

made it feel right for me to stay and investigate my relationship with the massively turbulent stories I grew up with and carried with me, and that helped me become the person I am. In the peace of "nothingness" I could go into the war of my memories and write about them, with the hope to make peace there, too.

And I discovered it actually works. Writing heals a heart and makes it wiser. Writing tells the heart stories, like a grandma shares memories. Besides, writing is fun for me. So, by mixing that sense of fun

I could go into the war of my memories and write about them, with the hope to make peace there, too.

with the hardship of stories filled with unbearable feelings, the challenge of writing the narrative of my childhood became possible. It started out small enough for me to bring to the page, and then it grew on the page, bigger than me. It grew wings, took off out the window to the world, and went back to the place it came from. But I did not want to give it back wounded and painful. Rather, beautiful and healed and hopeful, so the reader can experience and feel, learn and expand, but not get wounded by the story. I gave that task to myself as I wrote!



In *Tasting the Sky* I have a dedication to "the quiet city of Columbia, Missouri, where it is possible to gently face oneself – long enough to become friends, a crucial step toward world peace."

Many Arab Americans, as well as people in the Arab world, have long assumed that publishing anything that portrays Palestinians fairly would be next to impossible in the U.S. In recent years, however, that particular wall has started to crack. Now we have many excellent works of children's literature (picture books, novels, stories), depicting peoples of the Arab and Muslim worlds, including Palestinians, in a fair and sympathetic light. What was your experience, Ibtisam, in finding a publisher for Tasting the Sky?

I wrote the book over many years. In the late 1990s, I sent the first chapter to a short-story contest for the anthology *Children of Israel, Children of Palestine*, published by Simon & Schuster in 1998. Out of hundreds of entries, it won the only award given. When Laurel Holliday, the editor, called to tell me that my story had won $1000, I asked, "Are you sure it didn't win because you guys felt bad for me?" She spent half an hour telling me that it was the writing: that they had thought of giving a best story award for a Palestinian writer and another for a Jewish/Israeli writer, but finally decided it should go for the best writing. While she spoke, I asked her to wait because I wanted to get what she was saying on tape!

The second chapter got published in 2002, in the collection *Shattered: Stories of Children and War*, edited by Jennifer Armstrong. Then, in 2003, I met Suzanne Fisher Staples at a children's literature conference in Wisconsin, where we both spoke. She said, "You have to write a book—and it does not have to be long." So I started to think in those terms: "It does not have to be long!" In 2004, I spoke at CLNE (Children's Literature New England conference), where I met Frances Foster of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and many wonderful people from the publishing world. Frances said she would love to see a manuscript from me.

Four months after that, my dad died. I felt that I wanted to keep him alive . . . I mourned for forty days. And the mourning took me so deep into myself, to the roots of my life, that I found there the full story of my childhood. I wrote *Tasting the Sky* chapter after chapter, sending each to Suzanne, who very kindly encouraged me to go on. No critiquing, just encouragement. Then I sent it to FSG, which is Suzanne's publisher – and got a call within a week. I worked with brilliant editors and truly felt close to everyone in the publishing house. So my name, Ibtisam Barakat, which means "smiling blessings" in Arabic, came true in this case!

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Tell us something about the reactions to your book – reviews, media, public, and so forth – and what effect this has had on you. Have you been surprised in any way?

My editors believed in *Tasting the Sky* a lot more than I did. I kept wondering who in the world would want to read about a Palestinian family. That thinking came right out of my life under military occupation, when I used to say to myself, in the deepest level of my heart: I don't think anyone in the world truly cares about us, or else they would not let this situation go on for so long.

But of course the heart has layers, and I cultivated my hopeful ones.

When it came to publishing, I had to reckon

with that belief and many others. My brilliant editor Melanie Kroupa kept saying that *Tasting the Sky* is a special book. I told myself, if she thinks so, I will trust her.

And when the book came out, had great reviews, won awards, and people started to write to me, I got on the road to meet readers and engage in very broad conversation on the lives of young people

It is like a big gate opened up, and I am ushered into a world where I can make a big difference for the child I once was and for many children who are that child today.

in war and living under occupation – as well as about Arab culture, Islam, Palestinians, prejudice and healing and art. It is like a big gate opened up, and I am ushered into a world where I can make a big difference for the child I once was and for many children who are that child today. I am aware that many children in the world think that no one cares, because I was one of those children. Now the grown-up me wants to shout across the planet so that all the children in the world who feel that way can hear me saying – "I and many, many people care about YOU. Please, please do not despair!"

Writing a memoir can help one recognize and relive the blessings of one's life, but it also, almost inevitably, probes deeply in some wounds that have never really healed. Sometimes, too, those injuries may have healed so well that now the writer can examine them safely, perhaps from a new perspective. Are there some parts of Tasting the Sky that you particularly enjoyed writing – or that you found especially difficult and painful?

I enjoyed slowing down – because I lived my childhood running. I hurried through it because it was dangerous and I kept wanting to grow up in a day, if I could. I thought grown-ups did not have problems because they could do all sorts of things children could not do.

I had to slow down in order to write. Slowing down, I realized that while growing up, I could not truly love what I loved. I felt that loving anything at all was like stealing behind the back of the war, because I was forever wondering if the war would start at any moment and would take whatever I loved from me – my dad, the poppy flowers, the blue sky, the tomatoes in the garden that I watered and waited for them to have the slightest brush of red.

But writing slowly, I could finally love what I loved with a sense of safety. I could smell the poppy flowers and feel their petals on my palms for as long as I wanted. I could think about my dad without the daily panic I felt as a child – always worried that he might not come back. I could write about the tomatoes and close my eyes and let them ripen with delightful ease, like a sunrise that I was sure would come if I went on writing. I could chase a cloud in the endlessly blue sky, knowing that no helicopter would suddenly come and blow up something. If one did, it would be the helicopter from the nearby hospital, rushing to help someone. What a difference that is!

I loved the taste of the pastries that my brothers and I stole in *Tasting the Sky*. I tasted them truly for the first time when I wrote about them, not

So, in slowing down in order to write in ways that would offer the reader all the details, I was able to be a child again and grow up slowly, page by page, through the writing.

when I was gobbling them down. I loved having a perspective on my mother's pain and struggle. She was only 23 years old, with four children. The world was mean to her and chased out her gentleness with its daily insults to her life. So, in slowing down in order to write in ways that would offer the reader all the details, I was able to be a child again and grow up slowly, page by page, through the writing.

The hardest parts were those that I did not

want to slow down to feel... like losing my family during the war, and the death of Zuraiq my goat... like leaving our home at the end of the book, or remembering Zuhair, the boy who waited on the road when I came home from school.

Melanie, my editor, would say, "This feels a bit rushed." And I would laugh, because of course I wanted to rush through these things. But revision after revision, I could hold my ground in the face of these events, sob until I could no longer see the screen in front of me, and then go back to writing, like a blue sky after the passing of a storm. I think memoir writing can be a stormy journey. But one gets through, yes, drenched with one's tears, but also connected with parts of the self that wait and wait for us to return and set them free.

Many young children have imaginary friends, or make a doll or toy animal into something like a live friend. In your story, it was the letter "Alef," the first letter in the Arabic alphabet, the equivalent of "A," a straight vertical line-- almost like a person. Please tell us a bit more about Alef. Did he eventually have a family? Or did he stand alone, as a predictor of your life in letters?

I consider myself lucky that I had and still have a friend like Alef. He is the friend of my imagination because I could create him, and erase him, and he would not die. I needed something, someone who would not die.

Alef would hide, and then be brought into my life as I needed him. He was small enough and belonged in my environment. Eventually he did have a family, when I learned the rest of the alphabet, and they all became part of the big, extended family of my imagination.

I loved the creation of imaginary friends, so much so that even in middle school and high school, when I was studying for the General High School Exam, I had seven imaginary friends. I would explain the geography lessons to the one who loved geography; and when I had explained enough, repeated enough, we would agree that he would show up and answer any time I had questions during the exams. He would remind me that I knew all of this and had taught it to him. "Here is the answer!"

Ibtisam doing Dabke dance with students at Al-Bustan Camp

I think memoir writing can be a stormy journey. But one gets through, yes, drenched with one's tears, but also connected with parts of the self that wait and wait for us to return and set them free.

And so I had a math imaginary friend, a history imaginary friend, a science imaginary friend. I think that was the precursor for learning about character and dialogue and interaction in the realm of the imagination, and experiencing it as totally real, with actual consequences in the real world.

I am happy to say that I've been doing some writing in Arabic lately, and I can see Alef welcoming me with a Dabke, the Palestinian line dance that goes from right to left, the direction the Arabic language travels on the page.

Children of Palestine tell their stories

by JEHAN HELOU

Jehan Helou is President of the Palestinian section of IBBY and a member of the IBBY Executive Committee. She served as the General director of the Tamer Institute for Community Education from 2000-2006.

The author shares excerpts of stories written by children as part of writing programs in Palestine that provide outlets for coping with war and conflict so children can "grow totally like the flower between the rocks."

Good stories promote people's cultures and lives effectively. Edward Said emphasized the importance of stories, mostly those of the colonized people observing, "… Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity, and the existence of their own history."[1] History is not only events and dates, and not only the narrative of the powerful and the victorious; history is also the stories of ordinary people, their social values, culture, daily lives, agonies and hopes. Author Elsa Marston reflected on the importance of such stories, as well, saying, "I believe, fiction can have a lasting effect on the reader. A good story offers characters with whom the reader or listener can identify; it grabs attention, appeals to the emotions, and lingers in the mind and heart."[2] Marston believes that stories that reflect an author's drive for justice are very powerful, stating, "… young Americans can now glimpse the lives of their peers in Palestine through a window that defies walls of separation."[3]

It is heartwarming to see the fervent welcome that a book like *Tasting the Sky* by Ibtisam Barakat has received, even by those who have never heard the stories of the Palestinians and their dispossession. One of the main strengths of *Tasting the Sky* is that it is written in a gripping literary style, with the spirit of a child, without inhibitions and self censorship; in addition, it tackles a story of human suffering and struggle for survival and justice. When asked why she wrote her book, Ibtisam said, *"I grew up in a world that ached for freedom but could not touch it! So I wrote as an exercise in freedom and as an expression of it..."* [4]

Stories from the children

Are children's own writings part of "children's literature?" The great writer Leo Tolstoy wrote about the power of children's stories in an essay entitled, "Who should learn to write from whom?

Are children's own writings part of "children's literature?"

Should the peasant children learn to write from us, or should we learn to write from them?"[5] Michael Armstrong highlighted the importance of Tolstoy's essay in emphasizing the literary abilities of children. He observed, "Tolstoy seeks to revolutionize our understanding of children's thought.… the essay explores a vast theme: the literary consciousness of childhood, its implication for education and more broadly for thought about culture and its inheritance. It challenges what still passes for conventional wisdom about the transmission of knowledge, the acquisition of literacy, and the induction of children into culture."[6]

Palestinian children have a lot to write about, to tell about their agonies and hopes, without any intervention from parents and teachers. This provides a breakthrough, as traditional norms do not give children the space for such self-expression. Palestinian children feel that their stories give them a voice to fight for their stolen rights. Moreover, writing stories is very therapeutic for traumatized and stressed children, and one of the best means to release their frustration and express their aspirations. More children are writing their stories now under the sponsorship of different institutes and programs. During the last war on Gaza, and immediately in its aftermath, the Palestinian section of IBBY received very touching stories written by children in library programs.

One of the most unique experiences in encouraging creative writing and self-expression of children is a yearly competition organized by the Tamer Institute for Community Education.

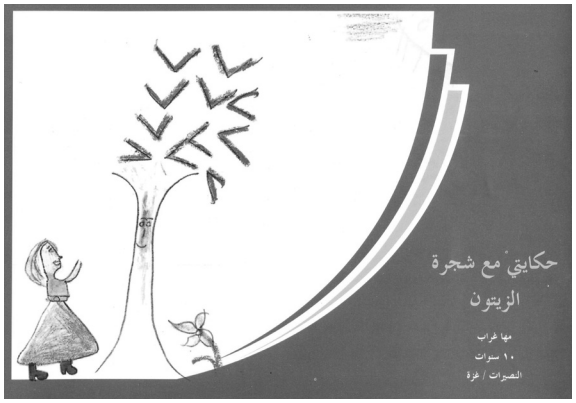
Palestinians who lost their basic rights as a result of dispossession and long years of Israeli occupation, treasured education and believed that it was instrumental in the struggle for liberation. Due to the disruption of the educational process, non-formal education became popular and an especially important tool for knowledge building. One of the most unique experiences in encouraging creative writing and self-expression of children is a yearly competition organized by the Tamer Institute for Community Education. Children write and illustrate what is called *My First Book.* ("First Books" were first published in 1997.) The Tamer Institute for Community Education is an educational non-governmental non-profit organization established in 1989 and recipient of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2009 for the promotion of books and reading.

Palestinian children, in general, write about many topics, including friendship, coping with disabilities, struggling for equality in the family, etc. However, the best stories are about their daily sufferings, hopes, and dreams. The stories are personal stories, or fictional stories inspired by their life realities and culture, or imaginary stories influenced by local folk and fairy tales. The stories inspired by the children's lives are particularly powerful. Each story is usually illustrated by the

child who writes it, or (sometimes) by another child.

It is remarkable that adults and children can express similar feelings in their writings. In writing the memoir *Tasting the Sky*, Ibtisam Barakat noted, "When I lived in Ramallah, there was the sense that anything I loved or owned could be taken away from me in an instant. In writing this book, I finally could own a piece of my childhood, which itself felt like a piece of Ramallah, in the form of story"[7]. It is interesting that a little Palestinian girl (Lamis Audeh) from Gaza says a similar thing when she describes the siege and the horrific war on Gaza saying, "They killed everything we love."

Here is just a sampling of children's original stories from the "My First Book" program sponsored by the Tamer Institute for Community Education.



"My Story with the Olive Tree"
By Maha Ghurab, 10 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2003

The olive tree is very symbolic in Palestinian life. Many writers and artists have reflected on the emotional relationship between Palestinians and the olive tree. Maha, who is 10 years, wrote a poetic and touching story about the agony of losing her friend, the olive tree. It is reminiscent of what the great artist Paul Cezanne said about it: "The olive tree is like an old friend. It knows all my life and gives me wise counsel. I should like to be buried under it."

"I always felt its shadow playing with me and relieving me of the fatigue of the school day. I imagined it telling my story to the ancestors… I even talked to it as a friend.… One day the Israeli forces invaded our camp with tanks, and so we had to stay home for a few days. Going back to school, and on my way back home, I went to lay down under the tree that was part of my little angelic and loving world, the world that doesn't know pain or grief. I walked towards the tree with an unusual bad feeling. Reaching the tree I knew the reason for what I felt, the tree was uprooted and thrown to the ground. Its leaves were drying up. They have uprooted it… they haven't even listened to its screaming and moaning… They pulled up the hope I grew and dreamed of underneath its shade. They didn't treat it with compassion because it symbolized peace and was planted in the land of peace…"

"The Story of 'God's Will'"
By Joanna Shama, 9 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 1997

Joanna, from Nazareth, tells her story. She challenges the backward outlook in our society regarding children and people with special needs. Joanna was born with her left eye almost closed, although she could see with it. She complains how her peers mocked and depressed her tremendously by calling her names such as "blind," "one-eyed,"

and "squint-eyed." Doctors advised her to exercise her eye, assuring her that when she grows up, it will open like the other eye. Joanna ends by writing, *"I exercise daily to fulfill my dreams... I will become an eye doctor… I will help the blind and people with special needs, telling them from all my heart not to lose hope!"*

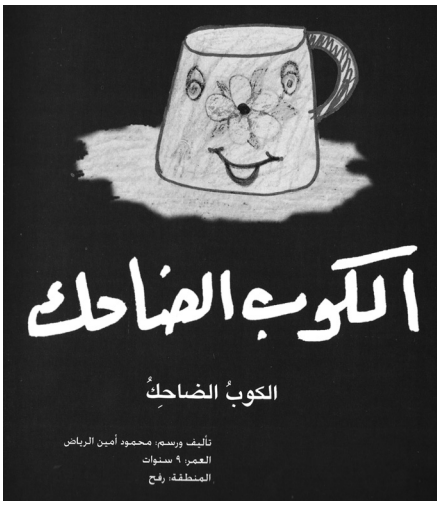
Last year, Joanna reflected on the story and wrote to me saying, *"The story has empowered me… My parents were amazed when they read it, they were not aware of my agony. Many parents and people read my story and told me that it made them aware of the importance of accepting the 'other' and 'people with special needs."* Joanna ends: *"The story was successful because it was real and concrete!"*

I'm also happy to report that Joanna's eye is opened now. She is studying in Germany to become an eye doctor.

"The Wasted Childhood"
By Musheera Al-Hajj, 16 years old
Illustrated by Hanan al-Qadi, 14 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2003

Musheera Al-Hajj wrote a powerful story, written in an imaginative style. He was critical of tribal values, and addressed the absurdity of treating a child like an adult. His story describes how, a child who is 10 years old, who is the son of the Head of a Bedouin Tribe *"used to join the elders of the Bedouin tribe in their gatherings. He sits near his father and listens to the talk of glory and eternity. The sheikh of the tribe is teaching the boy how to be a man and hence, the boy's dream is to become one. After the gatherings, the boy rests his head, the head which is full of so many thoughts, beside his grandmother and listens to her stories, as she tells them every night.*
But tonight it is different. The boy dreams of a chat with a cloud that tells him: Hello boy.
Hello! But I'm a man not a boy.
But the cloud talks to him about childhood…"

The story ends: *"We have to live our childhoods without any barrier to that right; the right that we will be satisfied to have. We engrave on the cloud: 'childhood.'"*



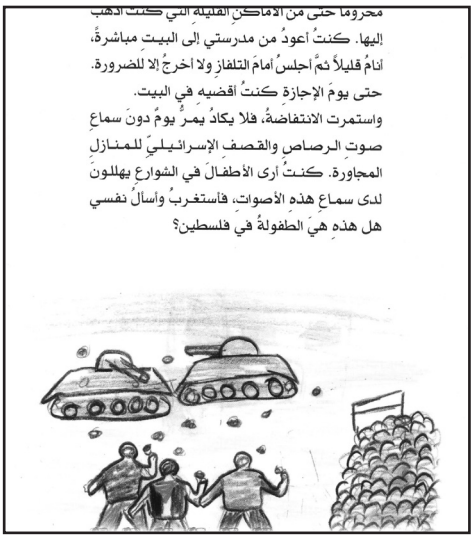
"The Laughing Cup"
By Mahmoud al Riyad, 9 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2002

Many stories tackle directly or indirectly the issue of loss. At age 9, Mahmoud al Riyad had a gift of a "laughing cup" which he liked very much. This cup was borrowed by his friend but …on the second day, when asked about the cup, his friend started to cry and said that *"his younger brother had broken the cup. I was very sad and never bought another cup. I don't want to be friends with any cup, because I don't want to feel sad when I lose it."*

"The Gone Voice"

By Maha Akel, 13 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2003

The daily loss of the beloved as a result of the oppression of occupation causes great suffering to family and friends. Hala, whose brother died, feels the great loss of a brother and a friend, and she goes to his room where she *"smells his clothes and touches the beautiful presents he brought her last year on her birthday. Basil is gone. She raised her voice and cried out, perhaps that he would hear her cry, but nothing…. She cried out in her bed and she cried out everywhere, then she stopped. Her voice was gone…"* Hala's voice is gone. There is no use of a voice that cannot be heard. Hala is sad and quiet, sitting near Basil's bed with no voice, no hope and no brother.



"The Lost Childhood"

By Mustafa Bakire, 14 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2002

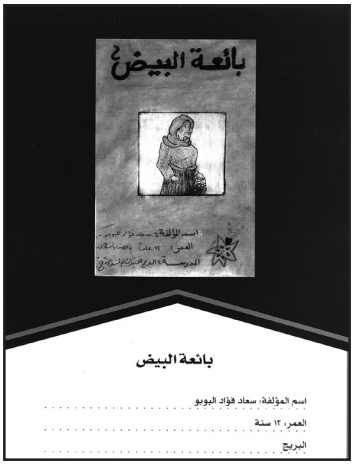
This story reflects the expectations of Palestinians who were allowed to return to the Occupied Territory after the Oslo Accords. Many thought that it was the end to occupation, but the reality on the ground was different. Mustafa, who tells his story with such insight and deep reflection of his internal conflicts, said that he was happy to return to Gaza and thought he would be living like a normal child, like he used to live in exile in Tunisia. He discovered that children in Gaza played war games and were suffering from a lack of facilities to play. At the beginning he was shocked, disturbed and did not adapt. After some time, he started to change and wrote, *"In a moment of truth I discovered that I was a stranger in my homeland, and I wanted to abandon other children and wished to go back to Tunisia. I was petty in this thinking…. Suddenly, I felt a strong urge to destroy all my toys that decorated my room! I ran to the street to join the children and adults of my Palestine in their resistance to occupation."*

"Despair and Hope in Life – Going to the Moon"

By Dua'a Allouh, 13 years old
Illustrations by Dua'a Mehidine, 13 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2005

Some of stories written by the children have a sense of humor or play on words.

"Two children from Gaza heard about trips to the moon and decided to go to live happily there, as they were leading a very miserable life under occupation, facing death, checkpoints and closures. In a few days, they made all the necessary preparations. One early morning, they took the necessary food and clothing and sneaked from their homes. They rode by car to the passage of Beit Hanoun… But, they were shocked to see that they cannot go to the moon as the passage of Beit Hanoun was closed!"



"The Egg Seller"
By Suad Fouad Al-Bobo, 12 years old
Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2005

A cynical story that includes a pun, this selection reflects the struggle of women to support their families. Fatima, the egg seller has to support her family since her husband became a political detainee five years ago. Fatima left her home in the refugee camp after long days of curfew. She collected the eggs her hens produced and went to the market to sell them, hoping to be able to take care of some of her children's needs and get new clothing for the feast. Fatima started to calculate what she could bring to her 5 children with little money.

"While she was deep into her thoughts, a thick voice speaking weak Arabic pierced her ears. When she raised her eyes to the source of the voice, she was met by one of the Israeli soldiers. She whispered to herself, 'He will buy all the eggs. I will sell him the eggs for 6 Liras each instead of 5.' The soldier yelled, '4 liras and I will buy all that you have.' Fatima said, 'These are organic eggs, fateh [8] (the start) for the chick.' She had barely finished her sentence when the soldier started kicking the eggs as a mad person and breaking them with his feet saying, 'Fateh…even in the eggs, fateh.' Fatima rose to her feet trying to protect the eggs from the feet of the crazed soldier, murmuring in shock, 'The boy's trousers, the girl's dress!'"

Libraries get involved
The stories written by the children in the two PBBY libraries are also very touching. It was amazing how the children could express their feelings against war and their dreams for a just and peaceful world in short sentences and titles like: *I Wouldn't Sleep, so as not to Dream* (Rana Al-Basyouni), *Isn't it my Right to Live Happily?* (Amal Al-Hissi), *They Killed Everything We Love* (Lamis Audeh), *Why Do They Oppress Us?* (Yusra Al-Basyouni), and *We Little Children Hate War and Hate those who Like Killing and Destruction* (Isra' Sehwail). Here's an excerpt of one example.

"Dust and Fire"
By Ala' Hassan, 18 years old
IBBY library in Gaza (not published)

This final story describes the cruelty of war and the fears of a child waiting for her mother and father who are caught in the fire of war.

My mother was working in Gaza as usual, and for the first time I felt like those destined to lose a loved one. Fear crept to my heart telling me I might lose my mother. I had heard so much shelling and cruel cannon fire that I imagined I would never see my mother again. Ah! My heartbeats insisted on disobeying me and kept going as fast as an Arab horse. Hours of bombardment, of worry and waiting passed, and my mother is still not near us, while shells come from every corner killing here and wounding there. In the darkness of this waiting, my mother finally arrived home, and joy was lit inside me…"

Conclusion

Good stories written by children are a joy to read, and are definitely part of social history and mirror the struggle for social transformation. Moreover, it really helps empower children through self-expression. Across the globe, children are victims of violence and war and projects like this can give them a tool for coping and thriving. Carmel, age 21, one of the children who participated in the "First Book" project ten years ago, and is an adult now, reflects passionately on her experience, *"I feel proud that I was a child of this Institute, which taught me that I have to hover by my ideas to the sky; taught me, that there is no end to the barriers that may stand in the way of* ***truth*** *and creativity, and also taught me how breaking these barriers is possible, so that I can grow totally like the flower between the rocks!"*

Notes

1. Said, Edward (1993) *"Culture and Imperialism,"* London: Chatto & Windus.
2. Marston, Elsa (2004, 11 March) "More than Just Stories: The Portrayal of Palestinians in American Children's Literature." *The Electronic Intifada.*
3. Op. Cit.
4. Bennet, Molly. (2007, June 4) Interview with Ibtisam Barakat. *The Nation.*
5. Armstrong, Michael (2006) *Children Writing Stories.* Berkshire- England, Open University Press, p. 8.
6. Op. Cit. page 10.
7. Interview with Ibtisam Op. Cit.
8. "Fateh" is the beginning or start, but it also refers to the main resistance group that led the PLO.

Meehan's debut novel- a combination of fact, fantasy, and humor - is filled with intriguing characters and exotic locations. Hannah's eccentric mother has come to Japan to research her new book on Japanese gardening. While she travels in the country, Hannah stays with a Japanese family. The realistic account of the stay soon seamlessly combines fact and fantasy when Hannah and her new friend Miki find an ancient message in a stationery shop and are drawn into solving a mysterious riddle. The lively plot features a playful ghost and a missing person as it wends its way toward a satisfying ending of happy reunions. Hannah begins to learn the Japanese language and so will the reader in the course of a story that is an introduction to Japanese history and contemporary culture, as well as a fascinating story successfully blending fantasy, realism, mystery, and humor. *Hannah's Winter* was shortlisted for the Patricia Wrightson Prize in the 2002 New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards.

Glenna Sloan

Kierin Meehan

Hannah's Winter

La Jolla, USA: Kane/Miller Publishers, 2009 (Originally published by Penguin Group Australia, 2001).

212 pp. ISBN: 9781933605982
(fiction, 9-14)

Face to Face:

Self and other in Israeli children's literature

The author reflects on key works of Israeli literature for children and how new bilingual collaborations help promote dialogue through the recognition of "self" and "other," mirrored in each other's languages.

by CELINA MASCHIACH

Celina Maschiach is Head of the Department of Hebrew literature and children's literature, David Yellin's Academic College of Education in Jerusalem, and author of *Yaldut Ve'Lumiyout, Childhood and Nationalism: Imagined Childhood in Hebrew Children's Literature, 1790-1948.*

Reflections about peace in children's literature, in time of war and hardship, bring forward two interrelated issues. First the affinity of story to history, second, the relationship of poetics to politics. Both are of crucial importance, as children's literature has always served as a means of political socialization and acculturation of children through books.[1] In this sense, children's literature is both an aesthetic and socio-historical document.[2] It weaves actual events and molds them into fictional fabric in order to remold it once again and shape reality. Children's literature, in particular, portrays an

"improved" and "refined" reality that transcends the singular into the sphere of the universal, and the political into the poetical. Free from the obligation to sort the fictional from the actual, the story out of history, children's literature purposefully deviates from the actual, in order to fulfill a socio-educational role: to generate fresh perspectives and to motivate new attitudes towards reality.

I do not intend to discuss political matters here, but rather to present the means by which fiction, in this case Israeli children's literature, confronts political conflict by means of dialogue.

Plato and Aristotle first uncovered the links between story and history. In their debate about the superiority/inferiority of history over poetry, they acknowledged the double meaning of Goddess Clio, muse of poetry and patron of history as well. According to Aristotle, (Poetics, chapter IX), the poetic is superior to the historical, as it expresses a universal, rather than a singular truth. In this sense, early Israeli children's literature reflects a universal truth by means of fiction, which is nevertheless as true as reality. I do not intend to discuss political matters here, but rather to present the means by which fiction, in this case Israeli children's literature, confronts political conflict by means of dialogue.

Promoting dialogue

Three modes of reaction are most common to humans confronting conflict. They may fight, avoid difficulties, or promote dialogue. In this context, the essence of dialogue and its main purpose is to reduce threat, discrimination, and denunciation in order to sustain equal dignity, legitimization, and respect. Reaction to conflict by means of dialogue softens differences and creates a secure space where mutual understanding and recognition becomes possible.[3] All three reactions towards conflict – fight, avoidance. or dialogue – revolve around a single pole, namely, the relation of "self" to "other."[4] The means by which Israeli children's literature reflects the relationship of "self" to "other" through dialogue is the main focus here.

Nobi and Gobi

Earliest examples of Israeli children's literature include poignant depictions of conflict and dialogue. In the year 1937, in the midst of a fierce political turmoil, an optimistic story for children, "Nobi and Gobi Searchers of Peace," was published on the front page of *Davar Le'Yeladim*, a magazine for children.[5] In his stories for children, the author, Yitschak Shvieger-Damiel (1892-1972) echoes Hans Christian Andersen's legacy, namely, the transformation of the local into a fairytale-like, global, and universal world. Both authors relied upon stories they had heard in early childhood, but while some of Andersen's stories retell folktales such as "Little Claus and Big Claus," "The Emperor's New Clothes," or "The Princess and the Pea," Shvieger-Damiel totally conceals his Hasidic-Jewish heritage and creates original tales. Nevertheless, both share the fairy-like texture, performed by the intermingling of the real and the wondrous. Their characters naturally communicate with animals, with humans, or with inanimate objects, which are all artistically personified. The real thus becomes wonder and the unreal appears as "natural." The transformation of the local into the universal enables both artists to add a dreamy, fairy-like flavor to reality, while at one and the same time to comment upon it in a manner that enables children and adults different levels of interpretation.

Accordingly, *Nobi and Gobi Searchers of Peace* is deeply rooted in historical events, those preceding the establishment of the state of Israel. And yet, the story still retains a universal flavor, which transforms it into a timeless fable. The story takes place in a legendary, tiny country that includes one mountain, two villages and a single well. The villagers living on each side of the mountain happily shared water and land until one day … rain stopped falling. This shortage of water led to distrust, to conflict, and to rejection. Villagers on

one side of the mountain claimed that the land and well belonged to them, while the others claimed it is theirs. One side announced it belonged to their mothers and fathers, and the other that it belonged to their great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers. The conflict rapidly deteriorated into mutual accusations and annihilation, except for Nobi and Gobi, the children who refused to give up their friendship or to consider each other enemies. Meeting secretly, they tried to find solutions to problems that they had not created.

Gobi recalled his first encounter with the enemy. Being very young, he stood in front of a mirror, and there appeared an alien – the "other" – a reflection of himself. Threatened by the unfamiliar creature, he yelled, "Go away, evil child! Go!" The mute stranger approached Gobi silently. Gobi raised his rod against the alien, and the evil creature did the same. Confronted by this act of violence, the child ran terrified to his mother, crying, "Mom, the other one hits!"

Nobi and Gobi decided to put this recollection into practice. When the villagers declared war, they placed two huge mirrors in front of the troops, on each side of the mountain. The soldiers, armed by daggers, swords and stones, were terrified when they confronted their own images turned against them. "I am here and I am there," each soldier exclaimed fearfully, "I am fighting against myself, attacking my own self!"… Who is the enemy?!"

Unexpectedly facing their own ugly faces, the adults are as confused as infants who discover that they can't possibly see their own faces, except through the reflection of a mirror, that is, through the eyes of the "other." The discovery of one's own image as an alien is experienced as a terrifying moment, in which one's own evil double, familiar and strange at one and the same time, is revealed as a built-in entity of the "self." This confusing revelation brings the enemies to end the war and make peace. Nobi and Gobi lead the peace procession holding a flag with the inscription "No More Fights," "No More War," "Long Live Peace."

It reflects the author's insight about human nature, the resolution of conflict by means of dialogue, and the understanding that the alien is not outside, but inside us.

Reading this story as a fairy tale, one may think it recounts a naïve escapism, or childish wishful thinking. Yet, on a deeper level of interpretation, it reflects the author's insight about human nature, the resolution of conflict by means of dialogue, and the understanding that the alien is not outside, but inside us. From this point of view, the mirror symbolizes the unconscious, where the self encounters its shadow, the evil enemy, or the "other." [6] Facing their own aggressions, "othering" their own

selves and uncovering the enemy within themselves, is experienced by both conflicting parties as a revelation. The idea that destruction of the "other" is self-destruction becomes evident. Thus through inner dialogue and reconciliation, the enemies realize that both "selfness" and "otherness" are dynamic features of human identity. Approaching it positively, through dialogue, they regain peace, in spite of the fact that nothing has changed: one mountain, two villages, one well. No rain.

These bilingual books are not meant to instruct the children about the particulars of a second language, but rather to endorse recognition of the "other" through a foreign language, alien to the "self."

Bilingual stories

Another manifestation of the "other" is the presentation of a story in more than one language. A dramatic shift is taking place in Israeli children's literature with the introduction of an innovative, literary genre: bilingual texts, written in both Hebrew and Arabic. These bilingual books are not meant to instruct the children about the particulars of a second language, but rather to endorse recognition of the "other" through a foreign language, alien to the "self."

The bilingual texts are composed by either a single author, or by co-authors – one Palestinian, the other Israeli – and they are either translated or written in each of the author's native languages. Telling one story while reflecting two histories is typical of these books, written, published, and distributed in time of war and severe political conflict (e.g., the first and the second Intifada). The reconciliation between the languages is a totally new endeavor in Israeli children's literature, and therefore, the books reported here are, in a sense, "first swallows" of a unique phenomenon that may indeed "herald a summer."

Representing an innovative attempt to create a different kind of children's literature, these books are called upon to perform an avant-garde leading role by taking responsibility for the well being of the next generations of both Israeli and Palestinian kids. The vision and the main task of this genre is to promote the idea that "recognition is not just a courtesy we owe to people. It is a vital human need," [7] especially in areas infected by war and political conflicts.

بدأتُ أبكي وقلْتُ : " لَنْ يمَّسها " شاطر " بسوء ، فَهو يفهمُ كلَّ شيء ، وأنا سأشرحُ لَهُ بأنْ لا يَعتديَ عليها وهو سيفهمُ ، انا متأكدةٌ من ذلك " . بدأ أبي وأمي يَضْحكانِ عليَّ وقالا إنَّني لا استطيعُ تغييرَ العالم . فقلْتُ : " سيرى الجميعُ بأني محقَّةٌ ، سَتَرَيانِ بأنهما سَيُصْبِحانِ صَديقَيْنِ حَميمَيْنِ . إمنحاني فرصةً للمحاولة ، وَسَوْفَ تَرَيانِ مَنْ كانَ منّا محقاً " .
تفاجأتُ عندما وافَقَتْ أمي على اقتراحي وقالَتْ : " في النهاية سَتَهْرُبُ القطةُ من البيت بِسَبَبِ شاطر " . أمّا أبي فَضَحِكَ وقالَ : " حَسَنَاً ، أنْ تغضبي على شاطر أفضلُ من أنْ تغضبي علينا ـ الكَلبُ والقطُّ لن يعيشا بسلامٍ أبداً ! " .
عندئذ كفكفْتُ دموعي واسرعْتُ لكي أُحضرَ الهِرَّةَ . ابتهلتُ لله أنْ يَفْهَمَني " شاطر " وأن لا يطردَ الهِرَّةَ .

הִתְחַלְתִּי לִבְכּוֹת: "שַׁאטֶר לֹא יִגַּשׁ אוֹתָהּ. אֲנִי אַסְבִּיר לוֹ שֶׁאָסוּר לוֹ לִפְגֹּעַ בַּחֲתוּלָה וְהוּא יָבִין, אֲנִי בְּטוּחָה."
אִמָּא וְאַבָּא צָחֲקוּ: "טִפְּשׁוֹנֶת, אַתְּ לֹא יְכוֹלָה לְשַׁנּוֹת אֶת הָעוֹלָם."
"אֲנִי צוֹדֶקֶת," הִתְעַקַּשְׁתִּי, "הֵם יִהְיוּ חֲבֵרִים! תְּנוּ לִי לְנַסּוֹת וְתִרְאוּ מִי צוֹדֵק."
לְהַפְתָּעָתִי אִמָּא הִסְכִּימָה: "טוֹב, נְנַסֶּה. מִמֵּילָא שַׁאטֶר יַבְרִיחַ אֶת הַחֲתַלְתּוּלָה מֵהַבַּיִת."
וְאַבָּא צָחַק: "עָדִיף שֶׁתִּכָּנְסִי עַל שַׁאטֶר וְלֹא עָלֵינוּ. אֲבָל תִּזָּכְרִי – חָתוּל וְכֶלֶב לְעוֹלָם לֹא יִהְיוּ זֶה עִם זֶה בְּשָׁלוֹם!"
נִגַּבְתִּי אֶת הַדְּמָעוֹת וְיָצָאתִי לְהָבִיא אֶת הַחֲתַלְתּוּלָה. הִתְפַּלַּלְתִּי לֵאלֹהִים שֶׁשַּׁאטֶר יָבִין אֶת הַמַּצָּב וְלֹא יִגָּרֵשׁ אוֹתָהּ.

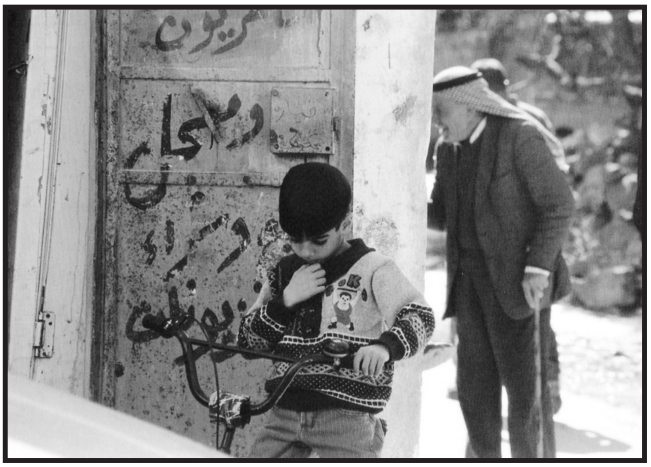
Mutual recognition through literature gains extra value, not only because both conflicting parties usually believe that recognition of the other's political identity would negate their own, but because "every conflict is justified by a narrative of grievance, accusation, and indignity[8]." Thus, it is through counter-narratives that acknowledgment of the separate truths that drove the parties into conflict is made possible, and consequently, the achievement of a vital contribution to conflict reduction.

Yusef and Rim

Tamar Verete-Zehavi and Abedalsalam Younis are the co-authors of Rim, *The Girl from Ein-Houd*

(1999) and *Yusef's Dream* (2003), two bilingual books. Verete-Zehavi, born in Jerusalem, conducted research about the ways children develop images and political attitudes. She worked jointly with Younis who was born in the Arab village of Arara, conducting workshops for both Palestinian and Israeli children through the Tamer Institute. Their co-authored books were written out of an urgent necessity to supply kids with common stories that would support and enrich their games and outdoor activities.

Yusef's Dream recounts in both Arabic and Hebrew the story of a Palestinian boy who lives in Deheisheh, a refugee camp on the outskirts of Beth-Lehem.[9] Yusef dreams about having a bicycle, but everyone laughs at the dreamer, except grandma, whom Yusef loves most because of her trust, her stories and histories. Yusef's dream comes true when he wins a competition and a brand new bicycle. Now he can drive to grandma's village, a "Garden of Eden," that has turned into ruins as a result of the 1948 war.



In this way, Israeli children are exposed to the narrative of the "other," and confronted simultaneously with their own complicated story and history. Palestinian children absorb the recognition they get through the story, and at one and the same time to Hebrew, the language of the "other," as carrier of a hidden narrative of its own. The contact with the "others" of both sides, within the merciful sphere of dialogue, recognition and security, seems to be beneficial, and inherently therapeutic.

Rim the Girl from Ein-Houd, another bilingual book by the same authors, tells the readers that Rim lives in "Ein-Houd by the sea, a village populated by Arabs." [10] Rim, who loves animals, takes care of a wounded black dog and a little orphan cat. Her parents object, saying that dogs and cats will never live together in peace. Yet to everyone's surprise, the big black dog not only protects the little cat, but its puppies do as well. Dog and cat can live together. Can humans?

In this way, Israeli children are exposed to the narrative of the "other," and confronted simultaneously with their own complicated story and history. Palestinian children absorb the recognition they get through the story, and at one and the same time to Hebrew, the language of the "other," as carrier of a hidden narrative of its own.

The extra value of bilingual texts for children living in areas of conflict is its contribution to the legitimization of the "other," and to the recognition of each other's cultures, languages, and histories. These books create an aura of dialogue within which both conflicting parties can share a single literary experience and learn that co-existence is possible. In this sense, two communities of readers partake in one narrative, even when their own

collective narratives greatly differ. Bilingualism serves thus as a poetic means, for the creation of a transitional literary zone, free of threat, of pre-conceptions, and of adults' impositions. In the literary "zone," children may encounter the "other," reconsider their former attitudes, and reshape new ones. To paraphrase Tamar Verete-Zehavi's words, the pages of the book symbolize a virtual territory

The extra value of bilingual texts for children living in areas of conflict is its contribution to the legitimization of the "other," and to the recognition of each other's cultures, languages, and histories.

which holds two separated languages transmitting the message, reinforcing the notion that an encounter with the other who belongs to a different national entity is possible. The equal value and mutual enrichment of the encounter of different cultures and identities becomes evident through the model set by these co-authors, Palestinian and Israeli, working jointly, through the reflection of each child's own language, in the language of the other, and through the overall poetic quality of the literary art.

Seeds of Peace

Nadir Tsur, born in Jerusalem, specializes in political science and political psychology, and is co-researcher at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of peace in Jerusalem. Tsur, the author of "Political Rhetoric" and news editor of current affairs programs in Kol-Israel (Israel Stat Radio), strongly believes that conflicts in the Middle East may find solution only by means of dialogue. Moreover he suggests that it is important that young children be exposed to political issues, as long as these issues are presented fairly.

Tsur's book *Seeds of Peace* (translated by Samir Haj) represents his vision as it promotes trust and recognition not only through its literary content, but by the extra value of its bilingual text, coupled by the visual, universal language of illustration.[11] Israeli and Palestinian children may learn that seeds of aggression contained in both conflicting parties may bloom into horrible monsters of war, but they can equally be replaced by seeds of peace, cherished and cultivated into lovely flowers. Hebrew and Arabic are accompanied now by a third language of art, which transforms the verbal metaphors into universal visual symbols: "Seeds of war" take the form of concrete inner monsters, while "seeds of peace" speak visually through flowers, the petals of which are Illustrated (by Lilach Tfilin) as lovely colorful doves.

Young children who sympathize with the main character Tom's philosophical question – "Where does Evil comes from? Why are there wars in the world?" – realize that wars are man-made realities and not "a necessary must." Evil seeds of aggression that turn into seeds of war are part of the human character and deeds, and may equally be replaced by seeds of friendship, brotherhood, and forgiveness for the benefit of both conflicting parties.

Conclusion

Bringing together two different cultures and histories, these books serve as motivational tools that promote dialogue through the recognition of "self" and "other," mirrored in each other's languages. By creating counter-narratives, which do not exclude either the opponent's narratives or their own familiar ones, this literary genre

promotes recognition and legitimization. Thus it not only reflects peace in time of political conflict and war, but also underscores the superiority of story over history, and of poetics over politics.

Bringing together two different cultures and histories, these books serve as motivational tools that promote dialogue through the recognition of "self" and "other," mirrored in each other's languages.

Notes

1 Political socialization and acculturation of children through books, bring into question the possibility of innocent relationships between adults, books, and children. My book "Childhood and Nationalism: Imagined Childhood in Hebrew Children's Literature 1790 – 1948" (Tel-Aviv: Tcherikover, 2000) focuses upon the invention of childhood in modern times, as an ideological concept, in the service of 19th century Romanticism and Nationalism. Jacaqueline Rose's "The Case Of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction" (London: Macmillan,1984), explores adult's manipulation of children through books. See also Stephen, J. "Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction" (London and New York, 1992); Knowles, M. and Malmkjaer, K. "Language and Control in Children's Literature" (London and New York: Routledge, 1996). The contradicting aspects of both the nurturing and the "fixating" character of children's books, is deeply rooted in the humanist's theories of education, ever since the Renaissance, through the Enlightenment and Modernism. See Grafton, A. and Jardine, L. "From Humanism to Humanities" (Cambridge, 1986); Crocker, L.G. "Rousseau et la Voie du Totalitarisme," in "Rousseau et la Philosophie Politique" (Paris: Annales de Philosophie Politique, 5, 1965), Althusser, L. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,'' in "Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays," (London and New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

2 I am borrowing here a term coined by Robert Darnton, who read folktales as historical documents, rather then as psychological manifestations of the collective unconscious. See "Peasants Tell Tales: Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History" (London: Penguin Books, 1984).

3 Haramati, A. and Shapira, M. in Doitch and Ben-Sasson (eds.), "The Other" (Tel Aviv: Yediot-Hacharonot, 2001, pp. 265 – 266).

4 In his psychoanalytical study of "The Double," Otto Rank points to the connections that the "double" has with reflections in mirrors and shadows. The double "personifies narcissistic self-love…or else…a wish-defense against a dreaded eternal destruction…the messenger of death." (London: Maresfield Library, 1989, p.86). Manifestation of "the double" as projection of that which is frightening is described by Freud in his study of "The Uncanny" (1919), while for the discussion of the unconscious as the "other" within us, see his "The Unconscious," The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud (London, vol.14, pp. 166 – 204).

5 Shvieger-Damiel, Itschak, "Nobi and Gobi Searchers of Peace," Davar Le' Yeladim, vol. 5. no. 4 (29th April, 1937), illustrated by Nahum Gutman.

6 "Self" and "Other" as representations that are meant to legitimize the superiority of the hegemonic collective and marginalize the "other," are discussed in Edward Said's "Orientalism" (New York: Pantheon, 1978). Perry Nodelman has adopted Said's insights in his readings of children's books in terms of adult domination and control over children. See Perry Nodelman, "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children's Literature," in "Children's Literature Association," vol.17.no.1, Spring 1992, pp. 29-35).

7 Taylor, Charles. "Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'" (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992, p.26).

8 Robert, I.R. (ed) "Israeli and Palestinian narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix," (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. vii).

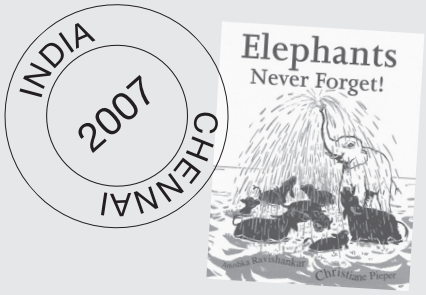
9 Zehavi-Verete, Tamar and Younis, Abdalesalam. *Yusef's Dream.* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2003).

10 Zehavi-Verete, Tamar and Younis, Abdalesalam. *Rim, The Girl from Ein-Houd*. (Tel Aviv: Hkibbutz Hmehuchad, 1999).

11 Tsur, Nadir. *Seeds of Peace.* (Tzivonim, 2007).

During a storm in the jungle, a little elephant is separated from his mother. After fleeing from monkeys who pester him, he is welcomed by some buffaloes and grows up as a useful member of that herd. When he finally encounters elephants and is faced with an important choice, he decides to remain with his buffalo family. The digitally created illustrations resemble woodcuts. Though only three colors (black, lavender and creamy white) are used, the illustrations are lively; the use of pattern, line, and color is stunning. The text of this story told in rhyme is dramatically integrated with the illustrations and includes onomatopoetic sounds of the storm and jungle animals, creating a perfect tale for a read-aloud session.

Carolyn Angus



Anushka Ravishankar

Elephants Never Forget!

Illus. Christiane Pieper

Chennai, India: Tara, 2007 (First U.S. edition Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008)

48 pp. ISBN-13: 9780618997848
(picture book, 4-8)

Sayin, an acclaimed children's book illustrator chosen for IBBY's 2006 Honor List in illustration, tells a story inviting everyone to live in peace. Unlike his friend the field mouse, Kuki the Mole is very bored and looking for a way to have fun. When he sees Kurbi the Frog trying on her new dress, he thinks that throwing mud on her will be very amusing. He answers Zip Zip the Squirrel's offer to share the nuts that he painstakingly collected with a kick that scatters all the nuts. He greatly enjoys pushing Turtle Topik, who has made it to the top of the grassy hill, back down the slope. Kuki has great fun harassing his friends but is unaware that he is upsetting them. He finds himself all alone the next day at Kurbi the Frog's party. Will Kuki realize his mistake and find a way of apologizing to his friends? A great bedside book for reading aloud and prompting discussion between children and their parents.

Tülin Sadikoğlu

Betül Sayin

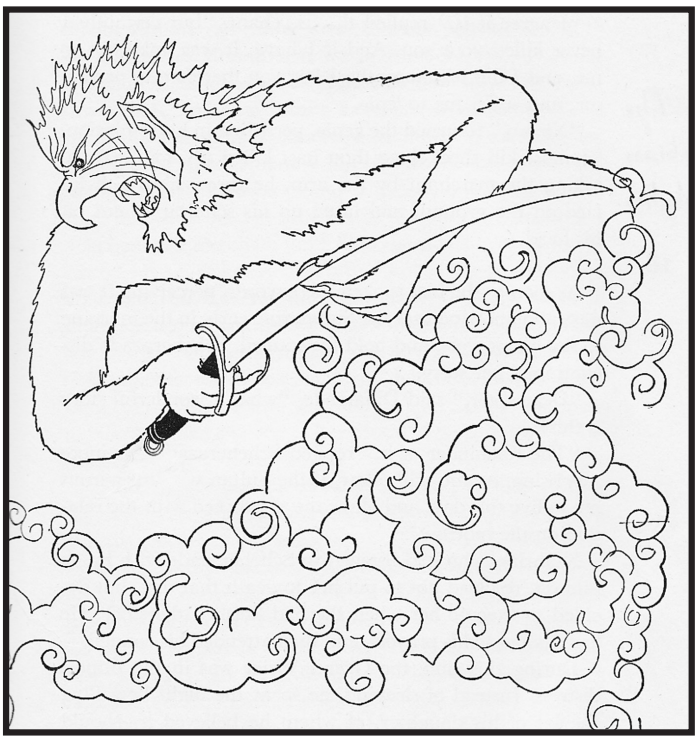
Köstebek Kuki
(Kuki the Mole)

Istanbul, Turkey: Günisiği Kitaphği
First edition 2007,
third edition 2009.

32 pp. ISBN: 9789756227947
(picture book, 6-8)

Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and its possible Arabic influences

by AHMED K. AL-RAWI



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Here the author explores the varying influences affecting a classic Charles Perrault tale, including possible roots in Arabic "ogre" tales and the impact of the Catalonian oral tradition.

From the very beginning of the publication of Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye* in 1697, critics started analyzing the tales and their sources. Perrault's tale "Le Petit Poucet" or "Little Thumbling" (ATU tale type 327) (Perrault, 29-44) received wide attention from critics who expressed different views about its origin. Dozens of stories from different European nations and from India were suggested as its source, but they did not always give satisfactory evidence because of the different details presented (Lang, civ-cxv; Deulin, 325-367; Cosquin, 349-99; Saintyves, 233-349). Other critics went further by suggesting that "Le Petit Poucet" imitated Homer's Odysseus in his plight, for both struggled to survive, or that Poucet descended from an Anglo-Saxon king (Tatar, 257; Cohen, 91-112). On the other hand, other critics believed that Perrault never heard "Le Petit Poucet"

from anyone; instead, he "first invented stories before they were disseminated among the people," according to Wilhelm Grimm's introduction to the 1812 edition of *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (see also Tatar, 257).

Very few studies, however, have considered a possible Arabic source for this tale. I contend that the first part of "Le Petit Poucet," which is believed by some critics to be partly the inspiration for later works such as Madame d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" and Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel" (tale type 327A) (Opie, 34 & 236; Murphy, 47), has a possible source in an old Arabic folktale. I believe that Perrault heard about this Arabic tale in two possible ways, either through the Catalan oral tradition or through his friend, Antoine Galland. In addition, I suggest that Perrault did indeed borrow his story from other sources, such as oral tales, instead of solely inventing the plots and characters, as some critics claim. In this analysis, I hope to shed light on the cultural interaction and folktale transmission between the East and West and showcase the universality of the theme and tale type found in "Le Petit Poucet."

Abdul Karim Al-Juhayman collected the Arabic folktale at the root of this study in the Arabian Peninsula in the late 1970s in his seminal work, Popular Myths from the Heartland of Arabia

The tales

Abdul Karim Al-Juhayman collected the Arabic folktale at the root of this study in the Arabian Peninsula in the late 1970s in his seminal work, *Popular Myths from the Heartland of Arabia* (Vol. IV, 55-68). He stated that he "wrote all the tales as he heard them without adding any further details" (Vol. I, 12). It was directly taken from Bedouins' accounts; however, no in-depth study was conducted to analyze this tale. Hasan El-Shamy's substantive work on folktales from the Arab world referred to it once as matching the tale type of "the children and the ogre" (based on Aarne and Thompson's scheme, 1964, tale type 327), including the sub-type of "ogre's wife (daughter) protects his victims-to-be" (tale type 327D, 164). Indeed, I would argue that there are also elements of sub-type tale type 327A, "the parents abandon their children in the forest" and sub-type tale type 327B, "the dwarf and the giant" (Aarne & Thompson, 116). The plot of this Arabic folktale, "Safīr's tale," can be summarized as follows:

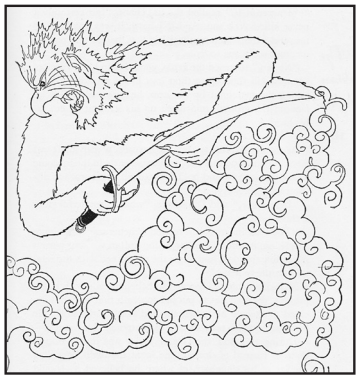
A very poor couple suffered because of the heavy burden of rearing three boys nicknamed Jarbū, Zafīr, and Safīr. The husband decided to get rid of the boys in the wilderness; however, the smallest boy, Safīr, who was the cleverest among the brothers, overheard the conversation that took place between his parents and made a plan. He collected white pebbles and put them in his pocket in order to guide his brothers back home. With the help of Safīr, the boys managed to return home safely. After feeling depressed, the mother was thrilled to see her children coming back. However, when the man decided to get rid of his kids once more, the same thing occurred, but this time the smallest boy brought crumbs because he was in a hurry. When the brothers wanted to return home, they failed because the birds ate the small pieces of bread; therefore, they kept on searching in the wilderness for a refuge until they found a small cottage down a desolate valley. A

Tale Types Cited

327	"The children and the ogre"
327A	"The parents abandon their children in the forest"
327B	"The dwarf and the giant"
327C	"The devil (witch) carries the hero home in a sack. The wife or daughter are to cook him, but are thrown into the oven themselves" *(not applicable here)*
327D	"Ogre's wife (or daughter) protects his victims-to-be"

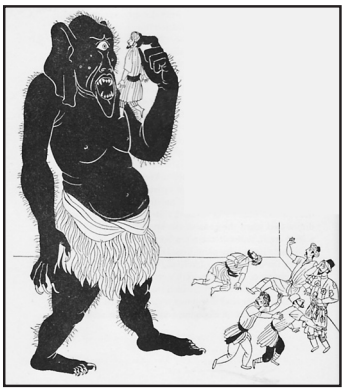
(based on Aarne and Thompson, 1964)

nice looking woman welcomed them into her small place, but she was frightened to hear her husband's footsteps approaching. The woman warned the boys that her husband was a ghoul accustomed to eating human beings. As he entered, the ghoul swore that he smelled human flesh and wanted his wife to tell the truth. Although the lady tried her best to conceal the fact that three humans were in the house hiding under the bed, the ghoul found the boys because he had seven heads, and each one contained a pair of eyes, ears, lips, and one mouth. Following the lady's advice, Safir managed to strike the ghoul with a sword on its head before it ate them. Before dying, the ghoul beseeched the youngest boy to strike again, but the lady warned him not to do so. Finally, the ghoul died and the three brothers and the lady left the cottage with the ghoul's treasure and lived a happy life afterward. After many years, Safir went back to his parent's cottage to find them extremely old, weak, and sorry for abandoning their children, but a family reunion restored peace and happiness in the family.



As we consider the relationship between this Arabic tale and Perrault's classic, "Le Petit Poucet," let's briefly review the plot of his story, as well.

Once upon a time, a poor old man lived with his wife and their seven children. The youngest was called, "Le Petit Poucet" (Little Thumb) because he was so small. Due to the family's poverty, the parents decided to get rid of their children in the woods. By chance, Poucet overheard his parents talking and decided to fill his pockets with small pebbles to trace his way back home. The first time Poucet's scheme worked, but the second time it failed because he used crumbs that were later eaten by birds. The young children were forced to take refuge in a cottage in the woods that happened to belong to an ogre. After a series of attempts, Poucet managed to deceive the ogre by tricking him into eating his own seven daughters while they slept, instead of him and his brothers, and by stealing the ogre's magical, seven-league boots. The seven children returned home and lived happily every after.



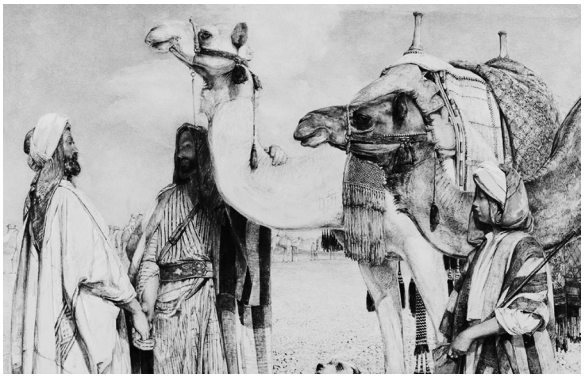
The ghoul is a well-known monster in Arabic culture. In old Arabic lexicons, it is described as a devilish genie that eats human beings in the wilderness and deserted valleys.

The ghoul, ogre, and ogress

Before discussing how this folktale has Arabic origins, it is important to note that the two words "ghoul" or "she-ghoul" and "ogre" or "ogress" are used interchangeably. *Al-Mawrid Dictionary: Arabic/English* states the Arabic equivalent for "si'alwah" or "she-ghoul" in English is "ogress" (630), and most Arab folklorists treat the two words the same. The ghoul is a well-known monster in Arabic culture. In old Arabic lexicons, it is described as a devilish genie that eats human beings in the wilderness and deserted valleys,[1] and in some cases the ghoul takes its victims to its dwelling (al-Mundir 1996, 243; al-Zubayd 1998, 127-33). In Arabic folktales and some *Arabian*

Nights tales, the same description is found;[2] the motif of people enticed to go to a ghoul's dwelling (El-Shamy, 158-9; Bushnaq's "The Woodcuttter's Wealthy Sister," 137-41) or children wandering into an ogre's house (G0401) and children being lured into an ogre's house (G0412) are well known in Arabic folklore (El-Shamy, 130, 156, 172, 554). For instance, Ahmed Shahi and F. C. T. Moore included a Nubian tale in their collection of Arabic folktales entitled "Fatma the Beautiful." The plot of this tale revolves around seven girls who went into the wilderness to bring wood. When they saw fire from afar, they became enticed to approach it, but they found an ogress[3] waiting for them. When the ogress revealed her aim of eating the seven children, Fatma decided to escape with the other girls by deceiving the creature. In the end, Fatma managed to run away and the ogress was killed (125-6). In her research, Christine Goldberg refers to another Middle Eastern story, "Halfling," about a boy called Mqidech who has seven brothers. Mqidech is the youngest among his brothers and his name denotes "half-man" (344). The ogre takes them captive and they manage to escape by the help of Mqidech. Finally, El-Shamy refers to tens of other Arabic stories that have similar tale types such as "Nus Nusais and Hdaydûn (Halved person)" (tale type 327B), "Thumbling as Rescuer," who saves his siblings from the ogress, and "Tom Thumb" (0700) whose story deals with the adventures of a boy the size of a finger joint (El-Shamy, 1001 & 1008).

Other tales dealing with the ghoul as a fearful human-eating monster that could smell humans in its house are found in Arabic folktales. Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana referred to two similar tales in their study of Palestinian folktales. The first, entitled "The Brave Lad" (148-50), is narrated by a 95-year-old woman from the village of Rammun in Ramallah and deals with a young man who decided to enter the ghoul's cave in the forest in order to kill it because its crimes terrified the people. Surprised, the man found the ghoul's beautiful wife whom the ghoul had taken captive. She hated the ghoul and wanted to escape, but



Due to the limitations of their desert surroundings, Arab Bedouins traditionally busied themselves with memorizing poems and tales to pass them from one generation to the other.

could not find a way. As they were about to leave the cave, the ghoul arrived, so the lady hid the man in the wardrobe. The ghoul was furious because it smelled human flesh, but could not find any stranger inside its dwelling. With the help of the young man, the lady managed to kill the ghoul, take its treasure, and save the town.

In addition, ghouls having seven heads are known in Arabic folktales (G361.1.4) (El-Shamy, 125) especially in North Africa, and this physical feature adds to their horrific description and increases fear. The English traveler, Edward Westermarck, confirmed the belief in seven-headed monsters when he visited the Arabs of Morocco in the 19th century. They thought of the genies as having "no fixed forms, but may assume almost any shape they like. They appear now as men, and now as goats, cats, dogs, donkeys, tortoises, snakes, or other animals, now as monsters with the body of a man and the legs of a donkey, now in other shapes, sometimes, for instance, with seven heads." (253)

The belief that ghouls only die by striking them once is a pre-Islamic myth. The prolific Arab writer Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāhid (780-869) mentioned that Arab Bedouins believed that the ghoul would never expire if stricken more than once, but would only die if one thousand blows followed (1969, 233 and 235). The Arab writer, Yūsif Ibn 'Abdulbar al-Qurtubī (978-1071), disagreed and considered this view of the Arab Bedouins' myths "foolish" (2001, tale type 327). But such a popular conviction

persisted throughout the ages.

For instance, the "Story of Prince Sayf Al-Muluk and the Princess Badi'a Al-Jamal" in Burton's *The Thousand Nights and a Night* describes a man and his friends who were kidnapped by a ghoul to be eaten later in its cave. The men succeeded in blinding the ghoul's eyes with hot sticks and killed him with "the sword a single stroke across his waist." Before dying, the ghoul cried out, "O man, if thou desire to slay me, strike me a second stroke." One man was about to strike again, but his friend urged him to stop, "Smite him not a second time, for then he will not die, but will live and destroy us" (1886-8, Vol. VII, 361).

Perrault could have used the tale above and added other features from his own, for in the first part of the seventeenth century, it was common in France to join two tales together as in Madame d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" which contained the plots of Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and "Cendrillon" (Trinquet 2005, 34). Let's consider the lexical evidence in order to investigate the link between Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" and previous Arabic folktales.

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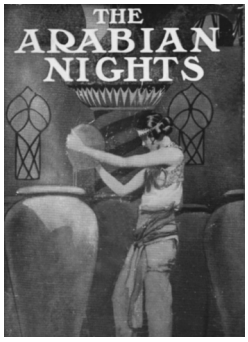
Philological connections

In order to understand the possible circumstances that led to the writing of "Le Petit Poucet," one has to examine the period during which our French author lived. The French interest in the literature and culture of what was then considered "the Orient" was as old as the Crusades themselves, but their preoccupation increased greatly during the reign of King Louis XIV (c. 1661-1690), a leader who encouraged the study of languages and cultures of other parts of the world. This interest was reflected in the increasing number of travelers to the East,[4] the trade with the Ottoman Empire, and a Christian religious zeal to convert Muslims.[5] French writers of fairy tales emerged during this period because they were supported by patrons and had suitable literary background. Writers like Madame L'Heritier, Madame d'Aulnoy, Madame de Murat, and Klle de la Force "composed lengthy tales about fairies" (Bottigheimer 2004, 261). As for Charles Perrault, he was, in fact, the pioneer in popularizing the fairy tale not only in France, but also in Europe. He was considered "the first man in France" to write fairy tales and "certainly the first Academician" (Warner, 10).

Perrault was supported by Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), who was responsible for the royal patronage of learning and served as finance minister to King Louis XIV. When Colbert heard about Perrault's skills, he hired him as First Secretary in the Department of Buildings and promoted him afterward to Contrôleur Général de la Surintendance des Bâtiments (Carpenter & Prichard, 402). Perrault started interacting with French intellectuals and became the center of attention due to his career and literary reputation.

Bibliothèque orientale (1697)

Among Perrault's most distinguished friends was Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville (1625–1695) whose patron happened to be Colbert, too. D'Herbelot was a French scholar who traveled several times to Italy to collect Arabic, Turkish, and Persian manuscripts that resulted in his substantial work *Bibliothèque orientale* (1697). He also used to interact with travelers coming to the Italian seaports from different Eastern countries in order to become familiar with their languages and cultures. Antoine Galland worked with d'Herbelot as his assistant to write the *Bibliothèque*, which is considered the first encyclopedia on Islam written in a European language.



Bibliothèque orientale, which was published in the same year as Perrault's The Tales of Mother Goose, is considered one of the most influential works on Islam and the Arab world in Europe. In fact, "many readers valued d'Herbelot and Galland's book as a source of Oriental tales" (Dew, 234), and several French and British writers drew information from it when they tackled the subject of Islam or Arabs. For instance, William Beckford used the *Bibliothèque* in his novel *Vathek: An Arabian Tale* (1786), and Robert Southey's "Thalaba" was directly influenced by the same work (Irwin, 15). Some critics now believe that *Bibliothèque orientale* even contains parallel stories to some *Arabian Nights* tales such as the story of "Buhlûl the Jester" (Marzolph & Leeuwen, Vol. I, 129).

Perrault became the first person to introduce Europeans to the words "ogre" and "ogress"

Most importantly, Perrault expressed in *Les HoMadames illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle* his indebtedness to the *Bibliothèque,* saying that it contained "the complete history of an undiscovered planet, adorned with its architecture, quarrels, the terror of its mythologies, and the mumble of its languages." Furthermore, Perrault felt that the *Bibliothèque* showed "new historical stories, new political realities, new morals, new poetry; in other words, a new sky, a new earth" (2002, 427). For the first time in Europe, the ghoul was presented in the *Bibliothèque;* "Goul" and "Afriet" were described as Islamic myths suggesting the most fearful kind of "Ginns" (2001, Vol. 5, 193). These new creatures were definitely a source of inspiration for many writers; in fact, it was not a coincidence that Perrault became the first person to introduce Europeans to the words "ogre" and "ogress" in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye* whose etymology remained "uncertain and disputed" (Rose, 274; *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2004 & 2008 eds.). Indeed, Perrault used the word "ogre" to mean "ghoul," and a few years later, when Antoine Galland translated the *Arabian Nights,* he followed Perrault's device and changed the use of "ghoul" into "ogre." In "The Story of the Vizier that was Punished" (1798, 77-79), Galland referred to an "ogre" instead of a "ghoul," saying, "The Lady was a Hogres, wife to one of those Savage Demons, called Hogres, who stay in remote places, and make use of a thousand wiles to surprise and devour passengers…" (1798, 78). Later on, western writers started using the word "ogre" to refer to a man-eating monster as a result of Galland's popular translation of the *Arabian Nights.* In the "Preface" to his selection of the *Arabian Nights* (1898), Andrew Lang mentioned that the work attracted many Europeans because they "were delighted with Ghouls (who lived among the tombs) and Geni, who seemed to be a kind of ogre" (1929, ix).

As further evidence that the two words were related, the word "ogre" was usually called "Le Sarrasin" in popular French versions of fairy tales up to the late nineteenth century in order to refer to the qualities of "ferocity and stupidity" (Lang, xli). In fact, the negative association between the ogre and the "Saracen" or Muslim has been rooted in the nature of the historical relationship between Europe and Islam, but it clearly reflects the origin of the word "ogre." There was a pattern in medieval Europe that linked the Saracen's figure with the devil or ugly monsters (Aljubouri, 58). Even the Prophet Mohammed's name referred to a "demon" in the Middle Ages (Smith, 3) as the different derivations of his name had other connotations; for instance, "Mahound" meant a "monster" and a "hideous creature" in the 16th century, "Mahomet" denoted an "idol" in the 17th century, and the word "Turk" meant a "hideous image to frighten children" that lasted many centuries *(Oxford English Dictionary,* 1989 and 2000).

Means of transmission

How did Perrault and his contemporaries come to

know about Arabic folktales? In 1819, Wilhelm Grimm pointed out in *Kinder und Hausmärchen* that many folktales from different cultures may look similar due to a mere "accident;" however, he stressed that some stories were so similar that they "quite preclude… all acceptation of the idea of a merely apparent relationship" (1884, 575). In other words, the similarity that one finds in the motifs, tale type, and nature of characters in folktales coming from far away is due to the oral tradition that plays a major role in the spread of ideas, stories, and beliefs. Andrew Lang elaborates on the illogicality of searching for a folktale source in the same place where it is circulated:

> But it is impossible to argue that the birthplace of a tale is the country where it is first found in a literary shape. The stories must have been current in the popular mouth long before they won their way into written literature, on tablets of clay or on papyrus (cxiv).

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There are two possible ways by which Perrault came to know about *Safir's* tale. First, the tale could have passed on to Perrault through the Catalan oral tradition. As a matter of fact, tale types 327A and 327B are well known in Catalan folktales (Aarne & Thompson, 117-8). According to Perrault's young niece, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, who also wrote fairy tales, the origins of European fairytales went back to the "Gallic matrix" of the Middle Ages, popular "among the troubadours and storytellers of Provence" (Warner, 7). In fact, the root of the word "troubadour" itself is Arabic based on "tarab" which means to "entertain by singing." The Arabic influence on troubadours' poetry is referred to by many scholars ranging from citing the practice of borrowing rhyme schemes from Arabic poetry to using the courtly love tradition (Sutherland, 199-215; Gorton, 11-6). Menocal asserts "the birth of Provencal troubadour poetry occurred at a time and place when the Arabic world and its culture were of immediate fascination and importance" (31).

To take an example from folktales, the Belgian critic, Charles Deulin, found a Catalonian tale entitled "Lo Noy Petit, Le Petit Gars" in "The Catalan lo Rondallayre" in which three brothers were abandoned by their parents, and the youngest thought of finding a way back home by using white pebbles and then crumbs. This story seems to be closely linked to the Arabic version of "Le Petit Poucet" cited here (341-2).[6] In fact, the literature of Catalonia was mainly based on troubadours' literary experience, and the inhabitants of the country were greatly influenced by the Arabs and their culture because of the Arab rule over Spain for several centuries. When Perrault started writing his fairy tales, Catalonia was already under French rule (between 1694 and 1697), and many people there spoke French.

Furthermore, Robert Irwin stated that the tales of "the Orient" were

well-known in medieval Italy and were circulated in southern Italy and Spain as part of the folk tradition (96-100 and 63-102). However, they were usually "stripped of their specifically Islamic and Oriental features" (101). Sir Walter Scott commented:

> *Intercourse of France and Italy with the moors of Spain, and the prevalence of the Arabic, as the language of science in the dark ages, facilitated the introduction of their mythology amongst the nations of the west. Hence, the romances of France, of Spain, and of Italy, unite in describing the Fairy as an inferior spirit, in a beautiful female form, possessing many of the amiable qualities of the eastern Peri. Nay, it seems sufficiently clear, that the romancers borrowed from the Arabs, not merely the general idea concerning those spirits, but even the names of individuals amongst them (176).*

Finally, the argument that Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet" is partly taken from the Italian folk narrative of Giambattista Basile's "Ninillo and Nennella" in the Pentamerone (Day 5, tale 8) (Deulin, 332; Carpenter & Prichard, 260; Lang, cvi) appears rather weak if one examines the different details in the two stories. However, it remains probable that Basile "gathered stories circulating in the oral tradition in his time. Some of these tales might already have contained motifs and images of Oriental origin" (Marzolph and Leeuwen Vol. II, 491). In other words, Perrault was indirectly influenced by this folk tradition by his presumed borrowing from Basile. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Perrault was mostly influenced by the Catalan oral tradition that was directly influenced by the Arabs.[7]

Other influences on Perrault

The other possible way by which Perrault heard about this story comes through his friend, Antoine Galland, the first translator of the *Arabian Nights* into a European language. Here, it is important to turn to the way the *Arabian Nights* had been translated and rewritten by Galland between 1704 and 1717. Many critics believe that some tales in the *Arabian Nights* were taken directly from the Arab oral tradition. Due to the encouragement of learning languages and cultures, an influx of Arab Christian monks in France discussed religious matters and shared popular stories from the Arab culture. The French interest in this area came with the colonial expansion of France into the "Eastern Mediterranean from the end of the seventeenth century on" (Said, 17). In 1692, the French Jesuits' requested approval to welcome "foreign students from the Orient with the idea that these students, once converted to the Catholic faith, should return to their home countries to help the Jesuits introduce it to the native populace" (Kimpton, 74).[4] Some French scholars like Galland made good use of having Arabic speakers in Paris. In 1709, Galland met a Maronite Syrian called Hannā Diyāb, who helped him compose what is now called the "orphan tales" like "Ali Baba and the forty thieves," "Aladdin," "The Story of Sidi Nouman" which do not bear any resemblance to other versions of the *Arabian Nights* (Marzolph 2004, Vol. 2, 582-3; Mahdi 1995, 32; Haddawy 1992, xvii; Larzul 2004, 258). The trend of bringing Arab scholars to France in order to assist in the translation and even in writing of works continued for more than a century as seen in the cases of Michel Sabbāgh and Mordecai ibn al-Najjār (Marzolph 2004, Vol. 2, 695).[5]

The other possible way by which Perrault heard about this story comes through his friend, Antoine Galland, the first translator of the Arabian Nights into a European language.

In addition, borrowing from other writers without referring to sources was customary in France because writing and publishing works was the primary goal as was the case with Madame d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron." Furthermore,

Soriano confirms that Perrault could have borrowed some of his tales from the Middle East through his friends François Bernier or Antoine Galland who both journeyed to the East and had plenty of knowledge about its customs and traditions (152). In fact, Perrault personally corresponded with Bernier in 1672 (275). It appears that Perrault must have heard some of the Arabic stories mentioned above but later changed some details and altered names to make it suitable for his French audience.

The trend of bringing Arab scholars to France in order to assist in the translation and even in writing of works continued for more than a century.

In considering the origin of Perrault's other tales, Andrew Lang and Charles Deulin believe that an old Arab (Swahili) tale closely resembles Perrault's "Puss in Boots," with the only difference being the presence of a gazelle instead of a cat that helps the poor man achieve his dreams (Lang, lxxix-lxxxii; Deulin, 204). Lang comments, "From Arabia the tale has been carried into Russia, Scandinavia, Italy, India, and France, often leaving its moral behind it, and always exchanging its gazelle for some other beast-hero" (Ixxxii). In fact, Perrault was used to changing details and deviating from the original oral tales. For instance, the addition of the "little red cap" in "Little Red Riding Hood" was meant to "indicate the social status of the young girl and is not found in any of the oral variants other than those directly influenced by Perrault" (Clements, Vol. III, 266). Also, the French critic Marc Soriano stated that Perrault's *Les Souhaits ridicules* ("The Ludicrous Wishes") has possible Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, or Greek sources because there are no obvious traces of its European origin (109). Finally, tale type 327D ("Ogre's wife (daughter) protects his victims-to-be") was known in Zanzibar (Aarne & Thompson, 118), a place that was controlled for a long time by the Arabs.

It seems apparent that Charles Perrault was influenced by Arabic folktales, whether directly or indirectly. He is naturally associated with French tales for children, but clearly there are varying influences on his stories well beyond French borders. Obviously, the oral tradition played a major role in the dissemination of tales from Arabia to Europe via various means. Indeed, "Le Petit Poucet" has roots in several different cultures, and its small hero figure enjoys a wide popularity around the globe despite the different names he has taken.

Notes

1 In Arabic mythology, valleys were mostly associated with genies. The Arabic word '"Ubqqar," which means "genius," was derived from a valley's name because it was believed that people could go mad if they went there due to the presence of genies.

2 See, for instance, the "Story of Fourth voyage of the Es-Sindibad of the Sea" (Lane 1865, 35-49; Burton 1886-8, Vol. VI, 34-48) and "The Tale of the King's Son & the She-Ghoul" in the Arabic version of the *Arabian Nights* (1992, 42-55).

3 In the Arabic language, the word "huqur" is close to "ogre," standing for a fearful and stupid "giant who is very tall" (Ibn Mandûr 2005, 4143).

4 French travelers to the East in the 17th century included Jean Coppin (1615-1690), Paul Chardin (1673-1677), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689), Jean de Thévenot (1633-1667), François de La Boullaye-Le Gouz (1623-1668 c.), and Paul Lucas.

5 For a detailed study of the French interest in the East at that period, see Nicholas Dew, The pursuit of Oriental Learning in Louis XIV's France, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1999. See especially chapters 1 and 4 that concentrate on Barthelemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliotheque* orientale. See also Ina Baghdiantz McCabe's *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime.* Oxford: BERG, 2008.

6 Charles Deulin suggests that the idea of the seven-leagued boots in "Le Petit Poucet" is probably taken from the ascent of Prophet Mohammed to Heaven. "la jument de Mahomet dont les enjambées s'étendaient aussi loin que la plus longue vue…" (327) (Mohammed's mare that leapt and took him to the highest sky).

7 I would like to thank Professor Nicholas Dew from McGill University, Canada, and Mr. Oded Rabinovitch from Brown University, USA, for their kind assistance. Special thanks go to Mr.

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Fantasy as Philosophy in Children's Literature:

The Multicultural Landscape of *The Clockwork Forest*

In an analysis of Australian author Doug Macleod's The Clockwork Forest, McInally examines how two philosophies of East and West meet in a narrative space. Through the use of both Buddhist and humanist philosophies, she examines how the novel presents a landscape that addresses what multiculturalism can mean.

by KATE MCINALLY

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The field of children's literature has always celebrated the role of fantasy stories in offering young readers ways to negotiate their own place in the world. Both traditionally and in contemporary times, harsh realities including violence, death and war have been mediated through fantasy as a means through which to discuss not only human conflicts, but cultural ideologies pertaining to growing up, maturation, and a sense of self. At the same time, however, fantasy, like children's literature in general, has been considered less serious than its counterpart, realism (and adult literature) when

important questions about identity, cultural positioning, and "otherness" underpin the narrative.

There is now a marked shift in the hierarchy of what has been considered serious or important literature. Contemporary scholarship in children's literature has recognized that the genre of realism has no exclusive authority over claims to truth, or jurisdiction over how to conceive reality. As such, fantasy has shifted from its previously undervalued position, as somehow less significant than novels that employ realism (Stephens, 1992, pp. 241-242; Hunt & Lenz, 2001, p. 2), to negotiate philosophical questions about self and otherness that are at the foundation of cultural tensions and anxieties. Fantasy is considered "one of the most important genres" in its ability to allow authors (and readers) engagement with "disturbing material" (Reynolds, 2005, pp. 42-43). Indeed, the potential of fantasy to deal with deeply philosophical questions is arguably more expansive in landscapes, both fictional and psychological, that are not always easily identifiable. By asking questions about identity and otherness, about our place in the world and more specifically the culture in which we live, about why we suffer and how to live fulfilling lives, fantasy allows a negotiation of how to live with others via its own position of "otherness" to real worlds and knowable situations. I do not argue that much fantasy for children reaches, or even approaches, this potential. Indeed, like realistic novels, it most often presents ideologies that reproduce hegemonic values and interests. However, fantasy has the inherent ability to negotiate varying futures that realism cannot.

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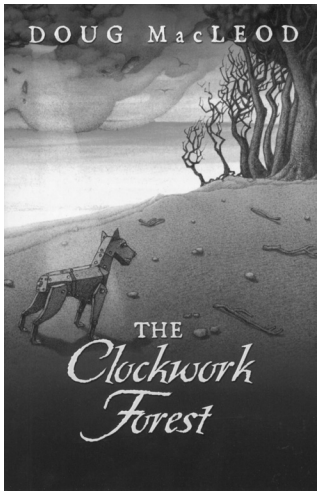


Examining Philosophies in Fantasy

This paper explores the potential of fantasy to act as a philosophical agent in presenting such futures to child readers. In an analysis of Australian author Doug Macleod's *The Clockwork Forest*, I examine how two particular philosophies of East and West not only meet, but cohabit harmoniously in a narrative space. Through the use of both Buddhist and humanist philosophies, the novel presents a landscape that speaks to and about possibilities of what multiculturalism could mean. The plot reveals how such a strategy of negotiation and then acceptance of cultural differences through engaging with such philosophies is not without its dangers. However, by its exploration of how dominant philosophies of different cultures can not only coexist but inform each other, it treads a challenging landscape of what sameness and difference are all about. This neither negates the Western importance of individual and essential humanness, nor Orientalizes the fundamental Buddhist principles that structure the narrative.

The author Doug Macleod is fairly well known in Australia for his deconstruction of gender and sexuality in fiction for children. Many of his novels have references to Buddhism, but this story (written from his original stage play) is actually about such concepts, and thus both original and intriguing. Because the concepts raised in the novel fall outside the usual trends in publishing, the book is entirely fascinating both in its genesis and in its subject matter. The author explains his perspective this way:

However, by its exploration of how dominant philosophies of different cultures can not only coexist but inform each other, it treads a challenging landscape of what sameness and difference are all about.

"This is a fairy tale that borrows from Buddhism. Chris Drummond (the commissioner and director of the play version of The Clockwork Forest) was keen to present a play with the theme of abandonment. But he didn't necessarily want a purely negative interpretation of the theme, so it seemed natural to turn to a Buddhist perspective, that is, sometimes abandonment can be a good thing… [The protagonist] tries to fill the emptiness in his life by focusing exclusively on the beautiful objects that he owns. A lot of people – adults as well as children – do this. Such people are very often unhappy. The love of an object is a poor substitute for the love of a human being or the devotion of a pet. This is something that Morton discovers as he journeys through the forest of life and faces a series of challenges. He must use his ingenuity, bravery, loyalty, etc. to overcome them. I've given him a seemingly useless shawl as a reminder of Hannah the girl he has met and with whom he comes to realize he has fallen in love. It is the shawl that becomes his most useful possession, saving his life again and again, and prompting him to abandon pretty trinkets."

To approach a novel this way – to read the strategic use of Eastern and Western philosophies in the novel as a metaphor for a multicultural future – is not without dangers of its own. These dangers, such as the potential that a focus on philosophy might silence real and lived racism, deserve serious consideration. However, such a critique arguably also mirrors the old criticisms of the genre of fantasy itself, in that this approach is somehow less serious because it does not overtly deal with day-to-day experience. Accepting the potential of fantasy to deal with issues about self and otherness, however, is not ignoring the need to critically attend to race within multiculturalism. Debra Dudek argues persuasively that the "floating signifier" that is multiculturalism needs to be more soundly anchored to multicultural theorizing and politics, by paying more attention to race, or how "race underpins multiculturalism" (2006, p. 4). So, while my focus on philosophy, rather than on its translation into theory and politics, does not deal with policy or pedagogy, it is one that has as much relevance to the study of children's literature in its negotiation of the "big" questions, as any realistic journey across nation-states.

Macleod's novel is traditional in ways the western reader will easily identify, in the sense that it is a story about a boy's quest or a *bildungsroman*. It is also traditional because it presents, as a central concern, human negotiations with identity and maturation, and understanding the individual self. However the novel also offers an alternative to humanist philosophy, which, as McCallum defines it, is concerned with the "uniqueness of the individual and the idea of selfhood as essential" (1999, p. 5). It does this in its negotiation of the idea that conceptions of self can only be thought of as non-hierarchically interdependent with one's world. The novel may be read, in this sense, as refusing the binary oppositions between humanism and Buddhism, in their differing ideologies of the self and the non-self, and interconnecting the ideas fundamental to both without erasing their differences.

Understanding the story of *The Clockwork Forest*

The protagonist, Morton, is fifteen, and his parents have been dead since he was twelve. From that time, he has been living alone, on the outskirts of a forest, with only four clockwork toy animals for company. These toys are precious to Morton because they are his only defense against the isolation and alienation of his situation. So, when a storm destroys his home, and scatters the toys throughout the forest, Morton embarks upon a journey to retrieve his lost treasures. Along the way, he meets other displaced persons whose homes have also been destroyed, refugees from the destruction of the environment. Through a series of trials, Morton needs to weigh the relative importance of his toys and comes to an awareness of a "truer" self that is formulated through the acceptance of others, rather than the desire for his possessions.

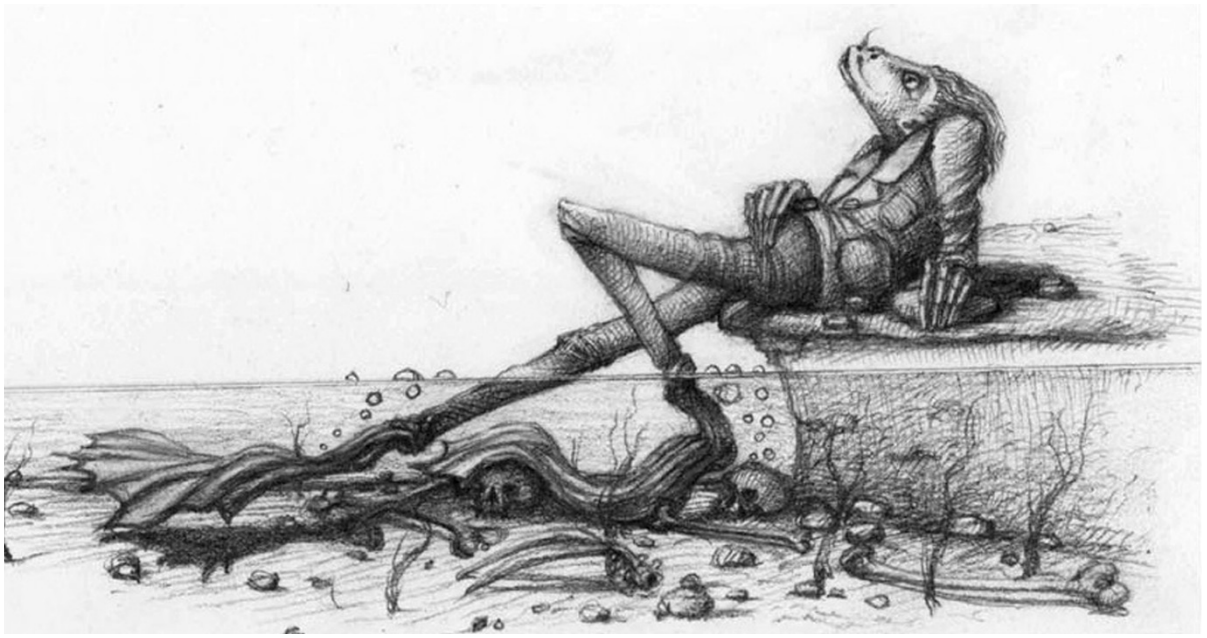
Morton teams up with an older man who is suffering from amnesia. Cuthbert represents the wise mentor figure (identified in Joseph Campbell's monomyth). Cuthbert, however instrumental in Morton's journey though, is also on a mission to find his true identity through attempting to regain his memory of his past and forgotten life. This quest for discovery might well be read as humanistic, in that Cuthbert's identity was always there for him to discover. While the concept of the quest is articulated by the characters, however, the text equally offers an engagement with Dharma, the fundamental Buddhist teachings, as I will explain.

Through a series of trials, Morton needs to weigh the relative importance of his toys and comes to an awareness of a "truer" self that is formulated through the acceptance of others, rather than the desire for his possessions.

The third human character, Hannah, is also used as a traditional vehicle of identity formation, through Morton's eventual realization that he loves her, part of his growth from boy into man. There is a somewhat pedestrian subplot, wherein both of these young characters remain annoyed or irritated with each other until they recognize their mutual respect and love (already recognized, of course, by the adults). However, Hannah is fundamental not only to Morton's discovery of self, but his actual survival in an alien world. Hannah is neither a helpmate nor a hero, as her journey is separate from Morton and Cuthbert's adventures in the forest. She spends her time in an alcove, looking for pieces of her house destroyed in the storm, and piecing the bits; the windows, the door, the roof, back together.

Understanding Buddhist references in *The Clockwork Forest*

The quest that Morton and Cuthbert undertake is structured through their interactions with, and negotiations of Buddhist concepts. In the first instance, Morton finds one of the toys in a Dukkha bush. As I attempt to explain concepts such as Dukkha, I do acknowledge my western interpretation, and the necessary oversimplification of these philosophical tenets. For the purposes of



this literary analysis, however, "Dukkha" refers broadly to the suffering in life. Buddhist philosophy explains that suffering comes about because of our inability to accept life as constant change, so that we experience suffering and unhappiness when we try to hold on to things, even such things as life itself: thus our suffering when we negotiate death or illness.

As Morton is about to rescue his toy, Cuthbert warns him of the dangers of the Dukkha bush, that the power of Dukkha should not be underestimated. Indeed, the Dukkha thorns, they learn, have the power to make people explode. Morton and Cuthbert witness such power when they meet an artist, Felicia, painting the bush. Felicia paints pretty pictures that make the world look perfect, romanticizing the world by ignoring all its shortcomings. Felicia's delusion about and desire for a perfect world leads to her failure to acknowledge the threat of the Dukkha thorns, so she reaches into the bush to retrieve the toy, is pricked by the thorns, and consequently disintegrates. Morton then constructs a plan which allows him to rescue the toy without being pricked. There are dual philosophical narratives at work in this episode: Morton's humanistic rational mastery in recovering what he wants, and Felicia's position that explains the Buddhist concept that suffering will never cease without first acknowledging and accepting it as a part of experience. Felicia suffered the consequences of her delusion and her desire for a perfect world without pain.

A koan asks one to contemplate problems outside the comfortable logic that informs most rational thinking, whereby the answer is reliant on multiple interpretations, and must transcend polarized or dualistic inquiry.

The novel is interspersed with many Buddhist terms that have no explanation, and this, in itself, is a strategy that recognizes the differing cultural understandings and experiences of many readers. The novel

attempts not to privilege the reader most often implied in Australian children's literature, the white western middle class child. Through the omission of the explanation of Buddhist terms, however, there is an implicit invitation to such readers to research different views of the world and

His lesson is to recognize the impermanent nature of everything, where life is continually changing; and rather than life being the opposite of death, it is instead an episode in a much longer narrative of being.

different practices. This is evidenced in Morton and Cuthbert's engagement with Mr. East, Mr. North, Mr. South and Mr. West under the Vicara tree. "Vicara" is a Buddhist term referring to meditation, where one must maintain attention to an object to seek a state of enlightenment or awareness. Under the Vicara tree, a further Buddhist teaching is discussed. The four characters who appear human to Morton and Cuthbert, but who are once again *not* what they appear (they are fish), accuse Morton of being a murderer, smelling "the stink of corpses on [him] from a quarter mile away" (p.64). Indeed, Morton was a fisherman who never used a hook, but who tickled his fish into submission. Morton

and Cuthbert are then trapped by the vegetation in the fish pond and told they will be eaten by Mr. North, unless they solve a riddle. This riddle is actually a well known Zen koan. A koan asks one to contemplate problems outside the comfortable logic that informs most rational thinking, whereby the answer is reliant on multiple interpretations, and must transcend polarized or dualistic inquiry. Indeed, while the fish seem to look Eastern, with Fu Manchu mustaches, they are arguably more reminiscent of Western practices in their assessment of Morton's solution to the puzzle as definitively correct. Further, the question remains as to whether the decision that Mr. North should eat Morton is karma for Morton's past fish-murder, or if it concerns Western ideas about retribution and justice.

After several further stages in the quest for identity, Morton and Cuthbert, both hungry, find the Moha tree, which yields an abundance of fruit that to Morton tastes like nectarines and to Cuthbert tastes of banana. The fruit, however, is psychotropic, causing Morton to hallucinate. In Buddhist philosophy, Moha is delusion and ignorance. It is, according to Flanagan, "one of the three poisons (basic noxious tendencies of persons) that can pretty much ruin a person" (2007, p. 168), and this manifests itself in Morton believing that he finds his long-deceased parents alive. In his hallucinatory state, Morton spends time with them, drinking honey, their only food, and feeling relieved that they were merely lost, rather than dead. However, the parents begin to regress, acting like young children with little understanding of concepts such as sharing and peaceful coexistence. Morton's desire to "hang on" to his parents is delusional, in Buddhist terms, because death is not an absolute, but rather a process, just like life itself. Part of the process, though, is to accept death, as Morton does in this episode. His lesson is to recognize the impermanent nature of everything, where life is continually changing; and rather than life being the opposite of death, it is instead an episode in a much longer narrative of being.

The novel's engagement with ideas about death is further reinforced through the character of Loki,

a ghost that rows up and down the river that runs through the forest. Loki is an ambiguous character, because he is kind and mostly honest, but he also attempts to kill Morton, Cuthbert and Hannah, so that he might have company in his afterlife, someone with whom to tell interesting stories and allay his loneliness. Here, the novel departs from a Buddhist perspective, in its focus on human life being the central story of the world's, or in this case the narrative's, existence. However this singular position is countered through Hannah's encounter with a talking bear.

The song that the bear sings includes a Buddhist mantra, "Om Mani Padme Hum." This mantra is said to contain the essential teachings of Buddhism, and just by hearing it, or indeed, just by the reader reading the words in the novel, it is said to instigate feelings of compassion and understanding toward others.

When Hannah hears a bear singing in the woods, the bear explains to her that he has no choice but to eat her in order to keep all humans from discovering that bears can sing. The bear explains the consequences to Hannah, "The humans will imprison the bears. They will punch holes in our nostrils and insert rings attached to heavy chains. We won't speak or sing. Not at first. So the humans will whip us until the pain is so great that we burst into song and people will pay to watch" (p.175). When Hannah protests that she will keep the secret, the bear responds, "One day you will be at a party and you will have drunk some elderberry wine. In the middle of a conversation about politics or umbrellas or something you will suddenly announce that you've heard a bear speak" (p.174). However common karma then comes into play, because the bear discovers how important Hannah is to Morton, and that Morton had previously destroyed some bear traps. Because of Morton's past actions, the bear lets Hannah go. This is not cause and effect, but rather actions and consequences; unbeknownst to him, Morton had saved Hannah's life by his prior good deeds. The song that the bear sings includes a Buddhist mantra, "Om Mani Padme Hum." This mantra is said to contain the essential teachings of Buddhism, and just by hearing it, or indeed, just by the reader reading the words in the novel, it is said to instigate feelings of compassion and understanding toward others.

All actions are interconnected in the novel, because Hannah had also saved Morton's life unknowingly. In their first encounter, Hannah had left her shawl with Morton. In all the challenges through his quest, he survives by using Hannah's shawl. He uses it as a parachute which saves him from certain death in a fall; he uses it to rescue Cuthbert from death in Loki's boat; he uses it to escape from the Misters North, South, East, and West; and in many other episodes. The interconnection between Hannah, Morton, and Cuthbert, then, is vital not only for survival, but in order to live what is, in the end, in peaceful coexistence, where different world views and philosophies contribute to one's conception of how to live a good and just life, a concern of both Buddhism and humanism.

Conclusion

In David Loy and Linda Goodhew's study of what, they argue, are Buddhist themes in fantasy novels and films (from authors such as Tolkien, Pullman, LeGuin and Miyazaki), they call for a recognition of how identifying this Buddhist perspective allows western readers to engage with the problems that threaten the contemporary world. They state, "Collectively, our most problematical delusion is ... the alienation between our group and another, between our nation and their nation, between our religion and their religion, between Homo sapiens and the rest of the biosphere..." (2004, pp. 90-91). The novel, *The Clockwork Forest*, acknowledges such a position, particularly in the respect that

Hannah pays to the bear and the bear returns to her.

Perhaps in the case of *The Clockwork Forest,* fantasy acts as a kind of middle path whereby the Western characters enrich the world that offers them human connection through an understanding of other ways of seeing and being in it, while maintaining their Western-style individuality. When Hannah rebuilds an arguably better house for the new community of Morton and Cuthbert, and herself, many of the pieces she uses are not from her original building, but from other houses destroyed in the storm. In piecing together the disparate fragments that will form her new home, the text suggests the need to acknowledge and appreciate difference, and how the sum of difference can ultimately offer a coherent whole. The new house is a unity of differing parts, not thrown together but deliberately built, which in the end supports all of the characters. Hannah's new house might be interpreted to be a host country, in that it is both rebuilt from the materials of the original house and is positively changed in the inclusion of parts that are and will remain different. In reading for metaphors of multiculturalism, it is also pertinent that Hannah must extend her house in order to welcome the other characters: metaphorically the host house can always accommodate others, not as visitors but as co-inhabitants, with different interests, knowledge, and experiences.

If *The Clockwork Forest* engages with philosophies of true selves and also non-selves where life is a series of constantly changing flows, it must be read from dual perspectives. The abutting philosophies do not cancel each other out. Rather, like Hannah's house, they support each other in a refusal to insist on one way of being in a shared environment. This is the multiculturalism that, in Australia, continues to be a fantasy, but may well be the only realism in which a community of positive difference can ultimately exist. In Anglo-Australia, a country that has historically represented itself in eternal battle with the land through the imagery of the hostile bush and threatening deserts, and then celebrated an anxiety over "drought and flooding rains," the path through the forest of philosophical differences does not "run like clockwork." Instead, like Morton's toys, which are given away in the conclusion of the book, such romanticized representations might be substituted with exactly what Morton comes to appreciate in his own resolution: that different world views are necessary for survival. If "Consciously or unconsciously, stories order a complicated, often confusing world and give us models of how to live in it" (Loy and Goodhew, 2004, p.1), then both the genres of children's literature and of fantasy might offer some (home) truths that mainstream realism cannot.

The abutting philosophies do not cancel each other out. Rather, like Hannah's house, they support each other in a refusal to insist on one way of being in a shared environment.

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Canadian author Margriet Ruurs, the author of the acclaimed *My Librarian Is a Camel: How Books are Brought to Children Around the World* (2005), again creates a lively, informative photo essay certain to intrigue child readers. Thirteen school settings are described, including a virtual classroom on the edge of the Sahara where students learn to speak English from a teacher in front of a Webcam in North America, a hospital ship that sails the world while the children of the adult workers attend school onboard, and Charlie's solitary classroom at his home in Australia where he communicates with a teacher and the other children in his grade by means of the computer. A brightly-colored map indicates where in the world each of the countries discussed is located. Each double-page spread includes accessible text rich in anecdote and facts, photographs of children in their school settings, and an insert that provides information about the country: its flag, capital, and estimated population.

Glenna Sloan

Margriet Ruurs

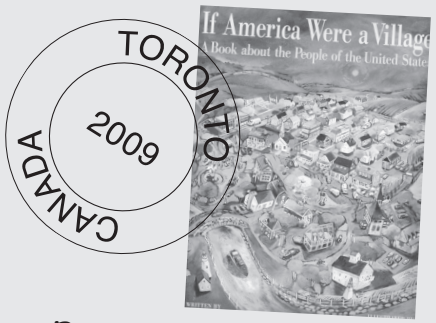
My School in the Rain Forest: How Children Attend School Around the World

Honesdale, PA, USA:
Boyds Mills Press, 2009.

32 pp. ISBN: 9781590786017
(nonfiction picture book, 6-9)

This striking large-format picture book teaches children about the large, diverse country of the United States in child-friendly text complemented by vivid, informative illustrations. There are 306 million people, many of them immigrants from countries around the globe, who live in the United States. This enormous number may be difficult to grasp, especially for a child. Using a simple metaphor of just 100 people to represent the entire population, Smith explores the lives of the villagers: their ethnicity, religion, pastimes and occupations. This is one of Groundwood's notable "Citizen Kid" collection of books. Along with others, like Smith's *If The World Were a Village* (2002), these titles are intended "to inform children about the world and inspire them to be better global citizens." *If the World Were a Village*, published in 16 languages and used worldwide, appears to have gone far in accomplishing this goal. The metaphor Smith employs in both of these fine books makes statistics and facts accessible and appealing to readers of all ages.

Glenna Sloan



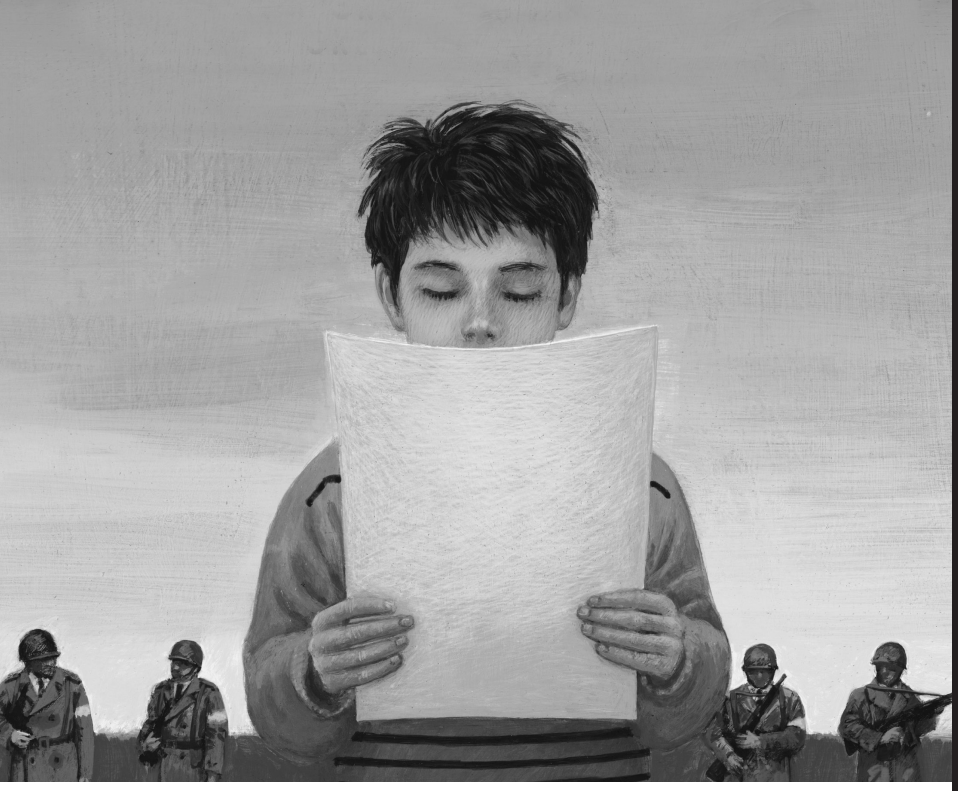
David J. Smith

If America Were a Village

Illus Shelagh Armstrong

Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Press, 2009.

32 pp. ISBN: 9781554533442
(picture book, 8+)



Memories of Meeting Worlds or Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind

by CARMEN DIANA DEARDEN

Carmen Diana Dearden is an editor and publisher at Ediciones Ekaré in Venezuela and a former IBBY President.
cdd@ekare.com.ve

This article is based on the biennial Dorothy Briley Lecture that Dearden delivered at the eighth IBBY Regional conference held in St. Charles, Illinois (near Chicago) in the U.S. in October, 2009. The conference theme was "Children's Books: Where Worlds Meet." She shares memories of books and reading, her work in publishing, as well as her experiences working within IBBY.

It was a delight to be once again at an IBBY Regional conference hosted by USBBY and an honor to have been asked to give the Dorothy Briley lecture, for Dorothy was a person I knew and respected and bickered and laughed with and shared many IBBY experiences with. I remember her smile glowing during the first Regional conference in Callaway Gardens, Georgia in the U.S. in 1995, held mostly in the dark because of a hurricane.

When I first saw the theme of the conference, "Children's Books: Where Worlds Meet," I thought "How nice! I have so many good memories of the different worlds I have met in my 40 years of working with children's books. This should be fun to do." Then I thought of one of my favorite films from when I was a kid, *"The Day the Earth Stood Still"* – the original with Michael Rennie playing Klaatu – and I

remembered that not all the meeting of worlds are pleasant. So, like Fagin in the Oliver Twist musical, "I thought I'd better think on it again."

Are the meeting of worlds real meetings? Are they clashes, mergers, integrations, disintegrations, assimilations; are they merry or miserable, sad or joyous? I will try to unravel this through my own experience, but I know, that whatever they are, they are transformative.

Remembering the world of children's books

As an editor/publisher at Ediciones Ekaré I have met many worlds. One of the main reasons I wanted to publish books for children could be found in those worlds I discovered through books when I was a child. Some of them were joyful, like Heinrich Hoffman's classic *Struwwelpeter* (known in English as *Slovenly Peter*), which my mother read to me when I was 6 and I refused to have my hair combed, played with matches, and sucked my thumb. She thought the enormous scissors that cut off Suck-a Thumbs' thumbs, or the pile of ashes that Harriet turned into would scare me into changing. I thought they were the most **wonderful** stories I had ever heard and wanted to be just like them. *The Wind in the Willows*, on the other hand, made me wistful and sad, because Mole and Water Rat on the river and Toad's crazy adventures reminded me of my father, and I read it when he was far away in exile in Costa Rica. *The Wind and the Willows* and the longing for my father have merged forever in my heart.

One of the main reasons I wanted to publish books for children could be found in those worlds I discovered through books when I was a child.

Banco del Libro is a private, non-profit reading promotion institution which later won the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2007 and was the first recipient of the Asahi Reading Promotion Award.

Ekaré beginnings:
The first close encounters

Starting a children's book publishing company from scratch in Venezuela in 1976/77 was not easy. Some worlds clashed, others converged. The first clash came between Verónica Uribe, my partner in this adventure, and myself. Virginia Betancourt was then Director of the Banco del Libro, from which Ekaré developed. (Banco del Libro is a private, non-profit reading promotion institution which later won the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2007 and was the first recipient of the Asahi Reading Promotion Award.) She was 100% behind starting a children's book publishing company because we had encountered a lack of good books representing our culture in our libraries. Virginia named Verónica Uribe, a journalist exiled in Venezuela from the Pinochet regime, who had just started working in the Banco del Libro, as the person to help me set up our publishing house. I

Dorothy Briley was an editor and publisher at Clarion Books in the U.S. and a leader in publishing children's books for nearly 40 years. She was deeply committed to seeking out and publishing authors and artists from around the world and was also involved in IBBY, serving on the Executive Board in 1988, and as president of USBBY in 1992. A lecture series focusing on international topics in children's book publishing was established in Dorothy Briley's name by the United States Board on Books for Young People in 1999, and is delivered at each biennial IBBY regional conference hosted by USBBY.

was horrified, and so was she – as we found out to our mutual delight some time later. Verónica is a quiet Chilean, petite, polite, very organized, a deep thinker and a perfectionist. I am an excitable Venezuelan, big, explosive, not very diplomatic and I usually act before I think. I thought, "What? Work with that finicky quiet mouse that is always bothering about details? It will be impossible." She thought, "Oh no! Work with that bad tempered, rude woman? I shall have to get another job."

As it turned out, Virginia was right, and what started as a clash turned into the perfect integration. As Eleanor Farjeon says in *The Seventh Princess* – a story I have loved ever since I heard Anne Pellowski telling it – " It takes all sorts to make a world" and Verónica and I have managed between us to make up the world which is Ekaré for 31 years now.

Worlds converged in the person of a "Fairy Godmother," Anne Pellowski, who not only arranged for us to do three months of training in the USA, at Thomas Y. Crowell Publishing for me and at Seabury Publishing for Verónica, but also advised us on what books to start with, coordinated a workshop to select indigenous tales from our tradition, and has been always there for us ever since. For me working at Crowell under Ann Beneduce was a privilege I will forever treasure.

Worlds converged in the person of a "Fairy Godmother," Anne Pellowski, who not only arranged for us to do three months of training in the USA . . . but also advised us on what books to start with, coordinated a workshop to select indigenous tales from our tradition, and has been always there for us ever since.

The business world of publishing children's books

The second clash came with the Board of Directors of the Banco del Libro. By that time, Virginia had left to head the National Library System and the new Board thought we were crazy when we presented our project after our training in the USA. They said no, it can't be done in Venezuela. And that seemed to be that. Once again Virginia's wisdom came to the fore. "Rewrite it," she said, when we gloomily went to report on our non-progress, "and I will make a few phone calls." The second time around, the Board said OK. But… they were not willing to put a cent down to start the publishing. We had to find our own financing. Virginia's father, Romulo Betancourt, former president of Venezuela, then phoned up a good friend of his who owned a TV station and had a Foundation for Education, and told him "These little girls are on to a very worthwhile thing—(remember, this occurred more than 30 years ago) – Can you help them?" His friend agreed to finance our first three books: two Indian tales from the Pemón tribe in the Amazon and from which the name Ekaré, which means "story," is taken, and a translation from the Italian: *La Spedizione* published by Emme Edizioni. We thought we were off at last.

We were wrong.

This time the meeting of worlds became a never-ending circle of misunderstandings. We were sent to talk to the general manager of the

Foundation, a very well known philosopher whose first words were, "I know nothing about children's books for I am the quintessence of the abstract so you will have to inform me." No problem, we said, and gave him the résumé of each book, estimated publishing date and costs. He said he would look them over and let us know, and for the next three months I would phone every week and ask when we could start, and he would say: "I cannot give you the money until you show me the books," and I would answer "I cannot show you the books until you give me the money."

He would say: "I cannot give you the money until you show me the books," and I would answer "I cannot show you the books until you give me the money."

Finally, in desperation, I had an idea. The only book we had to show was the Italian version of *The Expedition*, which we wanted to translate, so I decided to show him that one. Now, *The Expedition*, if you know it, is a **wordless** picture book, about Spaniards arriving in the New World, setting off through the jungle to dismantle what looks like a Mayan temple, only to find on their return with their loot, that in the meantime, their ship has also been dismantled. It is a funny and meaningful book, with a quite obvious message, to us. The general manager did not find it so. He turned the pages, his brow furrowing deeper and deeper as he turned them, reached the end, and started backwards, flipping to the beginning. Finally, he said, "But Carmen Diana, this doesn't have any words. What are you going to translate?" "The title," I said.

This time we got the money.

We had a big agenda, but started very small – with 1 and ¾ persons. Verónica was the only one working full-time; I worked half-time at Ekaré and half-time in our public library network, and so did our secretary. We worked in very precarious huts – until 1988 all of us in the Banco del Libro worked in huts left over from the Ministry of Public Works. When it rained, the water would seep through, and the possums came to visit and leave their paw marks on the final art. By coincidence, our first book, published in 1978, and which is still in print was *El Rabipelado burlado (The Hoodwinked Possum)*, so it seemed logical to make the Ekaré logo a possum.

Because the children's book publishing world is full of serendipity, my youngest son, Conor, was born the same month that *Rabipelado* was published, and for a long time he was nicknamed "El Rabipelado" ("The Possum"), until one scandalized aunt begged us to call him something else.

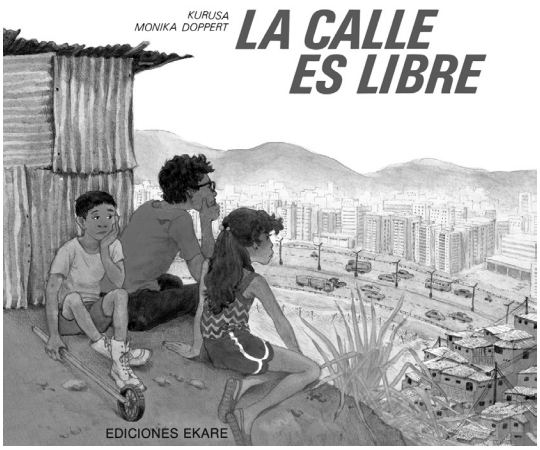
The world of the Bologna Book Fair

The Bologna Book Fair, where we have found most of our translations, and which we have attended since 1978 on Anne Beneduce's advice, has been a rich and joyous source of many meetings and many worlds, but it was a disconcerting experience in the beginning. We had a very small stand, and we were lost and confused. Serendipity intervened once again: our stand was right next door to the IBBY one and Nilo Visapaa, who was then president of IBBY, took us under his wing. Little did I know then how much IBBY would become part of my life.

When we tried to buy rights for our first translations, editors would ask what publisher we were from. Ediciones Ekaré from Venezuela, we would answer. Blank looks. They had never heard of us and were not quite sure in what part of Spain Venezuela was. So, for a long time they were not willing to sell us rights of any sort. Klaus Flugge, from Andersen Press in the United Kingdom, with whom we have done many books by David McKee, Tony Ross and Max Velthjuis, for many years introduced me as his Colombian publisher.

The making of the books: Close encounters of many kinds

Thirty-one years later Ekaré is an independent non-profit publishing house, and we produce only 8 to 15 novelties a year (mostly picture books and illustrated books for ages 0 to 12) because we



take a long time over each one – sometimes too long – but we reprint form 40 to 70 titles a year from our backlist. From 30 to 35% of our titles are translations and we also take a long time to select them – sometimes too long, so that we lose wonderful ones. It happened to us with Tuesday by David Wiesner and I regret it to this day. When Dorothy first showed it to me, I wanted it immediately, but long discussions followed in the office over its boldness for the Spanish market (this was the early 1990's) and Dorothy gave it to another publisher, quite rightly. It was the first of our many heated arguments.

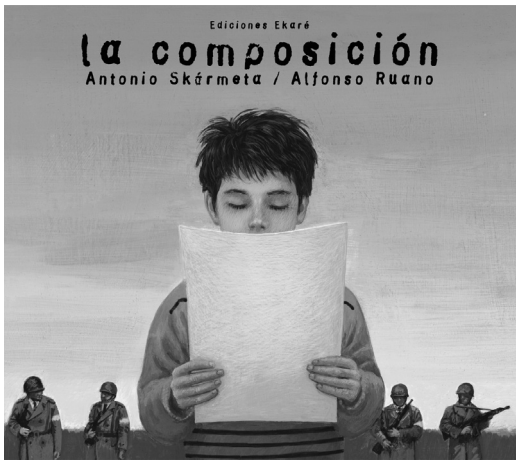
Often our own books get lost in translation. *La Calle es libre, (The Streets Are Free* published in English by Annick Press), a story of the growth of the "barrios" in Caracas due to migration has been translated into 14 languages and underwent some peculiar changes in some of them. The Dutch edition decided to add some information of its own to the text. They planted Caracas with oil wells, something most of our population would have been amazed to see, as the wells are hundreds of miles away. Because we found out about this astonishing addition a bit late, it required stopping the presses with a furious long distance phone call.

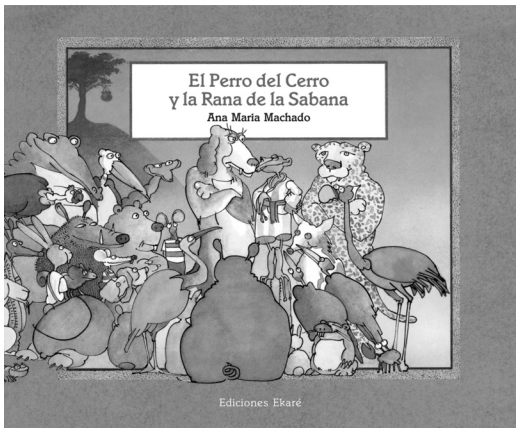
The changes in the German edition were fascinating. They changed the cover from the teeming barrios of a densely populated city to a bucolic nature scene that appeared in the beginning of the book, which of course had nothing to do with the title. The page that describes the children spontaneously going off from the library to the Municipal Council to ask for a place to play was changed to "On Wednesday afternoon, the children went to the Municipal Council." When asked why Wednesday, the publisher answered, '"Because on Wednesdays German children get off school early." And the last page which says, "In their free time, all the neighbors helped build the park," was changed to "on Sundays the neighbors helped build the park."

With *Niña Bonita* by Ana Maria Machado, illustrated by Rosanna Faría and translated into English by Kane-Miller, we came across the politically correct movement in the USA which taken to extremes is often just another way of intolerance of cultural differences and imposition of one world over another. *Niña Bonita* is the story of a white rabbit that wants to be as black and beautiful as the girl who lives next door and pesters her to tell him how she got that way. The girl makes up a story about drinking a lot of coffee and when the rabbit tries that he spends all night going to the bathroom. One of the illustrations depicts him sitting forlornly in a puddle of pee. It seems some people objected to this. Our question was: " Do kids in the States all die of kidney failure since peeing is taboo?

La composición (The Composition) by Antonio Skármeta, which won the UNESCO prize for Tolerance … is the story of the disintegration of everyday life under a fierce dictatorship, that of Pinochet in Chile. It took us 10 years to produce this book.

Every book is a merging of worlds, but in some the collisions are more painful than others. *La composición (The Composition)* by Antonio Skármeta, which won the UNESCO prize for Tolerance as well as the Americas Award and the





Jane Addams award in the U.S. for the Groundwood English translation is the story of the disintegration of everyday life under a fierce dictatorship, that of Pinochet in Chile. It took us 10 years to produce this book because we had to keep changing illustrators. The first was an eclectic Chilean artist in exile who had lived through the horrors of the regime. His first sketches were just right. And then he stopped. Doing the drawings had made him relive all the anguish, which was still too raw. He couldn't go on. So, next we tried a brilliant young illustrator who did not have those painful memories. His first illustrations were bold and stunning, and completely wrong for the book. Precisely because he was too young and had never been through a dictatorship, they were exaggerated and grotesque. It became a satire instead of a depiction of everyday lives under fear. So we turned to Alfonso Ruano from Spain who had known Franco's times. He finished it in 6 months and the result was an extraordinary book. The book was received with contradictory reactions in Chile because Pinochet was still alive, although he had been ousted and was undergoing trial, but the transition to democracy was not complete and he still held much power. The book was commented on in whispers, but the Ministry of Education would not buy it for its libraries, and only recently, as the memories from the past settle down, has the book been celebrated as one of Skármeta´s best stories.

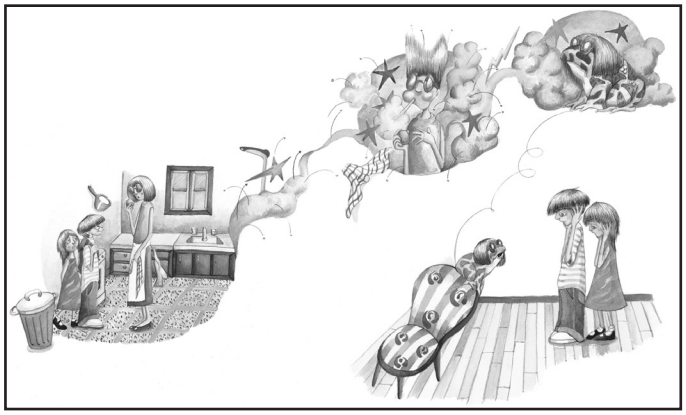
Because the original Portuguese version of this story (Gato do Mato e Cachorro do Morro) had a cat of the jungle ("gato de la jungla") which did not have a rhyming counterpart in the "perro del cerro" version, we had to invent a whole new character – "la rana de la sabana" (the frog from the savannah) – and rewrite a lot of the story during the editing process.

The worlds of author and editor

Then there are the meeting, merging, sometimes clashing worlds of author and editor. *El Perro del cerro y la rana de la sabana*, by Ana María Machado, illustrated by Peli, was an integration of the work of author and editor. Because the original Portuguese version of this story *(Gato do Mato e Cachorro do Morro)* had a cat of the jungle ("gato de la jungla") which did not have a rhyming counterpart in the "perro del cerro" version, we had to invent a whole new character—"la rana de la sabana" (the frog from the savannah) – and rewrite a lot of the story during the editing process. It was done during some misty nights in México City, an example of the importance of face-to-face meetings.

On the other hand, publishing *Lom y los nudones (Lom and the Gnatters)* by Kurusa, illustrated by Isabel Ferrer, just translated by Groundwood in

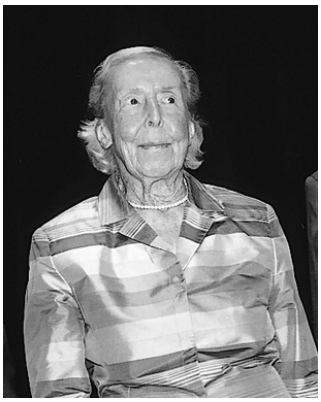
Canada, was a continuous clash between the editor who wanted to cut the text dramatically and a strong-minded author, who was also an editor and who fought every inch of the way. This is a good example of how editors react when the tables are turned on them. Interminable discussions ensued by email, since the editing was done at a distance. This made it even more difficult as emails, in my experience, tend to suffer a strange mutation in cyberspace.



The funniest example of author-editor worlds meeting was *Diego y los limones mágicos (Diego and the Magic Lemons),* a story of two children and their grandmother who find a magical lemon tree in a witch's garden, written by Verónica Uribe, illustrated by Ivar da Coll. Ivar is a very good, but very sensitive Colombian illustrator who had been used to Verónica's polite suggestions and motherly care in other books of his that we had published. This time, because she was the author, he got me instead. He was not happy with the change and pleaded with Verónica to take over. And because she could not, he took a masterly revenge on both of us: I became the witch and Verónica, the grandmother who was turned into a jumping frog, glasses and all.

The infinite world of IBBY

IBBY is full of infinite worlds. My first ever IBBY Congress was in Prague in 1980, in the now nonexistent Czechoslovakia, where I was elected onto the EC or Executive Committee. I am not quite sure what I expected, but it was certainly not those laughing, irreverent, hospitable Czech people coping in spite of all their adversities. I think Margaret McElderry, whom I had the fortune to meet at that Congress, was the most amazed of all. In all the years I have known her since, she has never quite been able to explain what she expected behind the so-called "Iron Curtain," but she was mostly open-mouthed and delighted the whole time. At the end of the Congress on our way to the baths in Piestany, she sat at the back of the bus and pointed out every startling discovery that was new to her. When, in utter awe she pointed and said, "Look! A cow!" we all broke up. And from then on it was "Look Margaret, a tree!" or "Look Margaret, grass!"



Margaret McElderry

And here the Old World and the New met and collided and merged again, for thus was born the **secret** IBBY RC or "Revolutionary Committee" with Margaret as its Chair, better known as "Chère Madame." We met for several years after every Congress for a day or two of sheer fun and sharing, and since it no longer exists I can tell you about it. Our meetings were duly taken down in proper Minutes by the Secretary – and they still exist – we had special secret IBBY badges to distinguish us, and subcommittees, the best of which were the Eatables and Potables Committee headed by Leena

Maissen, Executive Director of IBBY, and the Kissing Working Group led by Miguel Azaola, past president of IBBY. It was, like IBBY, eclectic and with several countries represented: Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Spain, Finland, USA, France and Denmark. It was also, unlike IBBY, very exclusive for there were only 8 members.

In fact, the RC, apart from being inspired by Margaret, who often led us adrift, was instituted as a rebellion against the then president of IBBY Knut Hauberg Thychssen, a very square Administrator who as he himself said, had nothing to do with children's books, but was there to organize the IBBY finances, and who kept a very strict eye on us. But being a canny Dane, he outfoxed us by joining the RC – the perfect example of that old maxim "If you can't lick them, join them." On a memorable trip to the Children's Book Fair in Mexico City, organized by Carmen Garcia Moreno, another RC member, we took him to the witch doctor's market in Sonoma. Knut was horrified when we offered him a beautiful garlic wreath to ward off vampires. He wrinkled his nose at everything we showed him, until we found him a special powder for enhancing money matters. That one he bought. I don't think he has been the same since then.

The IBBY Presidency

I agreed to run for the IBBY presidency because of the encouragement, not to say unending persistence, of another special person, who I understand was one of the key people who made the Williamsburg Congress in the U.S. possible (along with Dorothy): John Donovan. Before leaving Williamsburg, we joked about the moon and promised we would think about each other in our separate worlds every time we looked at the full moon. I did not know then that I would never see him again, but I have kept my promise ever since.

I was elected president at the Sevilla Congress in 1994, thanks to the support of so many people from different countries, especially the Nordic sections across the ocean led by Britt Isakson and the lobbying power of a certain French delegate, who later also became a member of the RC. My friends from Spain supported me in their own peculiar and idiosyncratic way; they slotted my conference *(Children's Literature as a means of understanding cultural diversity)* as the inaugural one. It was a great honor, but I was terrified, and

I was elected president at the Sevilla Congress in 1994, thanks to the support of so many people from different countries, especially the Nordic sections across the ocean led by Britt Isakson and the lobbying power of a certain French delegate.

when I told one of the organizers this he replied, " Don't worry, it's on the 12th of October – which is a holiday for the Spanish speaking world – so no one will come to listen to you." I had also been told that coming from a "poor developing country," I had very little chance of getting elected against the very good candidate from Japan. After they read out our résumés, 30 seconds before I had to stand up in the General Assembly and present myself, my Banco del Libro colleague who supposedly had come to give me encouragement turned to me and remarked, '"I have to say her résumé is much more impressive than yours."

In all my years in IBBY, I have seen many clashes and much disharmony. I have heard a German member of the EC ask the Japanese member how she could bear going back to Japan after doing post graduate studies in the "civilized country" that was Germany, and heard the Israeli delegate call the Palestinian delegation " terrorists" in a heated General Assembly debate in Basel. I have seen some jurors of the Hans Christian Andersen award committee vote, not for the excellence of a particular author or illustrator, but for the country or section of the world they represented. I have argued with closed-in IBBY national sections over the necessity of opening their activities to all groups in their country. In one unforgettable instance I was told they could not do so because they didn't

have enough chairs to accommodate everybody around the meeting room table.

My favorite collision was during the Congress in New Delhi in 1998. India was testing a nuclear weapon at that time and the Danish section sent a letter proposing a boycott of the Congress because of this. I wrote back that India was also the land of many other things, among them Gandhi and his advocacy for peace. And I received in answer, all the many points of view of the microcosm that is IBBY: a perfect photograph of the world we lived in at that time. The Danish were adamant and would not change their stance; the Latin American sections were against everything: nuclear bombs, the IMF, the World Bank, wars, global warming, you name it they were against it; the Japanese section sent a four page letter, very polite, very measured, at the end of which I was not sure whether they were for or against the boycott. But the best of all was the letter from the Chinese section. It was very short and began ""Your Majesty," and then went on to state "We have 8 people ready to attend the Congress in New Delhi. Please tell us what to do."

I shall cherish it forever.

In any case, it was a slam bang, wonderfully argumentative General Assembly where everyone put forth their point of view, and at the end, many positive things came out of it, as such things can happen in a crisis.

I have also seen, in all these years, the harmonious twinning of IBBY sections that makes such a difference to some. The generous donations of people from countries like Japan and Korea, and the USBBY donations to needy sections, among them our Bibliotherapy program *(Leer Para Vivir- Read to Live)* on the behest of that caring person that is Katherine Paterson, when the mountain came down on a section of our Venezuelan coastline, and which truly transformed the lives of so many people including my own. I have seen dedicated people giving their all to organize seminars, conferences and congresses. I remember Ambrosio Ochoa from Spain, one of the organizers of the Sevilla Congress, smilingly take care of every detail, including sending the leftover food from the lavish receptions to the homeless shelters, Dorothy in Berlin defending the section of a country outlawed by her own. Tayo Shima from Japan always willing to help everybody with a smile and a soft word, Betsy Hearne and her practical good advice; Ralph Steiger and Alida Cutts's kindness; the intense and frequent meetings of the Latin American sections when we were organizing the Cartagena Congress in 2000. I have seen the IBBY network, so efficiently guarded by Leena Maissen for many years, expand under the care of Liz Page and Patsy Aldana, my terrible twin, to include workshops and seminars and programs like the Children in Crisis Fund that give practical help to so many needy sections. Liz always answers any query with patience and good humor and has an answer for **everything**. Patsy does it by a mixture of persuasion and scolding with an unending capacity to take it all in and be in all places at once.

In all my years in IBBY, I have seen many clashes and much disharmony. I have heard a German member of the EC ask the Japanese member how she could bear going back to Japan after doing post graduate studies in the "civilized country" that was Germany, and heard the Israeli delegate call the Palestinian delegation " terrorists" in a heated General Assembly debate in Basel.

And I have made many lasting friends. The best part of IBBY always has been and always will be its strange, quirky, idealistic, diverse people. So many worlds, so many special persons, so many stories, impossible to relate them all.

Conclusion

The meeting of worlds is circular. In our profession, it starts with an author's or illustrator's inner world,

influenced by an outer world, which translates into a book that finds its way across boundaries, which in turn transforms someone else's inner world, which in turn… and so it goes. As my friend Susan Cooper once wrote "… every beginning, every opening page, has in it an echo of what has gone before. Literature is a chain in which every link is connected to the one before it and the one after. And so is life."

I have also seen, in all these years, the harmonious twinning of IBBY sections that makes such a difference to some. The generous donations of people from countries like Japan and Korea, and the USBBY donations to needy sections, among them our Bibliotherapy program (Leer Para Vivir- Read to Live)

My son Alex, who has a prickly porcupine personality, stood in tears before the original illustrations of Anthony Browne's *Gorilla,* because, being the middle child, he often felt as lonely and wistful as Hannah in that book. I had not realized how much so, until I stood beside him, also in tears. It was the first time we talked about it without bitterness.

We began the bibliotherapy program, which changed so many lives in the devastated coastline of Venezuela, because I knew from my own experience after my husband died, that books could heal. In my case, it started with a book about a cold and faraway land, which nevertheless echoed in my hot and tropical world: Roald Dahl's autobiography *Boy.*

The people I have met through children's books (both real and imaginary) have given me frustrations and fury, laughter and solace, passion and stillness. But above all, those meetings have altered my world and been enlightening and unpredictable.

And I still want to be like *Struwwelpeter.*

Hannu Mäkelä (born in 1943) is a versatile Finnish author whose broad output consists of children's books, novels, radio and TV plays, anthologies of prose, and poetry. Mäkelä is the winner of numerous literary awards, including the coveted Finlandia Prize and he is the Hans Christian Andersen author nominee from Finland for 2010. His works have been translated into 16 different languages. Hannu Mäkelä's picture book, *Vauvaunia (Baby Dreams)* asks which kind of dreams every baby and parent dreams. When the baby sleeps, his or her gestures can tell us where the baby is travelling when dreaming. The baby flies to other places, to another world, familiar to the everyday world – but fabulous and different. Poetical Hannu Mäkelä understands baby talk just as animals do.

Marika Maijala (born in 1974) is a young, talented illustrator who received the Rudolf Koivu Illustration Prize in 2008 for her soft, tender, timeless, and philosophical illustrations for this book (Vauvaunia/ Baby Dreams).

Teresia Volotinen

Hannu Mäkelä

Vauvaunia (Baby Dreams)

Illus. Marika Maijala

Helsinki, Finland: Tammi, 2008.
33 pp. ISBN: 978-951-31-4135-6
(picture book, 4-8)

Profile of Ted van Lieshout

Duijx offers this profile of poet, author, and artist Ted van Lieshout on the occasion of his winning the Dutch Theo Thijssenprize.

In 2009, Ted van Lieshout received the Theo Thijssenprize, the most important Dutch prize for children's and adolescent literature awarded every three years. The jury chose a writer and poet who had built a diverse and high quality oeuvre as an illustrator and writer, and is known as an activist for the quality of children's literature and the rights of authors and illustrators since 1986. Already very early on, the quality of his work was recognized and praised, underscored by his receiving the *Charlotte Köhler Stipendium* as a promising young author in 1989, now twenty years ago. He was the first author of children's books ever to receive this stipend and his work has been critically acclaimed ever since.

His biography

Ted van Lieshout was born in Eindhoven on 21 December 1955. He comes from a huge family with eleven brothers and sisters. Ever since he was young, Van Lieshout knew he wanted to become a writer. And if he did not succeed in that, he wanted to become an illustrator. If even that plan would fail, he thought he might become a singer. At age nineteen, he moved to Amsterdam to begin his studies at the Art Academy. After he had graduated there in 1980, Ted van Lieshout designed book covers and catalogues and made illustrations for

by TOIN DUIJX

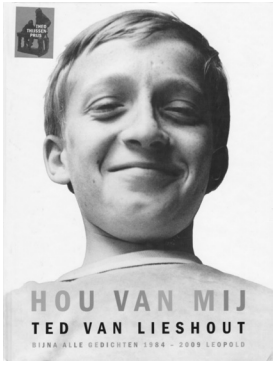
Toin Duijx is secretary of the Dutch IBBY section and works at Leiden University (child and family studies) and Tilburg University (children's literature).

NRC Handelsblad (one of the Netherlands' most important newspapers) and various magazines.

For the first time ever, in 1995 a volume of poetry was awarded a Gouden Griffel (Golden Slate Pencil; awarded to the best Dutch children's book of that year). It was Ted van Lieshout who received this honor.

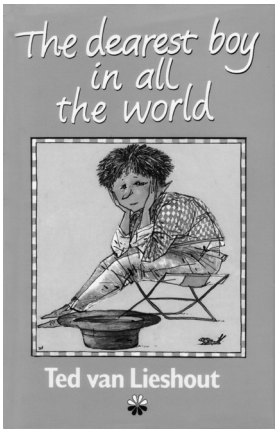
His poetry

Becoming the illustrator for *De Blauw Geruite Kiel,* the children's newspaper, another important weekly magazine, was particularly important to him. Here he was in the position to illustrate poems by famous Dutch authors of children's literature, such as Karel Eykman and Hans Dorrestijn. It was Karel Eykman who gave Van Lieshout the opportunity to publish poems himself. In 1984, he made his debut with his first poem in *De Blauw Geruite Kiel* and from that moment on Van Lieshout published volumes of poetry with some regularity, allowing young readers to see the world through his clever eyes. For the first time ever, in 1995 a volume of poetry was awarded a *Gouden Griffel* (Golden Slate Pencil; awarded to the best Dutch children's book of that year). It was Ted van Lieshout who received this honor with *Begin een torentje van niks (Begin a Silly Little Tower)*, a masterpiece of children's and adolescent poetry.



Conflicting feelings and desires are often present in his poems. In many of them, he is looking for recognition and safety. The death of his father and brother had a great influence on him. In Van Lieshout's poetry, simple words often have a very special meaning to them, which makes reading his poems a unique experience. Ordinary things are usually presented in an original way. Van Lieshout plays with words, carefully weighs them, leaves unnecessary language out, gives hope, evokes penetrating images, and breaks taboos, like in *Zeer kleine liefde (Very Little Love)*, a volume of poetry, letters, and photos of a twelve-year old boy who has a controversial sexual relationship with an adult man.

His prose



In his prose debut, *Raafs Reizend Theater (Raven's Travelling Theatre)*, he portrays the life of an anti-hero who gets the respect and support he did not find in the real world by travelling around with a theatre consisting of various marginal characters. Another example of such an outsider is Tim, who is always turning over puzzles in his mind, in *De allerliefste jongen van de hele wereld (The Dearest Boy in all the World)*. He's a boy who thinks he has to replace his dad who died in a traffic accident.

Tim was a boy who had so much to worry about that he hardly ever went out to play. All day long questions without answers and answers without questions crawled inside his head. And they didn't stop at night either. He even worried in his dreams. (...) But his mother and all the other grown-ups that he knew said that Tim was the dearest boy in all the world. And on one special day he believed it.

(excerpt taken from *De allerliefste jongen van de hele wereld*, 1988; translation by Lance Salway)

Another beautiful piece from the prose of Van Lieshout is the youth novel with the mysterious title *Gebr. (Bros.)*. The abbreviation "Bros." was once frequently seen at the ends of names of

companies headed by brothers. Van Lieshout uses the abbreviation to indicate a breach in the relationship between two brothers and the premature end of a young life. The central theme in this book focuses on the way a boy deals with the death of his brother. *"The idea that everyone would be able to forget him was something I just couldn't stand,"* Van Lieshout once wrote. In an impressive way, he describes the process of his brother becoming sick and slowly weakening and failing. Furthermore, the discovery that his brother was different plays an important role, along with his own emerging homosexuality that began revealing itself around that time. Although this novel of adolescence is told in a sophisticated way, its real importance is its authentic setting and the encounter between the two brothers. The dialogue of two points of view across the border of death brings Luuk's own doubts and insecurity to life. The expressive language and balanced composition make *Gebr.* a reading experience that will leave no one untouched.

The central theme in this book focuses on the way a boy deals with the death of his brother. "The idea that everyone would be able to forget him was something I just couldn't stand," Van Lieshout once wrote.

Ted van Lieshout is a kind of chameleon. Besides poetry and stories, he also writes (song) lyrics for television shows, like the Dutch version of the television program, "Sesame Street"

Ted van Lieshout is a kind of chameleon. Besides poetry and stories, he also writes (song) lyrics for television shows, like the Dutch version of the television program, "Sesame Street" *(Sesamstraat),* in which he generally maintains a much lighter tone than in his poems and stories. Furthermore, he writes radio plays, play scenarios and songs for various singers.

His art

It is clear to everyone who is familiar with his poetry picture books that Van Lieshout really values art education for children (and adults!), however he would be the last to use the term "art education." *"I always try to reduce the distance between pure illustration and modern visual arts with and in my illustrations, hoping that children will see art somewhat closer than they do now,"* he once said. In the poetry picture book, *Mijn botjes zijn bekleed met deftig vel (1990; My Bones Are Clothed with Classy Skin)*, he succeeded in reaching that goal. The poems in this volume often have a relativizing, sometimes even mocking tone, while humor is something that these poems are also not lacking.

The poems are printed on the illustrations which are made by using various techniques. Van Lieshout finds it important to familiarize children with the background of the illustrations, therefore, the techniques used in every illustration are explained on the last pages of the book. Van Lieshout keeps looking for new styles, in both words and images. He expressed his vision of art in a very personal way in *Stilleven (Still Life)*, in which he confronts pieces of art and styles in conjunction with each other in a surprising way. *Stilleven* was the first title in which he laid out his vision on artworks and styles, and which may be read as a forerunner for "Paper Museums."

His goal of bringing children and art closer to each other can increasingly be seen in his "Paper Museums" series, of which three volumes have appeared thus far. For example, in the second

"Paper Museum" he brings together sixty poems by the same number of poets in the different halls of a museum, linking poems in pairs that combine thematically. Illustrations, photos, and computer-edited images are added to these presentations. In *Papieren Museum 3 – De engel met twee neuzen (The Paper Museum 3 - The Angel with Two Noses)*, which he designed himself, he assumes the role of Director of the "Paper Museum." The covers of the book are the walls of Van Lieshout's museum, the pages are the galleries, where you can wander to your heart's content and get lost amongst the works of art that he has brought together with so much care. A critic wrote: *"Ted van Lieshout ensures that art history is not a sleep-inducing school lesson, but a happy journey of discovery that involves looking and comparison, astonishment and identification, and, first and foremost, lots and lots of fun."*

Van Lieshout can be called a true ambassador of poetry for children and young adults. By paying a lot of attention to the design of his own volumes, he manages to make his poetry accessible to a broad audience. Moreover, Van Lieshout thinks it is important that other poets, most of them still not very widely known, get the chance to publish, especially in a time when it is harder and harder for publishers to publish poetry volumes. Also due to his initiative, the yearbook *Kwam dat zien! Kwam dat zien!* was released in 2008 (in 2009, the second volume appeared). Van Lieshout succeeded in combining the work of over fifty poets in a very special way; poetry for young people portrayed as a circus show.

The covers of the book are the walls of Van Lieshout's museum, the pages are the galleries, where you can wander to your heart's content and get lost amongst the works of art that he has brought together with so much care.

The versatility of his oeuvre is something that distinguishes Van Lieshout from other authors. Other important characteristics of his work include the dialogue between words and images, his original and visualizing writing style, and the "unique" eyes he uses to observe the world with a different perspective every time. His work is in a constant state of flux; he is always looking for new styles and techniques to shape both words and pictures.

A sampling of Ted van Lieshout works in translation

Brothers. London, CollinsFlamingo, 2001
Bruder. Weinheim [u.a.], Beltz & Gelberg, 2004
Frère. Genève, Joie de Lire, 2001
The dearest boy in all the world. Stroud, Glos [u.a.], Turton & Chambers, 1990
Ich bin ein Held. München, Middelhauve, 1994
Soy un héroe. Barcelona, Edebé, 1998

Sample poems, used with permission

My father went

My father went. No one had given permission,
said he could go. But he got in the car, crashed
into a flight of two steps and had a heart attack,
or had a heart attack and crashed and went.

We children were not alarmed that he had gone.
Fathers go off to build a bridge, a tower or a house.
Fathers build far away. Fathers come home again one day
to kiss their wives, to serve out saved-up punishments,

to take the children who have won the contest for nicest child
of the week on their laps. Fathers die, that's just how
it is. They lay themselves down in a box, are dressed
in unworn pyjamas and don't listen to what I say:

Daddy, I can write a word! He looks at me and I hear:
Is that all? Start by building a modest bridge, attempt
the smallest of houses, begin a silly little tower, find
out how it's done, then we'll see if it's any good yet.

This, Dad, is the bridge that I have built. It rests
on five piers. I learned to do such things in time. I built
this tower word by word, laid this poem stone by stone,
in twenty lines wrote a little house for us to live in.

(Translation by Paul Vincent)

Mother, sometimes I think, when I can't
sleep, that I will wake up one morning
and find you dead, or I come home

from school and there you are, lying lifeless
behind the door, or in the kitchen, and I can feel
by touching the tea pot that you just died.

And what am I supposed to do then? Who
should I fetch? Must I wait till the others
get home or call an ambulance right away?

Do the dishes while I wait and cover you up
with a blanket? Or first pull your dress straight
if it's not neatly as it should be? Are there

secrets I must destroy so that no one will
find them? Here in our house, in the attic
or in the cellar? In the closet I already know?

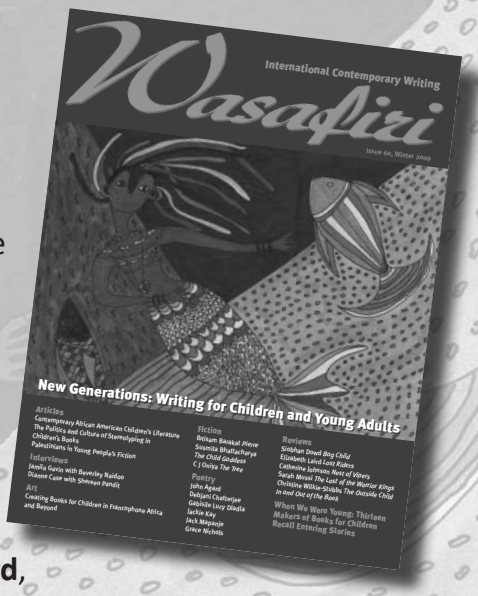
O, what am I to do when I am the first who
must take care of you, Mother, when you are
dead, and no one in the world knows it yet?

(Translation by Ted van Lieshout)

Wasafiri

Issue 60: New Generations: Writing for Children and Young Adults

Edited by Beverley Naidoo and Shereen Pandit



In *Wasafiri*'s 25th anniversary year, *New Generations* features writers and writing for young people. The issue offers creative delights, as well as critical insights into current dialogues across generations and cultures.

New Generations includes an interview with **Jamila Gavin**, a feature on writing and illustrating children's books by **Véronique Tadjo**, an article by **Elsa Martson** on Palestinians in fiction for young people, fiction by **Ibtisam Barakat**, poetry by **John Agard**, **Jackie Kay**, **Jack Mapanje**, and **Grace Nichols**, and contributions by **Elizabeth Laird** and **Benjamin Zephaniah** plus much more.

Guest Editors

Beverley Naidoo has won many awards for her novels, short stories and plays, including the Carnegie Medal for The Other Side of Truth. Her latest novel Burn My Heart is set in 1950s Kenya. See **www.beverleynaidoo.com**

Shereen Pandit's short stories have appeared in many anthologies and magazines and have won several prizes, including the Booktrust London Award. See **http://shereenpandit.book.co.za/**

'When we read the best of literature we learn to empathise and to understand about other places, other peoples, about the human condition, and the ways of the world. Every time we finish a great poem or story, we've been on an intellectual and emotional journey. We return enriched, our horizons widened, maybe even a little wiser. Wasafiri *is making a significant and vital contribution to our literary lives, our imaginary lives, our lives.'*
Michael Morpurgo, January 2009

To view the full table of contents and order this issue, visit
www.informaworld.com/wasafiri

Wasafiri's 25th anniversary year is supported by the Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England, and Routledge.

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Books on Books

Here are reviews of six new professional reference books including a celebration of the contributions of Belgian scholar, Michel Defourny, a look at Barbara Scharioth's book based on an exhibit of imaginary books dreamed up by 75 international illustrators, a discussion of Klaus Doderer's tribute to James Krüss, an examination of Rachel Falconer's study of the "crossover" impact of children's fiction, a discussion of the fantasies of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffmann, and a review of gothic elements in books for young people.

BELGIUM

MICHEL DEFOURNY AND SERVICE GÉNÉRAL DES LETTRES ET DU LIVRE DU MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ FRANÇAISE (EDS)
Le livre et l'enfant. Recueil de textes de Michel Defourny

(The book and the child. Anthology of Michel Defourny)
Bruxelles: De Boeck Université 2009 174pp
ISBN 9782804105259 *(Euro)* E 18.50

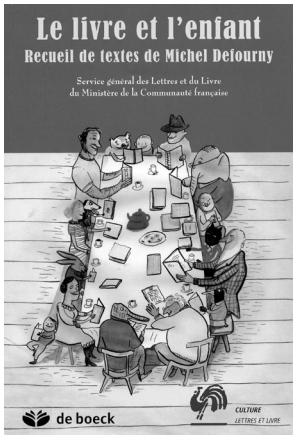
Michel Defourny, Belgian scholar of Romance languages and Oriental studies, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Hindu mythology.

Edited and compiled by
CHRISTIANE RAABE

Translations by NIKOLA VON MERVELDT

Christiane Raabe is director of the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (International Youth Library) in Munich.

It was the Indian fairy tale that led him to take up children's literature as a field of study. Following forty years of research and teaching, most recently at Liège University, the former representative of Belgium's francophone children's literature field is now retired. To commemorate his contribution to the field, this anthology features select talks about illustrated children's books, essays from renowned periodicals, and newspaper articles.



The selection reflects the wide range of Defourny's research interests: contributions on early literacy are followed by a historical survey of children's literature; observations on the aesthetic aspect of picture books in general complement reflections on the particularities of the picture book genre in relation to other literary and artistic genres. The essay, „Instruire et distraire. L'image documentaire" (Instruct and amuse. The documentary image), for example, analyzes the characteristics of the illustrated nonfiction book. While some contributions feature an author or illustrator such as Grégoire Solotareff, or a fairy tale character such as Cinderella, others present series such as *Archimède* published by the French publishing house L'école des loisirs.

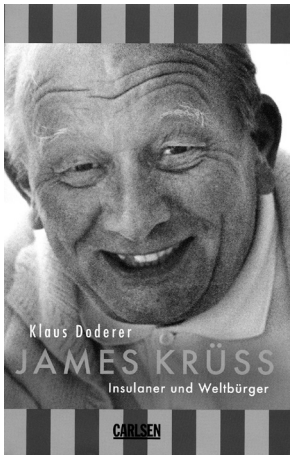
Michel Defourny's intimate knowledge of his country's literature (especially the Belgian French community), as well as his expertise in foreign literature and cultures (notably his contributions on the character of Savitri from the Indian epic Mahabharata or the English fairy tale *The Story of the Three Bears*) are truly impressive. Thanks to this anthology, readers will now be able to share at least part of Defourny's profound and vast knowledge of international children's literature.

Elena Kilian

GERMANY

KLAUS DODERER
James Krüss. Insulaner und Weltbürger

(James Krüss. Islander and Cosmopolitan)
Hamburg: Carlsen 2009 363pp
ISBN 9783551582133 *(Euro)* E 19.90



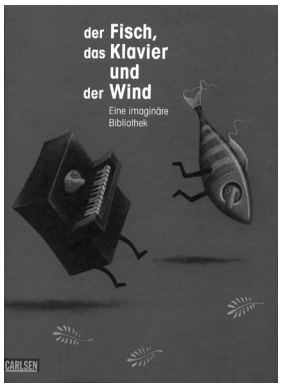
With *Islander and Cosmopolitan*, Klaus Doderer, former director of the Frankfurt Institute for Studies in Children's Literature, pays tribute to his friend James Krüss, whose verses about Corinth, the Magician, or pugs drinking schnaps are part and parcel of every German child's imagination. Within the context of a recent Krüss-revival, Doderer's book gives surprising insights into the poet's life and work. The book is divided into three parts: the first part offers a biographical approach and most importantly, squarely situates Krüss's life within the contemporary historical context. Krüss (just one year younger than Doderer himself) was born in 1925 on Heligoland, a small German archipelago in the North Sea. Doderer stresses the lasting impact World War II had on Krüss (as on himself). He interprets Krüss's optimism, his rampant imagination, and his gusto for spinning yarns and playing with puns as attempts at dealing with traumatic wartime experiences. According to Krüss, art and literature do not merely dampen the horrors; he also calls upon them to prevent them and to build a better world by way of reasoned imagination (cf. p. 111). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Doderer views Krüss's work as truly utopian instead of dismissing it as innocuous or escapist play. Indeed, he considers this utopian moment as inherent to all of Krüss's texts. In the second part of the book, Doderer not only

analyzes Krüss's poetry and novels, but also his poetics. He shows how Krüss's aesthetic creation is underpinned by philosophical, linguistic, and theoretical reflection. Finally, in the third part of the book, Doderer recollects his own friendship with James Krüss, which began on a train trip to Slovenia in 1965 and ended with Krüss's burial at sea in the fall of 1997. Thanks to the successful combination of biography and work analysis, as well as to Doderer's personal tone, *Islander and Cosmopolitan* is both an instructive and enticing read to be commended to every fan of Krüss's work.

Ines Galling

GERMANY

BARBARA SCHARIOTH (ED)
der Fisch, das Klavier und der Wind. Eine imaginäre Bibliothek



(The fish, the piano, and the wind. An imaginary library)
Hamburg: Carlsen
2009 175pp
ISBN 97835515172227
(Euro) E 29,90

This book is a paradox: a book about books that do not (yet) exist. When Barbara Scharioth, former director of the International Youth Library, retired in 2007, she offered the library a special farewell present: an exhibition on books that only had an imaginary existence. An exhibition based solely on hopes and dreams, how could that possibly materialize? Scharioth asked illustrators from around the world to give life to their book dreams. Everything was allowed. The only condition was that each participant would design the book cover, invent a title, and write a short summary of the dreamed-up book. Seventy-two well-known illustrators took up the challenge, and in 2007 the exhibition *An imaginary library* was on display at the International Youth Library from mid-February to mid-March. Since then, it has travelled to many countries, including Croatia and Japan; currently, it is touring the United States. Delighted by Scharioth's project, the Carlsen publishing house in Hamburg decided to turn the exhibition catalogue into a book entitled *The fish, the piano, and the wind. An imaginary library.* This book now features 75 book dreams (three additional illustrators were recruited) of stunning variety, but united by the same enthusiasm for the project. The imaginary books have titles such as "The quiet book about a dangerous fish" (Bárður Oskarsson), "All things unimportant that are important to me" (Isabel Pin), or "Extremely speedy automobiles" (João Vaz de Carvalho). The artistic techniques are just as varied as the choice of topics: Jutta Bauer creates "I went through hell" with sparse but vivid pen-and-ink drawings; Kvāta Pacovská employs radiant-colored chalks for "Color samples. A path to the world of colors;" and Elena Odriozola employs soft watercolours for "Twigs." *The fish, the piano, and the wind* does not only show the book dreams of illustrators, it is also an invitation to readers to give wings to their imagination, to spin their own tales, which may not be about fish, pianos, or the wind, but perhaps about rabbits, violins, or the rays of the sun.

Ines Galling

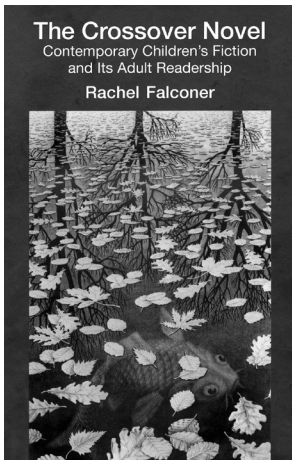
UNITED KINGDOM

RACHEL FALCONER
The Crossover Novel. Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership

(Series: Children's literature and culture; 57)
New York [et al.]: Routledge 2009 XV + 263pp
ISBN 9780415978880 £ 75

"Why did so many adult readers turn to reading

children's fiction?" This is the question that Rachel Falconer sets out to tackle with the tools of poststructuralist and psychoanalytical literary theory and by drawing on sociological and historical models. The result is a thorough and compelling analysis of the phenomenon commonly referred to as "crossover fiction," "all-age," or "kiddult-literature." The first chapter gives a survey of this phenomenon in Great Britain published in the millennial decade (1997-2007) as reflected by the book market, the use of books in other media, and by political and social practices. Looking back at the reception of A. A. Milne, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll, J. M. Barrie, Roald Dahl, or J. R. R. Tolkien, Falconer demonstrates that this hybridization of children's and adult fiction has a long tradition. She interprets cross-reading as a means for adults to playfully transcend their ascribed identity. Chapters 2 to 7 offer close readings of recent crossover novels. Falconer stresses the cathartic effect of reading practices that are characterized by empathy and identification with the hero and the vicarious experience of border crossings. In J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series, for example, she analyzes the opposing motives of lightness and death; in David Almond's "Clay" the topic of birth and creation. She reads Philip Pullman's coming-of-age trilogy "His Dark Materials" as a fantasy bildungsroman and sees the power of imagination at work as a protective force against death and abjection in Geraldine McCaughrean's *The White Darkness.*



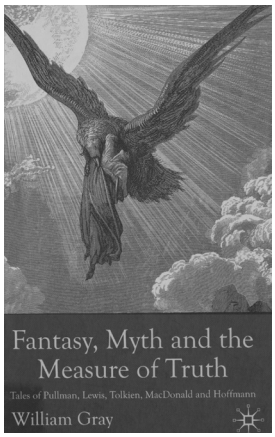
Falconer's in-depth study draws on an impressively wide range of sources, including book reviews from various media, governmental reports, statistical surveys, interviews, and Internet fan-sites. Engaging with the most current social and literary debates on the highest academic level, Falconer redeems the pledge she makes in the preface: "This study will, I hope, contribute to the growing body of work which considers children's literature as literature" (p.10).

Jutta Reusch

UNITED KINGDOM

WILLIAM GRAY
Fantasy, myth, and the measure of truth. Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffmann.

Houndmills [et al.]: Palgrave Macmillan 2009
215pp ISBN 9780230005051 £ 45



In his complex academic study, William Gray examines the way in which the works of some of the most important British fantasy writers have been heavily influenced by literary and philosophical ideas of the Romantic Movement in Europe and by German Romantic writers in particular. After suggesting in his prelude that Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy "may be seen as in certain respects the culmination of this tradition of mythopoeic fiction infused with (or contaminated by) a particular kind of Romanticism" (p.1), he sets off to discuss German Romanticism by providing background information and comparing the works of various German authors such as Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. The following three chapters offer an in-depth analysis of selected writings by George MacDonald, J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis respectively. Gray stresses their connection with German and British authors of the Romantic period, especially evident in these

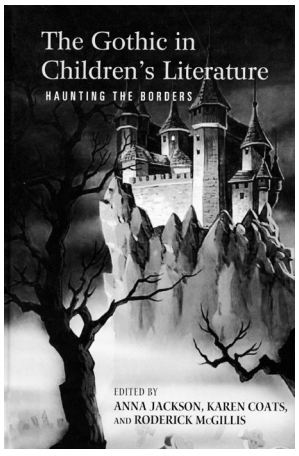
writers' aim to create and invent their own fantasy worlds as well as in their treatment of central religious questions. In chapter five, Gray returns to Philip Pullman, convincingly arguing that Pullman – despite his frequently quoted "explicit disavowal of fantasy" (p.152) – undoubtedly writes within the tradition of the earlier creators of fantasy fiction and is thus connected to the Romantic period. The concluding postscript briefly touches upon the question of whether J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series can be seen as belonging to the same tradition. Scholars of fantasy fiction will find this book an insightful and well-researched addition to the existing criticism in that field.

Claudia Söffner

USA

ANNA JACKSON, KAREN COATS, AND RODERICK McGILLIS (EDS)
The gothic in children's literature. Haunting the borders

(Series: Children's literature and culture; 43)
New York [et al]: Routledge 2008 VII + 254pp
ISBN 9780415960366 US$ 100.00



Gothic motifs and themes have never been more popular in children's literature, as evidenced by the worldwide publishing success of series such as *Harry Potter, Twilight,* and Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events.* This engaging and comprehensive study traces the wide-spread impact of the Gothic in children's books and, in the words of editor Roderick McGillis, asks "why a form that we might think inappropriate for young readers is so pervasive in the various forms of textuality produced for them" (p. 27).
Part of this volume's appeal is its wide-ranging focus. It tackles subjects as diverse as the relationship between humor and the Gothic, the novels of Neil Gaiman, the role of the family in contemporary young adult fiction, J.K. Rowling's employment of the Gothic mode when representing female development in the *Harry Potter* series, and the way in which Gothic comics for young readers subvert comic book conventions and open up new and liberating spaces for child and female characters. Many of the ideas canvassed are innovative and intriguing, particularly those expressed in standout chapters by Nadia Crandall (*Cyberfiction and the Gothic Novel*), Rose Lovell-Smith (the Gothic representation of the beach in *The Tricksters,* a novel by New Zealand writer Margaret Mahy) and Roderick McGillis's excellent conclusion (which uses M.T. Anderson's vampire novel *Thirsty* to propose that the Gothic mode can offer positive ways in which to understand and explain human behavior).

Aside from the fact that this book is both compelling and interesting, it fills a necessary gap in recent children's literature criticism. Reflecting on the popularity of the Gothic in fictions produced for children and adolescents, this volume also poses questions about changing cultural attitudes towards the innocence of children – because, unlike conventional Gothic heroines, the child protagonists of contemporary children's narratives rarely need rescuing; they are eminently capable of saving themselves.

Victoria Flanagan

Focus IBBY

In this issue, see the 2010 International Children's Book Day poster and message and read about the projects selected for support by the IBBY-Yamada Fund in 2010. Find out more about the 22nd Biennale of Bratislava and join us in remembering Sergei Mikhalkov, founder of IBBY Russia. Finally, read about the 2010 IBBY World Congress and make plans to attend now.

Compiled and edited by
ELIZABETH PAGE

Elizabeth Page is IBBY's Executive Director.

International Children's Book Day 2010

Every year IBBY initiates a worldwide celebration of books for young people with International Children's Book Day. ICBD celebrates the birthday of Hans Christian Andersen on or around 2 April each year. The 2010 International Children's Book day poster and message to the children of the world is sponsored this year by IBBY Spain – *Organizacón Española para el Libro Infantil y Juvenil.* They have created a unique and beautiful poster and brochure with the motto ***Un libro te espera, búscalo! A book is waiting for you, find it!*** Author Eliacer Cansino has written the 2010 message about sailing away with books. Cansino studied philosophy at the universities of Seville and Salamanca and since 1980, he has not only taught his subject at a secondary school, but also written many award-winning books. His book *El misterio Velázquez* was selected for the IBBY

Honour List in 2000.

The poster art and design was created by Noemí Villamuza. She was born in Palencia and studied fine arts at the University of Salamanca. To date, she has illustrated 30 books for children and has been awarded many prizes including the *Premio Junceda* for the best illustrated book for adults.

Un libro te espera, búscalo! A book is waiting for you, find it!

Once upon a time
there was a little boat,
that didn't know how to,
that couldn't
sail

One, two, three,
four, five, six weeks went
by,
and that little boat
sailed

"We learn to play and to sing before we learn to read. The children of my region and I sang this song before we could read. We'd form a circle in the street, our voices competing with those of the summer crickets, over and again to sing the woes of the little boat that couldn't sail.

Sometimes we'd make little paper boats and place them in puddles, letting them sink without ever reaching a coastline.

I too was like a little boat anchored in the streets of my neighborhood. I would spend my afternoons on a rooftop watching the sun set in the west and foreseeing the distant future – though it still wasn't clear if I was just peering into space or my own heart – imagining a wonderful world that was yet out of my sight.

Behind some boxes, in a wardrobe at home there was a little book that couldn't sail either as no one had read it. So many times I passed it by, not once noticing that it was there. A paper boat, stuck in the mud; a lone book, hidden on a shelf behind cardboard boxes.

One day, my hand was searching for something and came across the spine of this book. If I were a book I'd describe the event as follows, 'One day, a child's hand brushed up against my cover and I felt my sails unfold and began to sail.'

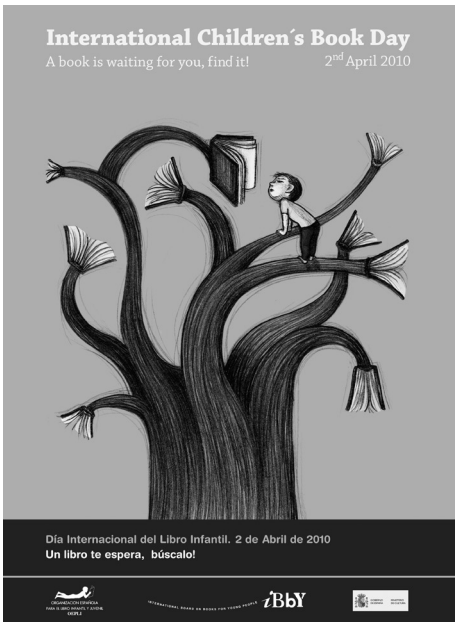
What a surprise it was when my eyes finally set upon that object! It was a small book with a red cover and a gold watermark. I opened it expectantly, like someone who had just found a treasure chest and was anxious to discover its contents. I was not disappointed. No sooner had I started to read it, I saw that I would be guaranteed adventure; the heroism of the protagonist, the goodies, the baddies, the illustrations with footnotes that I looked at over and over again, the danger, the surprises… everything

transported me to a world that was at once exciting and unknown.

And that is the story of how I discovered that beyond my home there was a river, and behind that river a sea, and in the sea was a boat setting sail. The first boat I embarked upon was called *La Hispaniola*, but it could just have easily been called *Nautilus, Rocinante, Sinbad's Ship* or *Huckleberry's Great Big Boat…* All of these, no matter the passing of time, will be there waiting for a child's eyes to look upon them, unfold their sails and set them sailing…

So, don't wait any longer. Reach out and pick up a book. Read it and you'll find that much like that childhood song of mine, there is no boat, no matter how small, that in time doesn't learn how to sail."

(Translated by Nadya Merghani) For the original Spanish version, visit the IBBY website at www.ibby.org.



Copies of the poster and the flyer with the message can be ordered from OEPLI: oepli@oepli.org

IBBY-Yamada Fund 2010

Each year IBBY invites its National Sections to submit suitable projects for support by the IBBY-Yamada program. The projects selected are those that are well thought out, manageable, and fall within our prime areas of concern. Each one selected can receive up to a maximum of CHF 5,000. This amount is often the seed money needed to get started and helps to solicit further support from other sources. Each proposal is judged on its merits with a particular emphasis on the development of a book culture where at present there is none or it is limited.

The projects selected for support in 2010 are in Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Peru and Zambia. Further support will be given as a grant for a librarian from Burkina Faso to undertake a special three-week training program especially designed for her at the *Centre national de la literature pour la jeunesse – La Joie par les livres* in Paris. She will also spend some time in a public library in Paris and as a central theme will be studying how to work in children's libraries, covering all aspects such as programming, storytelling, reading aloud, developing exhibitions, inviting authors, and how to budget, and above all using these activities to introduce children to books. All of these activities are mostly unknown in Burkina Faso where the emphasis is more on animation through music, dance and theatrical productions – not many of which lead to books and reading.

Following the tragic earthquakes in Sumatra in August and September 2009, **IBBY Indonesia** immediately made plans to take reading materials and trainers to Padang. The city had been badly affected and much was destroyed. IBBY Indonesia is very experienced in providing this kind of immediate aid for children, especially after their extensive work in 2005 following the tsunami that devastated the north of the island at the end of 2004. In this new initiative, the group travelled to Padang in November 2009, and began by simply telling stories to the children and playing games with them. They also distributed box libraries with approximately 200 – 250 books. Each box contained different books, so that the boxes can later be exchanged with others. The leaders will also assess the long-term needs and establish a strategy to continue this work. This project was also supported by the IBBY Children in Crisis Fund.

Children in Uruguay; an earlier IBBY-Yamada project

IBBY Mexico – A Leer will train reading mediators to install and activate classroom libraries as well as show the teachers and librarians how to look after and maintain their book collections. The possibilities of introducing reading opportunities will be included to demonstrate to teachers, librarians and others how to encourage the love of reading in children.

The Nepalese Society for Children's Literature – IBBY Nepal, submitted a project proposal that will address the needs of children from some of the very marginalized ethnic groups in Nepal today, namely the Tamangs, Tharus and Magar people. The project will develop hand-made reading materials and combine them with storytelling and drawing activities. Teachers will be trained in how to make these materials and how to use them in the classroom and in reading groups. Three workshops in three districts of the Kathmandu Valley have been selected for the workshops and local schools in neighboring areas will also be invited to attend.

IBBY Peru plans to run workshops and a training program in rural areas where the local literacy rate is among the lowest in Peru. The project is educational and aims at improving the quality of the children's libraries and help the children develop their writing, drawing and reading skills. Traveling bags of books will be made for parents and teachers to borrow, guidelines on the use of the materials will be included with the books. Mothers will be invited to participate and they will be encouraged to use books and games at home by being able to borrow these traveling bags. The first workshop will be called *We are ready to be creators of books for our children* and will offer tips and ideas to mothers and teachers about the basics of reading, games, and educational materials for preschool children and infants. The second workshop moves onto the next stage and will be called *We produce books and materials for our children.* This will be dedicated to the production of didactic picture books with short stories using embroidery and arpillería. (The traditional Peruvian craft of arpillería is the creation of artefacts using pieces of fabric, filling, cloth, wool and thread, which are then embroidered manually.) Ideally, the mothers and teachers will carry on producing reading materials after the workshop. A third workshop is planned to teach how to disseminate the books using the traveling bags and introducing the guidelines. Regular books would also be purchased to complement the hand-made ones.

The project in Zambia aims at equipping teachers, librarians and others working with children and schools with the skills to produce interesting and imaginative reading materials. There will be two workshops: one in Lusaka and the other in the rural village of Nabukuyu in the Monze area. Local materials and expertise will be used wherever possible, complemented by the guidance of an external trainer.

The IBBY-Yamada Fund has provided grants for 36 projects in 25 different countries since 2006! Every one of them has benefited children: through teachers and librarians who learn to use books in the classroom and instil the love of reading; through publishers who improve their books for children through a better understanding of what is needed to make "a good book"; through new authors and illustrators who are encouraged to produce better books; and, through their mothers, families and care workers who share the importance of reading and books from the very beginning. All have been touched by the enthusiasm and experience of the IBBY members across the world.

Josep Antoni Tássies Penella wins BIB'09 Grand Prix

The 22nd Biennale of Bratislava took place between 4 and 26 September 2009 in the Slovak capital. The opening ceremony took place on Friday 4 September at the historic National Theatre and the exhibition of artwork was at the *Dom kultúry* (the House of Culture). Further exhibitions featured the 2008 Hans Christian Andersen winners Roberto Innocenti and Jürg Schubiger; the 2007 Grand Prix winner Einar Turkoweski from Germany, and the Slovak illustrator Ladislav Nesselman. The collection of the latest Noma Concours illustration was also shown throughout the exhibition.

The BIB'09 awards went to:

Grand Prix: Josep Antoni Tássies Penella, Spain

Golden Apples: Pavel Tatarnikov, Belarus
František Skála, Czech Republic
Piet Grobler, South Africa
Martina Matloviová-Králová, Slovak Republic
Boris Zabirochin, Russia

Plaques: Anne Bertier, France
Kyosuke Tchinai, Japan
Ann Cathrin Raab, Germany
Jana Kiselová-Siteková, Slovak Republic
Fabian Negrin, Italy

Honorary Mentions: Publishing House Norma, Bogota, Colombia for Todos se burlan and El animal más feroz
Publishing house Wytwornia, Warsaw, Poland for Tuwim

The 2009 Jury included the following experts under the leadership of Anastasia Arkhipova from Russia: Jindra apek (Czech Republic), Arja Kanerva (Finland), uboslav Pao (Slovakia), John Rowe (UK), Setsuko Shibata (Japan), Marcella Terrusi (Italy), Einar Turkowski (Germany) and, Cica Fittipaldi (Brazil).
http://www.bibiana.sk

IBBY; How it all began

A number of people have been asking about the history of IBBY – how did it all begin? With this series, I hope to be able to share with readers a little bit of the history of IBBY. Of course, every section will have its own history and memories, and this series of short vignettes will show the links between them all.

The founding of the International Board on Books for Young People – IBBY – was the result of the visionary commitment of a remarkable woman, Jella Lepman (1891–1970). Born in Stuttgart, Germany, she became a politically active journalist. In 1936, she emigrated with her son and daughter from Nazi Germany to London and became a British citizen, working for the Foreign Office and the BBC during World War II and from 1941 for the American Broadcasting Station in Europe. She was engaged as an advisor for questions relating to children and young people at the American headquarters in post-war Germany. Even without funds, she went ahead and organized an exhibition of children's illustrations and children's books from 20 countries in Munich in 1946. In 1949, with initial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, she established the International Youth Library in Munich and directed the library until 1957.

After World War II, individuals actively engaged in the field of children's literature in many countries became aware of the importance of children's books as a means in promoting international understanding and peace. Children everywhere should have access to books of high literary and artistic quality and thus become enthusiastic and informed readers.

Jella Lepman, IBBY's Founder

With this vision in mind, in November 1951 Jella Lepman organized a meeting in Munich under the title of *International Understanding through Children's Books.* The goal of this meeting was the foundation of an international organization to

promote children's books. Instead of the expected 60 participants, 250 guests from 26 countries took part, representing different professions connected with children's literature: authors, illustrators, publishers, librarians, teachers, and members of various youth organizations. The opening lecture by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset was entitled *The Pedagogical Paradox and the Idea of Myth-Forming Education*. Media channels across the world covered the conference speeches and discussions. The result of the Munich meeting was the establishment of a committee to form the International Board on Books for Young People – IBBY.

The committee met in Munich in 1952 and made this declaration of intent in writing. It was chaired by the Swiss publisher Hans Sauerländer and was international in character from the beginning, including representatives from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

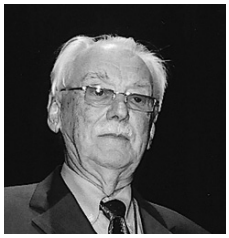
The success of this preparatory work resulted in the establishment of the International Board on Books for Young People, which was registered as a non-profit organization in Switzerland when IBBY's first General Assembly and Congress were held at the Swiss Federal Institute for Technology (ETHZ) in Zurich in October 1953. This legendary congress brought together founding members that included the authors Erich Kästner, Lisa Tetzner, Astrid Lindgren, Jo Tenfjord, Fritz Brunner, and Pamela Travers, the leading Swiss illustrators Alois Carigiet and Hans Fischer, the publishers Hans Sauerländer and Bettina Hürlimann, and specialists in reading research such as Richard Bamberger.

So it was that in Zurich 1953, with funding donated by the Swiss foundation Pro Juventute, whose Secretary General Otto Binder was elected as IBBY's first President, that IBBY began!

With thanks to IBBY's Executive Director (1970-2003) and Honorary Member Leena Maissen.

In Memoriam

IBBY Honorary Member Sergei Mikhalkov, Russian poet and author, died on 27 August 2009 in a Moscow hospital. Sergei Vladimirovich Mikhalkov was born in Moscow on March 13, 1913, into an aristocratic family with prominent tsarist governors and princes among his grandparents. He wrote poetry from childhood, but when he was 17, he went to Moscow to work in a fabric factory. He also joined several geological expeditions.



Sergei Mikhalkov 1913-2009

His first poems were published in Soviet periodicals in the 1930s, and by 1933, he began to earn his living from writing. From 1935 to 1937, he studied at the Gorky Institute of Literature. After graduation in 1937, he joined the USSR Writers' Union and rapidly rose in the organization to take a leading role. During the war he served with the Red Army and worked as a war correspondent.

Mikhalkov's poems for children about "Uncle Styopa", an enormously tall police officer, have remained very popular in Russia since they first appeared in 1935, and are still read in nursery schools. His books have been published in many different languages and have sold millions of copies and continue to be reprinted. He founded a state prize for young authors writing for children and it still bears his name.

In Russia, he is remembered for his lyrics to the Russian national anthem, which he wrote three times for the different regimes. He received three Stalin Prizes (1941, 1942 and 1950) and the Order of Lenin, and was appointed a Hero of Socialist Labour.

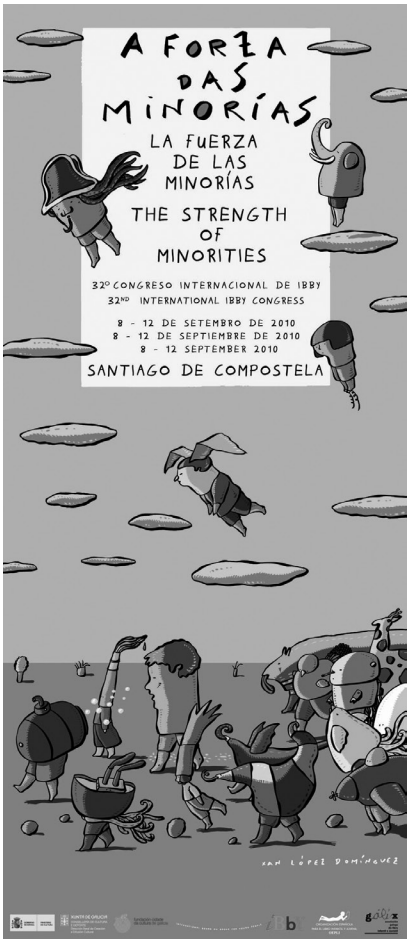
In the 1960s, he appealed to the Soviet Government with a request to form a Russian national section of IBBY and this initiative was subsequently approved and supported. The Russian section was accepted by IBBY in 1968, and Mikhalkov became the president and remained president until his death. He was frequently nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award and in 1972, received the "Highly Commended" distinction. He served on the IBBY Executive Committee from 1972 to 1976, and

again from 1980 to 1984, and was presented with Honorary Membership in 1982.
Mikhalkov received numerous state awards for his children's books, film scripts, plays and fiction. In 2005 Vladimir Putin personally presented him with the Order of St. Andrew, Russia's highest award, for his services to literature. He will be remembered for his long-standing involvement in and enthusiasm for IBBY.

32nd IBBY World Congress: Santiago de Compostela, 8-12 September 2010
The Strength of Minorities – A Forza das Minorías – La Fuerza de las minorías

This World Congress will be an event not to be missed. The main IBBY activities at the Congress include the ceremonies honoring the winners of the 2010 Hans Christian Andersen Awards and the 2010 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards, as well as the presentation of the 2010 IBBY Honour List. The biennial General Assembly will take place on the final afternoon before the traditional closing ceremony and gala dinner.

The second phase of the early-bird registration with a 10% discount is open until 30 April 2010. Full details and registration can be found on the website at: www.ibbycompostela2010.org



Send us a book postcard from your part of the world!

Notices on international children's books, appearing throughout *Bookbird*, are compiled from sources around the world by Glenna Sloan, who teaches children's literature at Queens College City University of New York.

Have you got a favorite recently published children's book — a picturebook, story collection, novel or information book — that you think should be known outside its own country? If you know of a book from your own or another country that you feel should be introduced to the IBBY community, please send a short account of it to us at *Bookbird*, and we may publish it.

Send copy (about 150 words), together with full publication details (use 'postcard' reviews in this issue of *Bookbird* as a model) and a scan of the cover image (in JPG format), to Professor Glenna Sloan (glenna.sloan@qc.cuny.edu).

We are very happy to receive reviews from non-English-speaking countries - but remember to include an English translation of the title as well as the original title (in transliterated form, where applicable).

Submission Guidelines for *Bookbird*

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature is the refereed journal of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

Papers on any topic related to children's literature and of interest to an international audience will be considered for publication. Contributions are invited not only from scholars and critics but also from editors, translators, publishers, librarians, classroom educators and children's book authors and illustrators or anyone working in the field of children's literature. Please try to supply illustrations for your article. Art work should be 200 dpi or higher if possible. (Book covers are sufficient, but other illustrations are also welcome.)

Length: Up to 3000 words

Language: Articles are published in English, but where authors have no translation facilities, we can accept contributions in most major European languages. Please contact us first if you have a translation question.

Format: Word for Windows (Mac users please save your document in rich text format — RTF) as an email attachment; send illustrations as TIFF or JPG attachments.

Style and layout: The author's name and details should appear in the email only, not in the paper itself. A stylesheet is available with more detailed guidelines.

Deadline: *Bookbird* is published every quarter, in January, April, July, October. Papers may be submitted at any time, but it is unlikely that your paper, if accepted for publication, would be published for at least six to nine months from the date of submission, to allow time for refereeing and the production process.

Contact details: Please send two copies to: kurkjianc@att.net; kurkjianc@gmail.com *and* svardell@twu.edu

NB: Please put ***Bookbird* submission** followed by your initials in the subject line.
Please remember to include your full name and contact details (including postal address), together with your professional affiliation and/or a few lines describing your area of work in the body of your email.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP,
MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION, 10/1/09

Title: *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature.* Pub. No. 019-026. Frequency: Quarterly. Four issues published annually. Subscription price: $100 institutions, $50.00 individuals. Location of office of publication: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Headquarters of publishers: Same. Publisher: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Editors: Catherine Kurkjian & Sylvia Vardell, Dept. Reading & Language Arts, Central Connecticut State Univ., New Britain, CT 06050. Owner: Bookbird, Inc., 59 Pond View Dr., Warwick, RI 02886. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal Income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.

Extent and nature of circulation	Av. no. copies each issue preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies single issue pub. nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies printed	1,111	1,260
B. Paid circulation, mail subscriptions	237	337
C. Total paid distribution	690	896
D. Free distribution	74	74
F. Total distribution	764	970
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Palestine

by IBTISAM BARAKAT

Ibtisam Barakat is a frequent speaker and author of *Tasting the Sky, A Palestinian Childhood*. For more information, go to http://www.ibtisambarakat.com
Photo credit: Matt Peyton

To all of the Palestinians
who have never seen Palestine…

Palestine

At the check out register
At an office supplies store
I am getting ready to
Buy the world –
The globe that is.

Fifty dollars, the man says
195 countries all for fifty dollars

I am thinking –
That means 25 cents a country.

Can I give you a dollar
And you throw in
Palestine?

Where do you want it? He asks.

Wherever there are
Palestinians.

الى كل الفلسطينيين الذين
لم يروا فلسطين

فلسطين

على نقطة المعاملات الحسابيه
في معرض بيع مستلزمات مكتبيه
أنا على وشك شراء
مُجَسَّم الكرة الأرضية.

خمسون دولاراً البائع يخبرني
مئة وتسعون وخمس دول
مقابل دولارات خمسين

أُفَكر: ربع دولار لكلِّ دوله اذن!
ربع دولار لكل دولة اذن!

أضيف دولارا كاملا للثمن
ان تعطيني فلسطين.

اضيفها اين؟ يسألني.

في كل مكان فيه
فلسطيني.

A Spanish translation of this poem by Andrés Cardinale is available online at IBBY.org

Poppies painted by Ibtisam Barakat.

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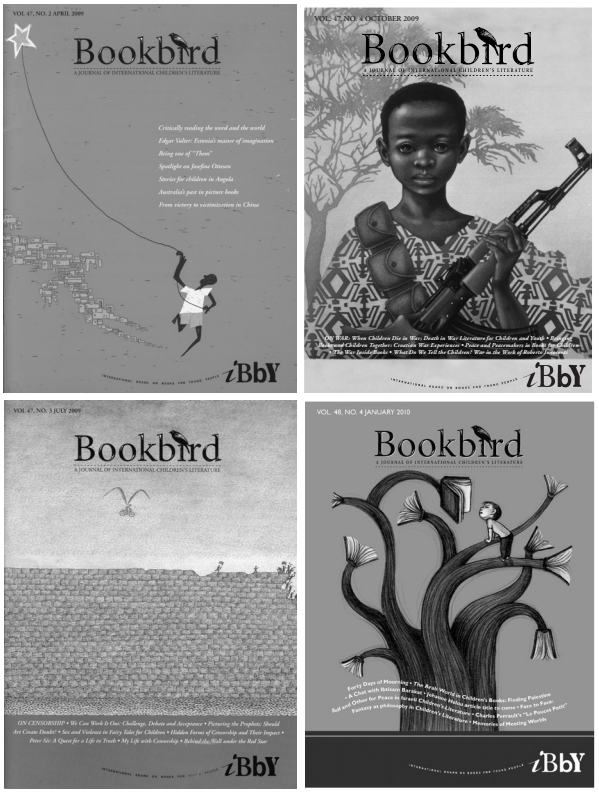

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