

Bookbird

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iBbY

GRAPHIC NOVELS AROUND THE WORLD The accidental graphic novelist • The artist as narrator: Shaun Tan's wondrous worlds • Not all that's modern is post: Shaun Tan's grand narrative • Striving to survive: Comic strips in Iran • The graphic novel in India: East transforms west • Educational graphic novels: Korean children's favorite now • Raymond Briggs: Controversially blurring boundaries • Dave McKean's art: Transcending limitations of the graphic novel genre • Picture books as graphic novels and vice versa: The Australian experience • *Robot Dreams* and the language of sound effects

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SAID THE VOICE IN A KINDLY TONE

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The quoted lines for each section of the table of contents are excerpted from the poem, "Vsi Naši Otroci"—"All Our Children," by Tone Pavček, from his book, *Majhnice in majnice, Pesmi mnogih let za mnoge bralce = Budding Songs*, Maying Songs, poem translated by Alan McConnell-Duff, illustrated by Damijan Stepančič, published by Miš, Dob pri Domžalah, Slovenia, copyright 2009, p. 221, used with permission.

Editorial

Bookbird editors



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Dear Bookbird Readers,

Welcome to this special full-color issue of *Bookbird* featuring the topic of graphic novels around the world. We are so pleased to offer this issue, in particular, in full color since the art of graphic novels is highly visual, complex, and often multi-layered. We begin with a fascinating trio of articles by and about author, artist, and filmmaker Shaun Tan, an innovator in this field, followed by three insightful pieces about the history, nature, and power of graphic novels in three different countries: Iran, India, and Korea. The blurring lines between graphic novels and other literary forms are examined in the final four articles, with a focus on the work of Raymond Briggs and Dave McKean, and a look at the evolving picture book in Australia and the translation of "sound" in one book, *Robot Dreams*. Taken together, we hope this issue offers a snapshot of how this crossover genre can bridge barriers of literacy, culture, and genre.

The work of Shaun Tan

First, we feature the work of Shaun Tan, the recipient of the recent 2011 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award as well as an Oscar for his film work. In "The accidental graphic novelist" he writes about his

“accidental” foray into creating graphic novels and addresses this continuum of “comics” and “graphic novels” in interesting ways noting, “This question of nomenclature... is part of a broader semantic discussion that trades in phrases such as *visual literacy*, *multi-literacy*, *sequential art*, *pictorial narrative*, and so on.” He goes on to consider HOW one identifies this genre; by aesthetics, audience, format, etc. These are questions that pop up again and again throughout this issue of *Bookbird*.

Linnet Hunter then delves into Tan’s work in her article, “**The artist as narrator: Shaun Tan’s wondrous worlds**,” by offering her analysis of his portrayal of a sense of belonging in many of his works noting that “his artwork renders imaginary worlds that are both specific and, at the same time, universal and surreal representations of wordless longings and fears. In her article, “**Not all that’s modern is post: Shaun Tan’s grand narrative**,” Lien Devos digs further into Tan’s oeuvre by examining his fusion of modernist aesthetics in the use of symbolism and surrealism with his use of postmodernist devices such as irony and fragmentation.

Graphic novels around the world

We then switch gears to focus on how graphic novels are viewed in Iran, India, and Korea. First, Sahar Tarhandeh provides a brief history of comics in Iran in her article, “**Striving to survive: Comic strips in Iran**.” She analyzes how factors such as political climate, publishing costs, and critical opinion shape perceptions and discusses representative titles and illustrators of comic strips in Iran. In “**The graphic novel in India: East transforms west**,” Dipavali Debroy outlines the debut and history of comics and graphic novels in India citing many interesting examples including the most current game-like versions produced for iPads. She calls for graphic novels infused with Indian themes and innovative Indian art styles that are culturally authentic. Yeo-Joo Lim introduces us to Korea’s Educational Graphic Novels (EGN) in “**Educational graphic novels: Korean children’s favorite now**.” This dual focus on being both educational and entertaining has led to a

surge of interest in this format, called *manhwa*. We learn about its popularity, its characteristics, and its history as a type of graphic novel from a Korean perspective.

Blurring boundaries and genre lines

In this last section of articles, we present an array of perspectives on the changing divisions between comics, graphic novels, and picture books. Janet Evans considers the seminal work of British author and illustrator Raymond Briggs in her article, “**Raymond Briggs: Controversially blurring boundaries**.” Petros Panaou and Frixos Michaelides then focus on “**Dave McKean’s art: Transcending limitations of the graphic novel genre**” in analyzing his groundbreaking, often hybrid works. Next John Foster considers “**Picture books as graphic novels and vice versa: The Australian experience**” in examining five key Australian books that merge aspects of each genre and how and why. Finally, Colleen AF Venable argues that “There is real beauty to be found in the language of sound effects around the world” in her article, “**Robot Dreams and the language of sound effects**.” In particular, she considers the variations in the English, French, and German versions of this same wordless book.

Regular features

Our regular concluding columns are full of great information: the **Books on Books** column offers intriguing reviews of an Austrian work that examines how world literature is transformed or “translated” into picture book format, conference proceedings by experts from eight European countries exploring the interaction between political and social ideology and the aesthetics of children’s literature, the development of Irish children’s literature in English from the past three decades, and an examination of different aspects of literary reading from the scholarship of three disciplines: literacy education, English, and library sciences. The **Focus IBBY** column includes the acceptance speech given by Jutta Bauer upon receiving the Andersen Illustrator Award, information about the next IBBY Congress in London, an insider’s perspective on

the recent ALMA awards presentation provided by IBBY Vice President Wally De Doncker, and the latest on IBBY-Uruguay's reading promotion project focused on the very youngest children and their families and sponsored by the IBBY-Yamada Fund. Glenna Sloan and company offer many interspersed postcard reviews—many of them of graphic novels—and Andrew Fusek Peters has authored our final “back page” poem, “Imagination: An Infringement of Health and Safety Regulations,” a tongue-in-cheek cautionary word to the wise.

Endings

It's hard for us to believe, but this is our last issue in our term as editors of *Bookbird*. What an experience it has been for us to participate in IBBY in this special way. We are so grateful to the entire IBBY community for this opportunity and would like to offer a round of thanks to all those who helped us along the way.

Thanks to Joan Glazer, Valerie Coghlan, and all the members of *Bookbird*, Inc., the IBBY Executive Committee, all the *Bookbird* correspondents throughout IBBY, and especially Liz Page, Forest Zhang, and Luzmaria Stauffenegger at IBBY headquarters. Liz is also the contributor of the always fascinating “Focus IBBY” column, our lifeline to IBBY’s latest activities, as well as to IBBY’s history. We also owe Valerie a second debt of thanks, along with Siobhán Parkinson, for their guidance as previous *Bookbird* editors. A special thanks to Christiane Raabe, Jochen Weber, and all the wonderful language experts at the International Youth Library for their “Books on Books” column and additional support. And we say thank you and goodbye to Glenna Sloan for writing and coordinating the pithy postcard reviews for many years now—an excellent snapshot of the latest books for children around the world. Thanks also to those who contributed postcard reviews for each issue. Our gratitude also goes out to Pep Molist and Joan Portell for guest-editing the special Congress issue (July 2010). This issue was innovative in that it appeared in print in English as well as online in the four languages of Spain. We thank all the

sections and nominating committees for assistance with the issue devoted to the Hans Christian Andersen Award nominees in April 2010, particularly Jury President, Zohreh Ghaeni. Of course we would also be remiss if we didn’t thank our families and friends for their support as time for *Bookbird* took precedence over all other activities!

Producing each issue involves a whole team of individuals and we’d like to thank them all for their care and diligence: our Editorial Review Board members, our proofreader Connie Rockman, our designers, Bill Benson, Charlsa Kern, and Regina Dardzienski, as well as Carol Hamblen at Johns Hopkins University Press. Thank you for helping us to make each issue unique and interesting. Thanks too to The Department of Reading Language Arts at Central Connecticut State University for serving as headquarters to *Bookbird*, providing both clerical and mailing support for sending complimentary issues to our authors. Thanks also to all our contributors who made writing for *Bookbird* a priority and shared their work with our special international community and to the authors, poets, and publishers who shared their words, poems, art, and books with us. We hope you will all consider writing for *Bookbird* in the future and share the journal with those who have not yet discovered its unique voice.

What a privilege it has been to guide the journal for the last three years—to get to know the organization of IBBY even better, attend and feature Congresses, network for the journal at the Bologna Book Fair, support the efforts of the IBBY sections and the Executive Committee, and represent IBBY and *Bookbird* at conferences in many locations. We are grateful to have had the honor to carry Jella Lepman’s vision along for a while, and *Bookbird* will always have a special place in our hearts. We wish the new team of editors, Roxanne Harde and Lydia Kokkola, all the best—and the same to *Bookbird* readers all around the world!

All the best,
Catherine Kurkjian and Sylvia Vardell

The accidental graphic novelist



As the title of this article suggests, Shaun Tan communicates the process of his creations as playfully experimental, exploratory, and as a quest to find expression to meet the demands of particular stories. Tan is inspired and often stands in awe of renowned artists who, like him, seem to engage in this process. Tan hits home in conveying the multilayered and complex nature of visual and verbal narratives that create a space in which author and reader can intersect in powerful and personal ways.

A few years ago I received a parcel at my front door in suburban Melbourne, a small but heavy square box with a consignment note written in French, which I can't read. Naturally, I was intrigued! Cutting it open and dipping my hand into a little Styrofoam snowdrift, I pulled out an impressive golden cat. A nice premise for a story, actually: the golden cat might proceed to wander

by SHAUN TAN



Shaun Tan is an artist, author, and filmmaker in Melbourne, Australia. His books have been widely translated and enjoyed by readers of all ages. Shaun has also worked as a theatre designer and feature film concept artist; he wrote and directed the Academy Award-winning animated short *The Lost Thing*. In 2011 he received the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in Sweden for his body of work.

about the house like a small deity, making all sorts of profound remarks... But here was a very real object, and so all the more strange: a shiny cartoon sculpture with a lovely big head the shape of a grapefruit, neat triangular ears and bright keyhole eyes. I eventually recognized what it was: a trophy from the prestigious Angoulême Comics Festival. Some months previously my book *The Arrival* had won a major award there—something I'd only known from a distance—following a successful French translation, *Là Où Vont Nos Pères* ("Where Our Fathers Went").

I use the term "translation" advisedly, given that my book is entirely without words (and so the title is the translation). *The Arrival* is the story of an immigrant told through a series of "silent" pencil drawings, a book I had never been entirely able to categorize—and certainly never imagined would receive such an exotic prize from the international comics community. In Australia, I had originally pitched my project to a publisher as a picture book, as this was a form very familiar to me as an illustrator. Five years later, it had expanded to 128 pages, lost its text and changed format. French rights were sold to a publisher specializing in *bande dessinée* (drawn strips)—meaning comics or graphic novels—and so my work was welcomed into a different fold, and by a largely adult audience. Somewhere in between, *The Arrival* was marketed in the US as a young adult graphic novel, with praise from such genre luminaries as Jeff Smith (*Bone*), Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis*), and Art Spiegelman (*Maus*)—which left me quite amazed. I had, rather unwittingly, become a graphic novelist, if only because an authority far higher than myself had said so! The little golden cat-idol from France did have something to proclaim after all.

You'll notice that I use the terms "comics" and "graphic novels" interchangeably, because I don't see much difference between them; these terms both describe an arrangement of words and/or pictures as consecutive panels on a printed page (and can be extended to include picture books too). The term "graphic novel" seems to have gained currency in recent years, partly to encourage a more serious regard for a long-established but

often low-brow form. It recognizes that many comics actually deal with serious subjects, with perhaps more allegiance to fine art than pulp fiction, largely by eroding the boundary between these categories. This question of nomenclature—being a popular topic at conferences and festivals—is part of a broader semantic discussion that trades in phrases such as visual literacy, multi-literacy, sequential art, pictorial narrative, and so on. These ideas are fascinating and certainly help galvanize our awareness of what's happening in a previously overlooked corner of literature where so many innovative illustrated books have hit the shelves and now enjoy serious critical focus and debate. (*The Arrival* caused some minor controversy in Australia upon receiving a mainstream literary prize, with protestations of "how can a book without words be called literature?") Naturally, there's much interest in how these books might be defined and categorized—perhaps by their aesthetic qualities, audience range, publishing and marketing criteria, page length, physical format, et cetera—the "graphic novel" alternatively describing an art form or a contemporary movement.

Searching for a story

From a more personal point of view, as someone who writes and illustrates stories, I'm less interested in these academic questions. I simply want to know what many practicing teachers, librarians, and general readers are also asking when they enter a classroom, bookstore, library, or armchair: "Why read a graphic novel?" Which is really the same question as "why create a graphic novel?" My short answer is this: it's sometimes just the best way to tell a particular story. For a longer answer, it might help to explain how I've come to find myself working in this area.

Ever since I could hold a crayon, listen to a story, or watch a movie, I've been fascinated by both writing and drawing. This attraction has followed me into my adult working life, albeit after a more convoluted path of considering other professions (biotechnology, among other things!). Fortunately, I've always managed to return to my childhood obsessions and eke out a living as

a full-time illustrator and writer, such that my dilemmas are less financial and more aesthetic. In particular, one question that I think about every day as an artist: how can I successfully combine written narrative and visual artwork in a way that's *unique*. What can an illustrated story do that other stories can't and how can it access a world that is otherwise inaccessible? Places of the imagination, yes, but also everyday experiences that may be deeply felt, but often hard to describe through words alone.

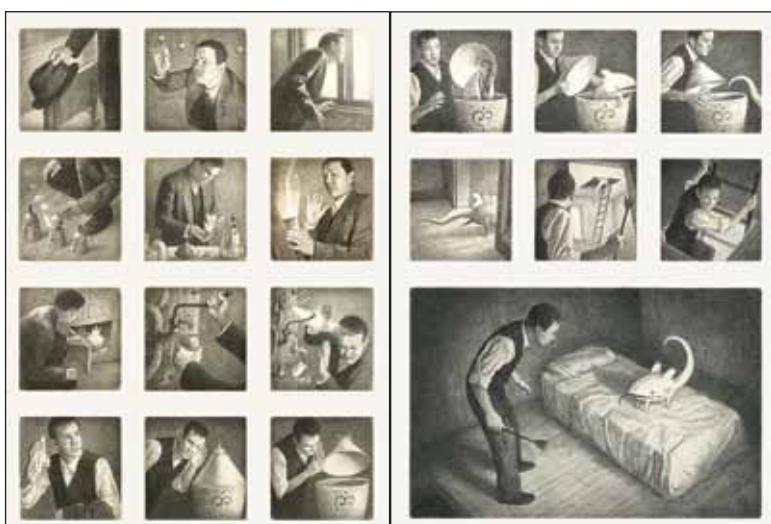
My experiments with picture books and graphic novels might be read as attempts to answer this—some of the more successful attempts at least—emerging from a protean struggle with words and pictures that takes place in my scruffy sketchbooks. *The Arrival* is an interesting case in point, if we return to the golden cat on my doorstep. I did not set out to create a graphic novel as a conscious exercise; it's something I've encountered accidentally, a form than works perfectly for certain stories.

As mentioned, *The Arrival* began as a suggestion for a 32-page picture book. My earliest draft featured double-page illustrations and a short written text, something about one man's experience of migrating to a fictional country. I was chasing a government arts grant at the time, and this seemed like a worthy idea. My application was successful, which of course meant I had to do something in order to acquit it! I began to develop my ideas in earnest, testing many different

styles and formats. None of them succeeded in capturing the essence or density of my subject, much to my disappointment. The real-life immigrant stories I had been researching, full of hardship, vulnerability, and complex humanity, made my own picture book illustrations seem clumsy, simplistic, and emotionally vapid by comparison.

There simply wasn't enough narrative continuity or detail in my "picture book" sketches to

properly convey an immigrant's journey from one life to another in any meaningful way. I began to add more pages to my drafts, and subdivide layouts, juxtapose multiple pictures on a single spread using scissors and tape, and replace singular illustrations with little sequences, such as a man opening a door, packing a suitcase, or walking in a street using several drawings instead of a singular image (what I would normally favor as a picture book artist). I liked the unusual feeling of time and space that this provoked—somewhere between a book and a film, like an imaginary photo album. It felt strange and interesting, something from a separate universe. However, I still lacked the confidence for such a radical departure from my original idea. Overall my drafts still looked very stilted, and I came close to shelving the project altogether, descending into artistic doldrums, as I often tend to do.



"Investigating a room" and "Discovering a creature"
from *The Arrival*

Around this time I stumbled across Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* in a local bookstore. For some reason, this picture book (and its film adaptation) had eluded my childhood radar, which was probably a lucky thing. It meant that I could fully appreciate it as an adult artist, seeing it for the first time. It has a simple magical premise—a boy builds a snowman that comes to life—yet it's the manner with which they explore each other's

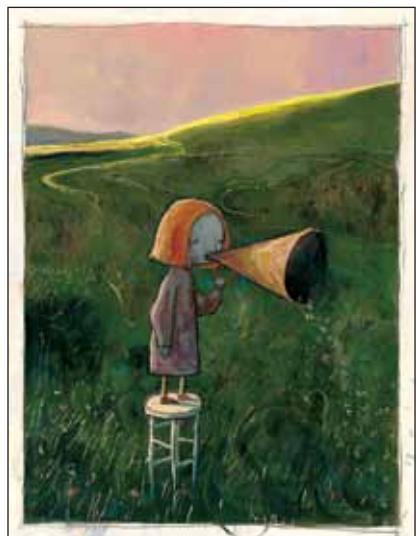
place in the world that is truly captivating, how an ordinary domestic interior or a winter landscape suddenly transforms into a place of miraculous discovery for the two innocent interlopers, each silently ushered along by the other. Read as an essay on nostalgia, it's quite emotionally complex, largely because there are no words. Is it a dream, a memory, a wish, or a literal reality? I like the fact that you never know. The parallels with my own faltering migrant story were very strong: a shared concept of crossing thresholds, action that transcends language, and constant ambiguity. Briggs had also independently arrived at a similar layout solution, using a simple grid of multiple images without words. Discovering *The Snowman* really gave me the extra kick required to persevere with my own flagging imagination.

Having since reviewed much of Brigg's other work, from *When the Wind Blows* to *Ethel & Ernest*, I suspect that he too might identify with the idea of being an accidental graphic novelist. His stories just happen to find perfect expression in a certain combination of images, captions, and speech bubbles, filled with visual details and simply drawn characters – a style traditionally associated with comic strips for children and “Sunday funnies.” Often he uses those associations in an ironic way, as when the colorful banter of an elderly couple entertains the reader, yet we are also mindful of a terrible unspoken menace, an impending nuclear attack. The innocence of the form, its simple presentation of pictures and words, its intimacy of small drawings and physical gestures; all of it is brilliantly effective in suggesting emotional complexity below the surface, achieving a far more disturbing resonance than might be possible in another medium.

A friend of mine who writes comics shared an interesting observation with me recently concerning Hergé's famous boy-adventurer, Tintin: “Everyone who loves Tintin knows on some level that he is not a representation, not a portrait of a character: the ink lines *are* the character. Tintin *is* the drawing, he only exists as those shapes on the page. He does not translate into another medium.” Pictures are not so different from words in that regard; they can be their own objects, possessed of a unique impression and voice, a separate reality in each reader's mind.

Conversely, certain ideas demand to be expressed in certain ways, a conclusion I come to again and again as a reader, critic, writer, and artist and no doubt a principle that drives so many artists and writers to constant experimentation, trying to give a tangible name and shape to ideas that might otherwise seem vague or nebulous. Something unique often emerges from that struggle.

If we examine a work such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth*, David B.'s *Epileptic*, or any number of celebrated graphic novels that form part of a recent wave, what they all have in common is an absolute confluence of form and content. That is, these are stories that could only be properly expressed as



“Dawn” from *The Red Tree*

a series of hand-drawn images and words, designed to invite a complex and thoughtful interpretation from the reader, often outside of more conventional language. There is something haunting about the way an inked animal-face masks the expression of a character in *Maus*, or the way a room is broken into carefully organized details on the page in *Jimmy Corrigan*, or the way a nameless monster grips a suffering boy in *Epileptic* with its bizarre serpentine form. Each visual language is specific to its story.

When I look at the work of other creators, I always see beyond the page surface and imagine them struggling the way I do: trawling through many different fragments of drawing and writing and discovering that some compositions work—seem truthful, precise, and evocative—while others appear false, inarticulate, or disjointed. After a while, every artist comes to realize that they are not just expressing an idea, they are engineering a personal language, tailored to suit that idea. For an illustrator, it's a language that involves image, text, page layout, typography, physical format, and media, all things that work together in a complex grammar of their own, and open to constant reinvention. And this is something that almost defines the graphic novel—an experimentation, playfulness, even irreverence, when it comes to rules of form and style.

A voice for the voiceless

I'd suggest that this playfulness might have something to do with a simple dilemma: how to tell stories that are about *silent* subjects. For instance, I notice that both my own picture-stories and those of other graphic novelists often deal with characters who have problems expressing themselves, from troubled young people to persecuted minorities and those suffering from emotional, intellectual, or spiritual obstructions. I only need to glance at my own shelf to find many examples. In *Blankets*, Craig Thompson examines the restrictions of his own fundamentalist upbringing—of not being allowed to read widely as a child; Satrapi's *Persepolis* explores the suppression of liberty in Iran; Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang* and Joe Sacco's *Palestine* use stylized drawings to report on the lives of those in hidden or oppressed places, occasionally to protect their subject's identity. *Skim* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki and *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang offer intimate insights into the lives of adolescents who identify themselves as outsiders, for reasons of sexuality or race.

David Small's *Stitches* is particularly about silence in both a literal and metaphorical sense—the author occasionally draws himself

After a while, every artist comes to realize that they are not just expressing an idea, they are engineering a personal language, tailored to suit that idea. For an illustrator, it's a language that involves image, text, page layout, typography, physical format, and media, all things that work together in a complex grammar of their own, and open to constant reinvention. And this is something that almost defines the graphic novel – an experimentation, playfulness, even irreverence, when it comes to rules of form and style.

trapped within his own closed mouth following the surgical removal of a vocal chord—and the deeper trauma of growing up in a loveless family. Small's imagery reminds me of my own introductory painting to *The Red Tree*, where a girl tries to speak through a megaphone, only to have her words collapse into a jumble of indecipherable letters; here illustrating an aspect of depression, a loss of will or capacity to articulate feelings: "here is a place without words." And then there are subjects that seem unspeakable in other ways, due to horror and violence, as in *Waltz With Bashir*, a Lebanon war story by Ari Folman and David Polonsky, or due to hidden family secrets, as in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (where the idea of a silent

Often characters might say one thing while the image shows they are really feeling or thinking something entirely different, or the reader's point of view is otherwise divided in a very thought-provoking way, or even left entirely hanging. One might interpret this as a cautionary artistic nod to the reader: don't always believe what you see or read – at least don't take it literally.

story is a key theme), and the wonderfully funny and sad *My Mommy* by Jean Regnaud and Emile Bravo, about a suppressed truth. Ultimately we are reminded that many ideas and feelings remain unspoken, but can occasionally be shown in other ways, and this is always a refreshing revelation. It's what drives so many of us to read, write, and draw, often without having to know why.

While many of these examples might seem quite dark (perhaps reflecting my personal taste as much as anything else), it's interesting also to note the balanced play of humor and seriousness that runs through so many notable graphic

novels. This seems to go hand in hand with a strong interest in irony, something that naturally emerges from discrepancies between word and image within the comic medium itself. Often characters might say one thing while the image shows they are really feeling or thinking something entirely different, or the reader's point of view is otherwise divided in a very thought-provoking way, or even left entirely hanging. One might interpret this as a cautionary artistic nod to the reader: don't always believe what you see or read—at least don't take it literally. Even the most factual representation has an element of fictional conjecture; such is the nature of drawing. The use of handwriting (another persistent feature of graphic novels, even when easy digital typesetting is available) constantly underscores this idea, as does the frequent engagement of autobiographical memoir, in which an opinionated creator literally draws him or herself into the story (almost all of those creators mentioned above). I'd suggest it has something to do with questioning the fallibility of written language and encouraging readers to creatively interpret what they are seeing. The best graphic novels are very self-reflexive this way, confessing as much about their craft as they do about their subject.

I like to think that *The Arrival* sits comfortably within this playful exploration of visual language and the examination of a voiceless subject by following the journey of an illiterate immigrant (who, incidentally, is modeled after myself in appearance). It's a subject that demanded an unusual and alternative approach, given that new immigrants are so often represented in the media, especially here in Australia, as somewhat anonymous and often dehumanized by a negative political debate. I wondered if that same anonymity could be used positively to generate empathy rather than prejudice by simply narrowing the focus to intimate details of a migrant's life and allowing the reader to really see things from a perspective that's at once personal and general, to walk in the shoes of a nameless person entering an unfamiliar country. And, most importantly, avoid conventional language in order to allow a very open interpretation: just a quiet stream

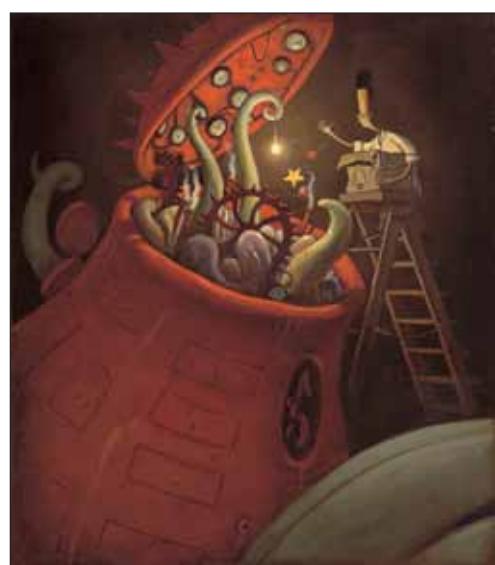
of intimate pictures devoid of comment, prejudice, or political noise. Like a tree, a cloud, or a shadow, the drawings *just are*.

An unknown identity

This notion of an “unwritten” journey has been something of a preoccupation in my other illustrated books, stories featuring nameless characters and places, themes of displacement and alienation. Naturally, I’m often asked if this has something to do with my personal background: the answer is yes, but not in a simple or obvious way. I grew up in the outer suburbs of a very remote city, Perth in Western Australia, one of two children in a mixed race family, my father Malaysian Chinese, my mother Anglo-Australian. At that time and place, being half-Chinese was unusual and cause enough to feel like an outsider, although it’s easy to overstate the effects of racism in an otherwise benevolent, middle-class suburbia. More critically, in terms of my artistic imagination, there is something interesting about living in such an isolated place, with parents of very different backgrounds, within a country with a brief but intense history of cultural displacement. It all tends to provoke some broad philosophical questions about identity and belonging. These questions also appear at a smaller scale, such as when I’m out sketching in the park, driving in the city, visiting a suburban supermarket, or remembering the coast of my childhood, running parallel to the flat line of the Indian Ocean. What does it mean to belong to a place, to understand a particular world, yet also feel that many aspects of it are beyond your grasp and can’t be fully explained? I think this is a question everyone asks throughout his or her life, regardless of age, background, or education. It’s a basic question of existence.

The Lost Thing is a story about a boy (based on myself as a teenager) and his encounter with a strange, abandoned creature on a local beach (inspired by the one I grew up near). He decides to find a home for the hapless creature, even though it can’t be identified. As we follow their strange journey, in which places and people are only really described visually—and even then very strangely—the reader may gradually become aware that the

Lost Thing is more than a simple character, object, or idea. It represents anything that’s beyond the reach of conventional understanding, something that cannot be named or placed, that “just doesn’t belong.” It’s a concept that I felt could only be clearly expressed through detailed but inexplicable illustrations, where a subject is clear and obvious but cannot be mentioned directly. Bizarre, faceless, and unable to communicate, the bright red creature being ushered through a grey city—a place obsessed with codes and measurement—can only be understood in silence, some kind of metaphor for various social, political, and personal problems.



“Feeding Time” from *The Lost Thing*

As the creator of this story, and having worked directly on its theatrical and film adaptations over a decade, I still find its central ambiguity hard to pin down. Even when you think you have a clear understanding, there persists a constant urge to re-interpret the imagery. That desire to keep speculating is, in itself, a necessary act of creative compassion: as a fictional idea, the lost thing is rescued by a reader’s attention and imagination, and by their thoughtful questions. These are the things that ultimately give meaning to a story and remind us how important it is to positively embrace the ambiguities of everyday life with an open mind. By doing so, we rescue ourselves from an oblivion of closed meanings, a bankrupt literacy.

A nameless truth

From picture books to graphic novels, the writer's and the illustrator's impulse is the same: to find a form for something that's quite elusive or difficult to represent directly. Ironically, good narrative illustration is not about "illustration" at all, in the sense of visual clarity, definition, or empirical observation. It's all about uncertainty, open-endedness, slipperiness, and even vagueness. There's a tacit recognition in much graphic fiction that some things cannot be adequately expressed through words: an idea might be just so unfamiliar, an emotion so ambivalent, a concept so nameless that it's best represented either wordlessly, through a visual subversion of words, or as an expansion of their meaning using careful juxtaposition. Graphic stories are often self-consciously interested in issues of communication, very aware of that interesting space that exists between the sound of words and the sight of pictures. Often there's some "incompleteness" between these two expressions, a thing left unanswered, which invites—even compels—each reader to draw upon personal memories and associations in order to find their own meaning.

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At the end of the day, this is what reading is all about. Above and beyond any simple story or "message," I believe that the personal reflections of the reader are far more important than those of an author and certainly more important than the style or category of their work. My own practice as an artist, writer, illustrator, graphic novelist—whatever name can be given to this compulsion to draw stories and then make them publicly

available—really just involves crafting a *space* in which the thoughts of another person can flourish, especially in ways that are impossible to conceive until you actually start reading, writing, or drawing. Why read or create a graphic novel? Because there's always something new, something nobody has ever seen: an untold story in search of a shape, a texture, a color, and a voice.

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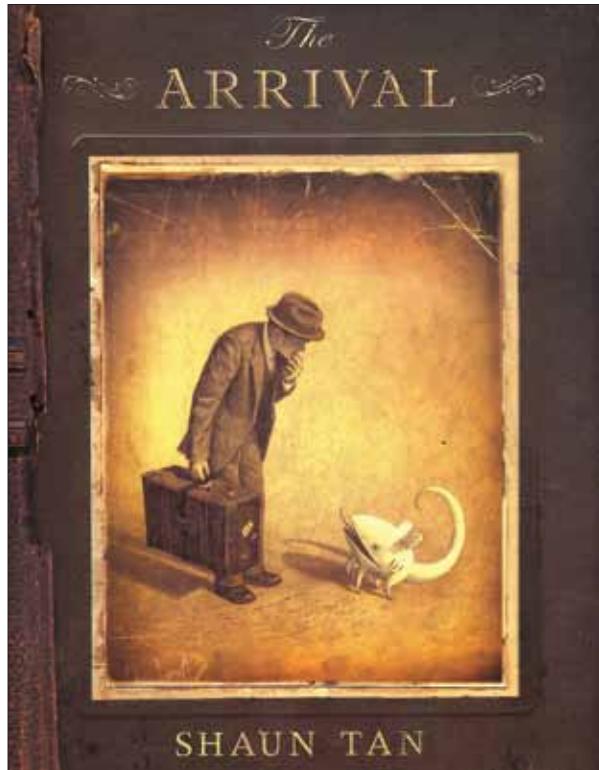
Thanks to Scholastic Inc. and the illustrator for permission to reproduce illustrations from Tan's books.

The artist as narrator: Shaun Tan's wondrous worlds

by LINNET HUNTER



Linnet Hunter has worked in the past as a teacher, teacher-librarian, teacher educator, children's bookseller and critic. She served as book reviewer between 1992 and 2008 for *Magpies*, the Australian newspaper and the Australian Book Review and is the director of her own teaching and learning consultancy.



Linnet Hunter honors the work of the 2011 ALMA winner by acknowledging his ability to tell a story without boxing himself into a style, format or genre. Instead she describes him as a narrative artist who “can make us question what we thought we had seen and known, and to look again at what was once familiar and see it afresh.”

When Shaun Tan stood as the author to receive the New South Wales premier's Literary Award, traditionally he should have read to the audience from his winning book. Since it only contained two written words—the title—he instead asked the audience to “talk amongst themselves.” This was the first time a book without words had won a literary prize of this kind and all were bemused by the event. Once again, one of Tan's books had cut across the agreed parameters of the genre, and been recognized as extraordinary. Readers adore them, juries rave, and prizes accumulate. The most prestigious yet might be the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Prize, presented to Tan in June of this year, which is not only the most financially rewarding of children's literature prizes, but also carries with it the recognition of rare achievement. Yet at the same time as we laud Tan's works, we ask ourselves, “What are they? Where do they belong?” This question resonates

like a quizzical echo—as the theme of belonging is a central thematic tenet of all Tan's stories.

Any examination that seeks to answer this question needs to look at the breadth of his works, and their development and change as he learned more about his chosen art form. This article attempts this task, and to add depth to the inquiry by looking as closely as possible at one particular illustration, to examine the minutiae within the broad horizons which make Tan's work so mesmerizing and wry.

Tan works in the part of the publishing world traditionally associated with children and young adults. His books look like picture books, adaptations of his books take the form of puppetry shows or animations, and his most famous book is usually classified as a graphic novel, although it turns around the text conventions of the genre by being wordless. Librarians could solve the cataloguing questions that vex them when trying to categorize Tan's books by purchasing three copies and placing them variously about the shelves, and bookstores might create a separate shelf labeled "Tan", if they had the space.

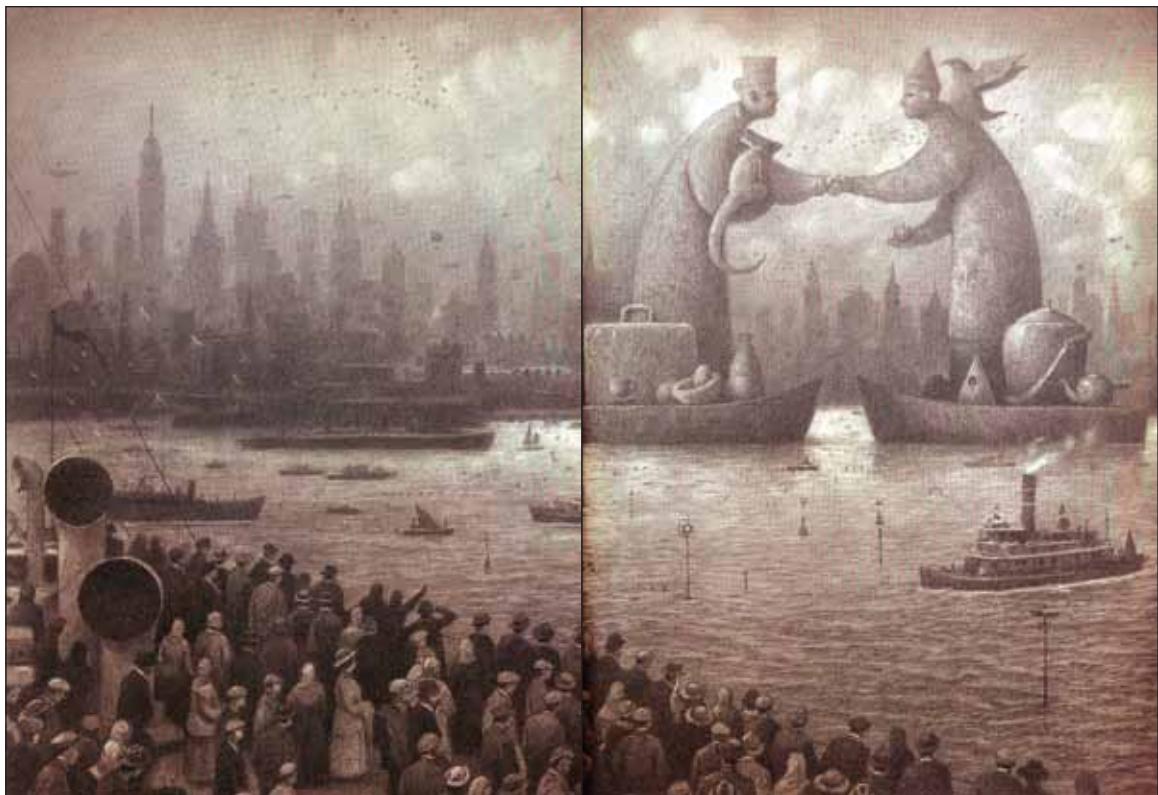
Using what works best to tell a particular story

While our task might be to constantly try to place visions in boxes, like all true artists, Tan works across boundaries and media, using whatever works best to tell the story he has in his head. Over the past fifteen years Tan's illustrations have inspired continued wonder from his audiences who range in age and taste from primary school children discussing the philosophy behind *The Red Tree* to adult aficionados of the graphic novel who chat on science fiction and fantasy forums about *The Arrival*.

His artwork renders imaginary worlds which are both specific and at the same time universal and surreal representations of wordless longings and fears. His vision is broad and his art captures it in wide panoramas or vistas of impossibility—the harbor mouth guarded by two huge carved figures in *The Arrival*, the monolithic sweep of mottled concrete along the edge of the beach in *The Lost Thing*, the miasma of contradictory signs clogging the wall that all point in opposite directions; these are elements we may be blind to until forced to notice by the artist's reworking of them on the page. As readers we are drawn in by the impressive majesty of scenes, composed to compel our attention; clearly invented, strangely familiar and often very unsettling.

Closer inspection reveals intricate curlicues of emotional anatomy, almost as if Tan were showing us the world's clockwork machinery, its internal logical mechanisms so as to share with us the mysterious nature of chaos underneath our apparently ordered lives. His textural workings of skies, paddocks, roads, cliffs or walls hint at swirling layers of meaning in the world.

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Storytelling in multiple formats across the arts

In addition to picture books, illustrated short stories, pocket books, and a graphic novel, Tan has also worked in other media. He collaborated with the Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to create a stage show of *The Arrival*, and both *The Red Tree* and *The Lost Thing* have also inspired theater projects, including a musical recital from the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Most famously he recently won an Academy Award as part of the team that created the animated film version of *The Lost Thing*. Whichever medium is chosen to bring the story to life, a gentle questioning of the form itself can be discerned in each case—never ironic, satirical or bitter, just a quizzical raised eyebrow—enough to make the reader look twice, at the page then back at the original that seems to have inspired it.

Inspirations and investigations

Tan began his career in book illustration with his drawings for the *After Dark* series (1996),

short tales of weird events, where his line works sketched the possible and hinted at the eeriness beyond the borders of the page. He moved to illustrating the work of two established masters of

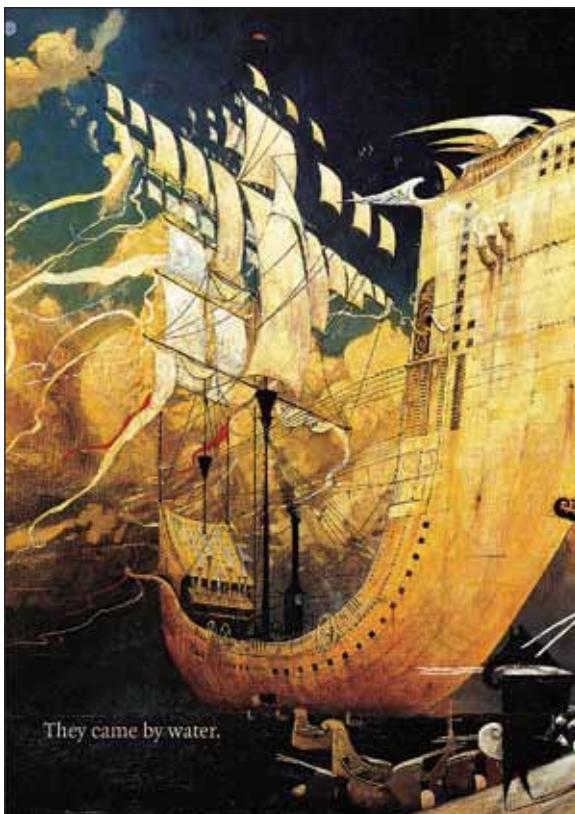
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the Australian children's literature world. In *The Viewer* (Crew, 1998), Tan began his explorations into variations on ways of reading a book, playing with circles within squares, squares within circles and forcing the reader of the book through the energy of his page design, to be drawn into and

experience the world inside the viewing mechanism of the tale's title.

In *Memorial* (Crew, 1999), he employed a different facet of his technical skill, using portraiture and assemblies of drawings in acrylic, gouache and pencil and paper collage to write the trail of time passing. This creates an eloquent visual patchwork of memory and experience and blurs the perceived lines between then and now, told through the lifetime of a man and a tree intimately connected to the history of every Australian town, or perhaps any town whose young men have gone to war.

and ellipses, beauty hidden within the depths of apparently featureless earth. These rabbits are uniformed and decorated with the insignia of rank, and they appear in ranks, more and more of them, equipped with black smokestack technology and instruments of sight and mapping—telescopes, orbs, spectacles and compasses. Yet this does not enable them to see, or to feel, what they are walking upon with their attenuated legs, which spike the ground like stilettos. As the rabbits breed and dominate, the horizons drop, the colors dim or change to chemical pinks and greens, and the pallid sunrise blue of the skies



The Rabbits (Marsden, 1998) is a grim allegorical tale of colonization. Tans' ability to interpret and enlarge upon the text, always evident in the earlier works that asked for imagination and technique married to a deep understanding of the intent of the work, here reaches another level as he subverts the traditional picture book tale of fluffy cotton-tailed creatures. His rabbits march with ramrod-straight backs across the clay and ochre landscape without a glance for its swirls

behind the water birds feeding on lakes pictured on the endpapers become distant memories.

Hope is there, though, shown through a small rabbit stopping to wonder at a tiny yellow flower, a single candle of color in an overwhelmingly oppressive, automated city. Generalization and condemnation are possible, almost required by this telling, and yet Tan veers away from it, opening the story up and as always posing questions and reflections.

The Lost Thing (2000) marked a new phase in Tan's storytelling, as he was able to be both writer and illustrator, and to make his mark on a book's design for the first time. The large lumbering red teapot of a thing with stalked eye, grey lobster claws and odd tentacled feet that gingerly touch the littered sands of the industrialized beach-scape where he is apparently abandoned does not sound like a character to warm to. Yet in Tan's hands, the lost thing and the narrator, with his nerdy bottle top collection and traditional comic book look of extended arms and head topped by a stiff brush of hair, are endearingly individual, gentle creatures, bemused by the bureaucratic over-management of their landscape and their lives, where traffic lights are unnecessarily placed at the foot of a set of steps, and arrows point meaninglessly in every direction. It quietly and quizzically poses the question of where each of us belongs, without laboring or overworking the

One of Tan's trademarks is not to waste a single iota of space that could be devoted to story and the endpapers, the background pages to the frames of illustration, even the barcode, ISBN and publication details are integral to the text and repay careful reading.

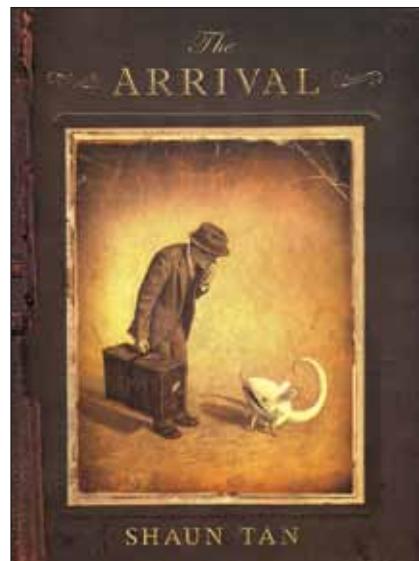
point. One of Tan's trademarks is not to waste a single iota of space that could be devoted to story and the endpapers, the background pages to the frames of illustration, even the barcode, ISBN and publication details are integral to the text and repay careful reading.

One of Tan's most controversial books, *The Red Tree*, also defies categorization. Adults who find in its extraordinary pictorial renditions of overwhelming emotions a physical representation of the nightmarish spaces of the mind, are often horrified that children might read it, forgetting the monstrous shapeless fears of childhood that this book acknowledges, gives voice to and in the final pages, allows the small red leaf of every

page to blossom into a fiery circle of the red tree—unexpected, astonishing, life-affirming.

Belonging: The search for identity

The Arrival, Tan's most prize-winning and famous book so far, published in 2006, is a wordless story. It has no captions, no descriptions, not a word of written text to elucidate, clarify or confuse. Working in the realm of the silent film,



Tan has used the image, and a range of sophisticated narrative techniques such as montage, editing, flashbacks, lighting effects, back stories, and subtle shifts in framing and color, to bring to life a series of stories. Long shots on double-page openings provide pauses in the action and distance and breadth, while the smaller pictures, often twelve to a page, tell the story close-up in carefully framed expositions.

These are tales of people seeking refuge from lands overshadowed by fear. They travel to a new country where everything is strange, wondrous, and inexplicable. We are as confused and delighted as the arrivals by the size and intricacy of this carnival world. Escher-like birds, their dart wings folded paper-straight, fly in mathematically precise flocks above a city of curved plate surfaces, geometrically decorated cones and clocks with flower-like cogs on their faces. And we, the readers, are as bemused as the travellers who have no language to explain what they see.

The journey begins when we hold in our hands the book. We as readers, hold a facsimile, a replica of a photographic album from the nineteenth century and are thus immediately not just the possessor of the a series of illustrated pages, but are implicated and involved as co-storytellers before even opening the book, "owning" it in more than the usual way. The invitation to turn the page, and the response to that invitation, represents a compact between teller and reader and the creation of the text as an artifact supports its credibility as a record of actual events. The faded and torn leather binding, the thickness and size of the book, the satin brown gold ribbon bookmark and the semi-gloss "photograph" mounted on the cover all hint at a context and a world of oddity and invention given a familiar form.

At the same time we are also placed in the position of an audience member watching a silent film, or a piece of theater. We view events through the invisible all-seeing "fourth wall" and are thus privy to the personal and intimate emotions of loss and fear, courage and kindness that are at heart of this story.

The narrative devices drawn from silent film, theater, graphic novels and comics are used to control the pace and mood of the story—a page opening which shows 60 frames of different cloud formations to demonstrate the passing of many days' journey for example. The number of panels and the choice of which moments to illustrate help the story progress using movement represented by the connections between each still moment.

Tan describes his technique in developing the page openings:

Realizing the importance of consistency over multiple panels, coupled with a stylistic interest in early photographs, I physically constructed some basic "sets" using bits of wood and fridge-box cardboard, furniture and household objects. These became simple models for drawn structures in the book, anything from towering buildings to breakfast tables. With the right lighting, and some helpful friends acting out the roles of characters plotted in rough drawings, I was able to video or photograph compositions and

sequences of action that seemed to approximate each scene. Selecting still images, I played with these by digitally, distorting, adding and subtracting, drawing over the top of them, and testing various sequences to see how they could be "read." These became the compositional references for finished drawings that were produced by a more old-fashioned method – graphite pencil on cartridge paper. For each page of up to twelve images, the whole process took about a week... not including any rejects, of which there were several. (www.shauntan.net accessed 2 February, 2011)

In contrast to the use of color in *The Red Tree*, *The Arrival* features pencil work tinted in subtle shades of brown and grey from pale peat to misty mauve. Tan's pencil touches the pages gently, deftly forming shapes through gradated tone, obviating the need for darker outlines and softening expressions. This technique not only creates an understated mood, it also invites the viewer to look at everything in the picture—our attention is not especially drawn to one feature by the color of it—everything is equally important. This adds to the feeling of sensual overload experienced by the arrival, who cannot know where to look next or what to give most attention to, and so must attend to every nuance of facial expression or gesture until he can learn to make distinctions and look for the details that matter. The protagonist is like a child in this respect, who wonders at all the world that is new to him.

Tan has the technical ability to create through image and word, worlds that are wondrous and intriguing. But his talent is broader and deeper than this. He is able to take our breath away or move us to tears or laughter through the emotional thoughtfulness, curiosity and playfulness of his vision. He can make us question what we thought we had seen and known, and to look again at what was once familiar and see it afresh.

Where does Tan belong?

Returning to the need outlined at the beginning of this article to quantify and grasp the intangible outline of his work and fit it under a heading—I propose the term *narrative artist*. He is a teller

of stories in the twenty-first century growing in ability as the technical dimensions of communicating story grows, but always sharing his vision with deep thoughtfulness, generosity, humility and artistry.

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Not all that's modern is post: Shaun Tan's grand narrative



In this article Lien Devos meticulously examines aspects of Tan's work to argue that his art defies categorization as modernist or postmodernist. Devos's discussion brings to light the originality of Tan's art as she examines his grand narrative and use of symbolism as examples of modernist aesthetics, as well as his use of postmodernist devices.

Over the past two decades, it has become common practice to make the connection between children's literature and postmodernism—especially where picture books are concerned (e.g. Lewis, 1990 and 2001, Sipe and Pantaleo, 2008, Nikola-Lisa, 1994, Anstey, 2002). This follows logically from the fact that picture books are created within a certain time and space and so reflect social and cultural changes and concerns. However, because “postmodern” carries many different meanings and has been subject to diverse definitions (see also Sipe and Pantaleo,

by LIEN DEVOS



Lien Devos studied English Literature and Linguistics at Ghent University, Belgium, completed an M.Lit in Children's Literature at Newcastle University under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Kimberley Reynolds, and is now a freelance editor.

2008), it seems to have become the default term for “different.” This leads to misreadings and under-examined value judgments—as is most certainly the case for the celebrated Australian picture book maker Shaun Tan. Tan’s work has often been called “postmodern” (e.g. Stephens, 2008, Salisbury, 2008, Mallan, 2005). While this is understandable, since it does indeed display some central characteristics of postmodernism, the application of this label not only leads to a significant misreading of his work, but it also fails to recognize some important reasons for its impact and its profound message for twenty-first century, multicultural societies.

The fusion of modernist and postmodern ideas and devices allows Tan to create his own subtle, thought-provoking, and hopeful universe in ways that speak to contemporary concerns and experiences of atomization and alienation.

As I will show, failing to recognize the way modernist aesthetics and ideas inform Tan’s picture books results in a failure to come to a full and adequate reading of them. In the interest that surrounded postmodernity, we have tended to lose sight of these modernist ideas, such as symbolism and surrealism, and Tan’s work reminds us of these roots which still have something to say to us. The fusion of modernist and postmodern ideas and devices allows Tan to create his own subtle, thought-provoking, and hopeful universe in ways that speak to contemporary concerns and experiences of atomization and alienation.

Postmodern on the outside, modernist on the inside

Stephens (2008) and others are not wrong to see Tan as employing postmodern elements in his work. In David Lewis’s definition, postmodernity is marked—among other things—by indeterminacy, fragmentation,

hybridization (such as parody or pastiche), decanonization, and an extreme sense of irony. In Tan’s work, readers are constantly required to construct some of the meanings themselves, perhaps because of the kind of indeterminacy that characterizes *The Red Tree* or because Tan has left out any text whatsoever, as in his graphic novel *The Arrival*. This allows for an array of different readings and a universality that is very appealing. One of the devices used for producing multiple interpretations is collage: in *The Lost Thing*, the background consists of clippings from a physics textbook, while the text and pictures are pasted on top of this. The background adds to the mechanical feel of the society depicted, but it also offers information for careful readers that may either support their interpretation or throw them off course.

Visual intertextuality can be found on several occasions: Tan respectfully creates pastiches of works by, say, Jeffrey Smart (*Cahill Expressway* (1962), on the cover of *The Lost Thing*) and Tom Roberts (*Coming South* (1886), in *The Arrival*), and in the process adapts them for his own purposes. The fact that pastiche never turns into parody already signals one of my most important objections to calling Tan’s work postmodern: it lacks the inherent ironic emptiness that is so typical of postmodernism. Glimpses of irony can still be caught in *The Lost Thing*, but these serve rather to comment upon the depicted meaninglessness than to endorse it. *The Red Tree* and, most prominently, *The Arrival* provide a strong and reassuring message of hope in the face of ostensible hopelessness, and hope is one of the few things that can withstand irony.

This brings me to my other important objection to reducing Tan’s work to the label of postmodernism. Lyotard defines the postmodern condition as one in which “the grand narrative has lost its credulity” (1999), while he uses the term “modern” as “making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative” (1984). Postmodernism entails a barrenness, an emptiness of meaning, and an extensive relativism that in the end makes it hard “not to speak and think in quotation marks” (Lewis, 2001) and even harder to consciously want to convey a message that is not ironic or

cynical. By contrast, modernism adheres to all-encompassing stories of ultimate values and truths. Tan takes this modernist characteristic one step further in his picture books and creates a grand narrative for the twenty-first century himself. Out of many small stories of alienation, an overarching story of belonging is created, carrying the message that while hope and despair seem mutually exclusive, they are in fact part of a larger narrative.



The hands of the clock go round and round

The grandfather clock on the title page of *The Red Tree* perfectly illustrates what I mean by this. Its face has leaves instead of numbers, with a bright red leaf for twelve o'clock and brown, withered leaves for the other numbers. The brown leaves represent (among other things) times of anxiety, loneliness, and despair, while the red leaf is a symbol of hope and better times. The hands of the clock will always come back to the red leaf, just as they will always have to get past the brown leaves. Missing or ignoring this grand narrative means failing to recognize the appeal of Tan's work: alienation and belonging are universal feelings—we can all relate to them, though perhaps on different levels. There is the very personal kind of alienation, in which you don't feel at home in your own skin and which has very little to do with other people. This is what we

see in *The Red Tree*, the threatening and bizarre images are products of the girl's mind and are not caused by others.

In *The Lost Thing*, it is society that alienates its own people, by favoring homogeneity over individualism—a grim view of the future, perhaps. *The Arrival* depicts the struggle of a man trying to find his place in a new country. The new country is full of surreal landscapes, animals and means of transportation, and this profound unfamiliarity places the reader on the same level as the protagonist: both are lost in and baffled by the new surroundings. This is, without doubt, the greatest feat of *The Arrival*.

The universality of feeling alone

Alienation and belonging are significant and topical social issues. Some people only experience alienation now and then, while others have a constant feeling of being out of place. Many people in our society have either literally been

The Arrival depicts the struggle of a man trying to find his place in a new country. The new country is full of surreal landscapes, animals and means of transportation, and this profound unfamiliarity places the reader on the same level as the protagonist: both are lost in and baffled by the new surroundings. This is, without doubt, the greatest feat of The Arrival.

uprooted through migration, or feel rootless, hovering between the culture of their parents and grandparents and the culture in which they live, feeling at home in neither. Tan's work speaks to anyone who has ever felt left out, whether on the playground or throughout his or her life. To call his work postmodern, and therefore to overlook this message of hope, is to ignore and even deny the reason so many people love and admire it.

Lonely birds and nests

Detailed consideration reveals how Tan constructs this story of alienation and hope in his wordless, award-winning graphic novel/picture book *The Arrival*. The story starts with an unidentified threat, symbolized by dragon tails, that causes the protagonist to leave behind his wife and child and go and find a better life for them. The stories of other immigrants the man meets are all different, but all have experienced

The stories of other immigrants the man meets are all different, but all have experienced atrocities, ranging from slavery to war to giants incinerating cities. In the scene in which the man is interviewed just after arriving, we see his confusion and desperation when he realizes he has no way of communicating.

However, the threads of hope running through these stories of despair and alienation are many. The man is welcomed into his new home by a strange animal that makes itself his pet. The thing follows him everywhere and makes him feel both needed and loved. Its presence

by his side also helps the man to fit in, to belong, as it turns out that everyone has a pet that follows them around. The man makes friends who help him to feel more at home—the scenes in which he meets the man from the land of the giants are very touching, for we can see the protagonist regain his confidence and revel in the hospitality and kindness he is offered. In fact, the whole country seems quite welcoming, as we can tell from their version of the Statue of Liberty: two men, one with a suitcase, shaking hands—though it must be said that this ideal of hospitality is not always lived by, as the rather dehumanizing scenes following the man's arrival show. This signals how Tan does not lose sight of reality.

The most important symbol of hope is the bird, which appears in many significant places and moments in the story. The man creates hope for his family when he folds birds out of paper prior to leaving his country. In another instance, he has just written a letter to his family and folded it into a bird when the ship is nearing land; hundreds of strange, bright white birds, rather looking like they are made out of paper themselves, come flying over the ship as if to welcome the arriving people. Nearly every large drawing depicting the cityscape has birds in it. His first friend, the man who comes from the land of the giants, lives in a part of the



city covered with statues, or perhaps buildings that look like owls. The tops of their heads are nests for real birds, as the title Tan has given that picture “The Place of Nests,” from Tan’s website) suggests. The home of the friend becomes the first “nest” the man belongs to. The day he first sends money to his family to bring them over to the new country, we see that a bird is making a nest in the pot he was given by that friend. A year later, the bird has small baby birds in its nest, and this is the day the man receives a letter from his wife telling him that she and their daughter will be arriving that day. The nest he has carefully been preparing will now finally be complete. The arrival of his wife and child is very touching, and the “storyboard telling” is particularly effective here. We see the scared faces of the woman and the child, the man running towards them and shouting. The child recognizes her father, the woman’s hand drops the suitcase, the man’s hat has flown off, and the last picture in this emotional series of details is one of birds. Birds act as symbols of hope, home, and belonging.

And there is more

The grand narrative is not the only modernist feature of Tan’s work. Several modernist movements have had a profound impact on his work—as no doubt many artists are still influenced by modernism, although this seems to have been pushed into the background by the overwhelming interest in postmodernism. Symbolism taught that meaning could only be expressed through indirect methods; for Tan, the indirect method is visual art. Paintings or pictures are anything but mere illustrations to the text. They become a sort of visual poetry:

“I’m more attracted to a kind of intuitive resonance or poetry we can enjoy when looking at pictures, and ‘understanding’ what we see without necessarily being able to articulate it.”

(Tan, ‘Comments on *The Red Tree*’, n.d.)

The texts in *The Red Tree* and *The Lost Thing* are never descriptive, and in *The Arrival* all understanding is left to the pictures as text is completely absent. In all works, the pictures evoke an understanding without having to literally articulate it, just as, according to T.S. Eliot, “genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood” (1972). Tan’s picture books, therefore, have a clear symbolist resonance to them: “Description is banished, that beautiful things may be evoked, magically” (Symons 1919).

The Lost Thing resonates with futurism, a brutal exponent of modernism that glorified war and violence and was fascinated by the



The arrival of his wife and child is very touching, and the “storyboard telling” is particularly effective here. We see the scared faces of the woman and the child, the man running towards them and shouting. The child recognizes her father, the woman’s hand drops the suitcase, the man’s hat has flown off, and the last picture in this emotional series of details is one of birds. Birds act as symbols of hope, home, and belonging.

industrial city. The buildings in *The Lost Thing* tellingly dwarf the characters and call to mind the verticalism of futurist architecture—Tan makes it clear, however, that its glory days are long past by covering the concrete in water stains and the excessive amount of pipes in rust. Surrealist art, finally, is another obvious modernist influence on Tan's work: *The Arrival* is literally packed with strange and bizarre images, imaginative details, and surprise elements; *The Red Tree* seems like one long dream sequence, and the creatures that populate “UtθqIA” in *The Lost Thing* are nearly beyond imagination.

Hope notwithstanding irony

Shaun Tan is not a postmodern artist. Neither is he a modernist artist. What he does is combine elements from both movements to create an original voice that defies classification. It rejects the inherent irony and cynical emptiness of postmodernism, while still being fascinated by its

Shaun Tan is not a postmodern artist. Neither is he a modernist artist. What he does is combine elements from both movements to create an original voice that defies classification.

devices. His work provides an honest narrative of alienation and belonging that focuses on the possibility of meaning, and it does so in a very subtle and thought-provoking way. Reducing his work to an exponent of postmodernism, and ignoring this narrative, does a large injustice to this treasured artist.

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Notes

Included in this discussion are *The Lost Thing* (2000), *The Red Tree* (2001), and *The Arrival* (2006). *Tales From Outer Suburbia* (2008)

has been left out because of its different format (illustrated short stories rather than picturebook), as are collaborations with other authors.

Images reproduced with permission from *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan, Lothian Children's Books, an imprint of Hachette Australia, 2006.

Image reproduced with permission from *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan, Lothian Children's Books, an imprint of Hachette Australia, 2001.

Oldsters who admit to learning to read with old-style comic books will recognize the worth of the best graphic novels to tempt today's beginning readers away for a while from electronic games and to convince reluctant readers that reading can be easy and fun. Engaging cartoon cats act out in this third Binky adventure. Their encounter features a timely topic, slapstick, dry humor, wit, and no gratuitous violence. Each page contains speech and sound effects in and out of bubbles as well as explanatory statements to help readers to the point. In a plot full of surprises, Binky, a certified member of F.U.R.S.T. (Felines of the Universe Ready for Space Travel), protects his space station (home) from alien domination (bugs!). Other noteworthy 2011 Kids Can Press graphic novels for young readers include *Luz Sees the Light* (8-12); *Big City Otto* (8-11) and *The Sign of the Black Rock* (9-12).

Glenna Sloan



Ashley Spires

Binky Under Pressure

Toronto, Canada: Kids Can Press, 2011
64 pp. ISBN: 9781554535040

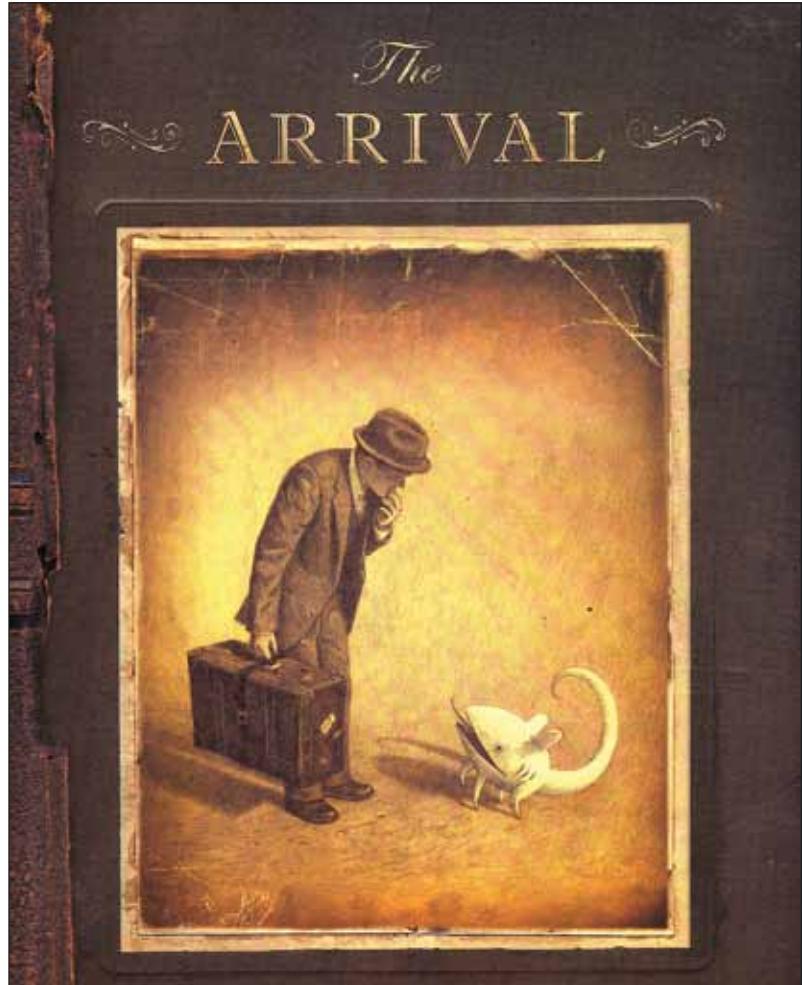
(graphic novel, ages 7-10)

Striving to survive: Comic strips in Iran

by SAHAR TARHANDEH



Sahar Tarhandeh is a graphic designer, critic and lecturer on children's book illustration and a Research Assistant for "Picture in Children's Books" in *The History of Children's Literature in Iran*, Vols. 4 & 7, and a member of the Editorial Board of Ketabak Website.



Sahar Tarhandeh provides a brief history of comics in Iran. She shows us how factors such as the political climate, publishing costs, and diverse opinions regarding comics as legitimate literature come into play as comic strips in Iran strive to survive.

Comic strips and graphic novels are becoming two of the most prevalent and influential forms in popular culture. Finding origins of the comic strip is still a controversial issue. In Iran, comic strips have appeared in children's magazines since the beginning of the 1950s. Comics were so successful that in the middle of the 1950s they became permanent parts of most magazines. In the beginning, only American and British comics were translated, but after a while Iranian artists started to create their own works. The first section of this paper is devoted to exploring some traditional painting schools in order to show similarities between them and modern comics. A common point between these traditional

paintings and modern comics is that time plays a vital role in them, and to show the passage of time similar techniques have been employed. In the second section, we will have a look at modern comics in Iran before the Islamic Revolution. A brief history of comics in children's magazines and the different kinds of comics will be considered. The third and last section will be about comics in Iran after the Revolution. Comics have been banned for some years and there are still concerns about them among experts. In spite of these challenges, comics have survived in Iran and may reach even higher standards with new generations of artists.

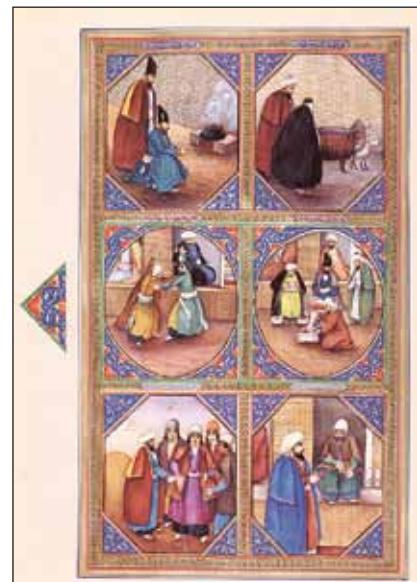
Similarities with traditional painting

Although book illustration has a long and rich history in Iran, its connection with modern comics has not been discussed properly. According to some experts, there are features and elements in some traditional paintings and illustrations that can be regarded as counterparts of modern comics. However, this has not been accepted by others who regard comics as new and modern phenomena originated from western cultures. This paper is not going to argue that comics have strong roots in traditional paintings. The claim, however, is minimal: there are similarities between modern comics and a specified group of traditional paintings, such as developing similar techniques to conquer common difficulties.

According to Zeiae (2004), in old manuscripts like *Manafé-al-Hayvanat* (1298) these elements are vivid. The book narrates the story of Adam's sons, Habil and Ghabil, via a sequence of pictures. Another example is illustrations of a 13th century manuscript *Kelileh-va-Demneh* containing a series of pictures telling a story.

The next case is Persian miniature. A miniature depicts a sequence of events, or some parallel events, simultaneously. Miniatures have been mostly used as illustrations. By visualizing a text, miniatures made it easier and more enjoyable to read. Persian miniatures have their own distinctive features. For instance, they are recognizable due to their emphasis on natural and real motifs. Also, they employ a technique of "layering" perspectives to create a sense of space that is phenomenal. They also can create three-dimensional spaces and guide the viewer to focus on certain aspects of the subject and ignore others. Among visual elements, color and its subtle use play fundamental roles in artistic expression.

In a manuscript of *Hezar-o Yek Shab* (*One Thousand and One Nights*), illustrated by Abol-Hasan Khan Sanie-al-Molk Ghafari, there are pictures that are really close to the definition of the comic strip. Some pages have been divided into three or six parts (panels), and the story is narrated by these means. In some cases, there are words or short sentences to describe each episode. The illustrator was the first Iranian artist who went to Italy by sponsorship of the king to learn lithography techniques.



One Thousand and One Nights

After the advent of printing in Iran (around 1815) and the emergence of lithographic books, illustrators continued to use the same techniques. To show the passage of time or a sequence of events, they put pictures into different boxes and therefore reached configurations very similar to comic strips. A good example is a picture about different steps of lithographic printing by Mirza

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Ali Gholi Khoie in *Khamseh-e Nezami* (1847). Another example is a picture by Mirza Hassan (1865) from *Tufaan al-Bokaa* showing a battle between Imam Ali and one of his enemies in two parts of a single frame.

Later on, when children's books were published in Iran, this tradition continued. For example, in a picture from *Akhlagh-e Mosavar*, by Mirza Mohammad Alikhan (1913), episodes of hunting by a lion are drawn in a long frame that has been divided into smaller vertical frames to show the time sequence.

Ghahveh-Khaneh (literally means “tea/coffee house”) is a traditional school of painting that has had strong connections with Persian literature. Even many contemporary Iranian illustrators see themselves as influenced by this school. Subjects in this tradition are mostly taken from two stories: stories of the literary epic masterpiece *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), by Ferdowsi, and the story of Imam Hossein (grandson of the Prophet Mohammad) who has killed tragically on Ashura, the 10th day of Muharram. Most artists of this school were self-trained and their

works represented their religious and nationalistic beliefs. Their paintings (*pardah*) were mostly used in tea houses. When there was no public media, such as radio or television, people gathered in tea houses and listened to the *naghah* (storyteller). *Naghali* (storytelling) was to narrate a story or an event, in verse or prose, with special tone, feelings, and expressions. The *naghah* played the roles of all the different characters by himself. He usually narrated epics and mythical stories in tea houses. Ghahveh-Khaneh paintings were the most popular means of *naghali*.

In Ghahveh-Khaneh paintings artists try to show lots of characters and events in a single frame. They usually put the main character or event in the middle of the frame and draw it bigger than the others. Some Ghahveh-Khaneh paintings, however, are divided into boxes and descriptive words are written inside them. In a few cases each box has been numbered to help viewers to follow the story easily.



An example of Ghahveh-Khaneh painting

Comic strips in Iran: Before the Revolution

According to *The History of Children's Literature in Iran* (Vol. 7, 2004, pp. 1109-1115), comic strips first appeared in Iranian children's magazine in 1950. At the beginning, all works were selected and translated from British and American comics. *Nonahalan*, a magazine published by the British Embassy in Iran during the Second World War, was one of the first places for comic strips. Most of the comics in *Nonahalan* were about war and the bravery of British soldiers. Among them these two are notable: *The Story of Bob Stanton* (1944) and *Winston Churchill's Life* (1945). Stories

and extra descriptions of these comics were too long and have been placed out of boxes.

The Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia defines a comic strip as a series of drawings that read as a narrative, arranged together on the page of a newspaper, magazine, or book. In the 1890s several U.S. newspapers published funny weekly

Although comics were popular among children, few of them have had Iranian illustrators. One of the main reasons is the shortage of big publishing companies that can afford professional comic artists.

drawings without any indicated speech. In 1897 Rudolph Dirks's *Katzenjammer Kids*, in *New York Journal* featured humorous strips containing words presumably spoken by the characters. Soon speeches in balloons appeared in other cartoons arranged in a series to form a strip. Contrary to this routine, written words in most early Iranian comics were cut from their original places and put above or under them. In some cases, a short English sentence became a long paragraph in translation. As comics were new and different from familiar ways of storytelling, some translators added more descriptions by themselves to help readers.

In the middle of the 1950s comics were so successful that they became permanent parts of most children's magazines. After releasing three new and colored magazines for children, especially *Keyhan Bacheh-ha* in 1956, a new wave of comics emerged in Iranian children's magazines.

At the beginning, only American and European comics, without any change in their pictures, were translated. *Tintin* and *Tarzan* were among popular comics in 1958. Gradually, comics with characters from children's animation like Uncle Donald (Donald Duck) and Tom and Jerry appeared in magazines and became popular. During 1948-51, attention to animation and its ability to entertain and educate children increased. In 1950 the first animated movie "Snow-White and Seven Dwarves" arrived in Iran and after

that many comics were about characters from animated movies (Hoseein-zadeh 1991, p.295).

Apart from dominant translated comics, there were some Iranian works as well. Artists like Yahya Dolatshahi and Jafar Tejaratchi were among the illustrators who tried to create national comics. Their works were primitive and not so sophisticated, but they were at the beginning. They tried to create comics based on Iranian folk stories, for example, in comics entitled *Khal-e Soske* and *Atal Matal*. Other comics like *Life of the Great Shah Abbas* in *Tehran Mosavar-e Kocholoo-ha* by unknown artists seem to have been more experienced and skillful.

Shortly after the success of *Tintin's Adventures* in the 1940s, it came to Iran and was one of the first translated and published comic strip



A frame from *Rostam va Esfandiyar*

books from the Universal Publishing Company, followed by the *Asterix* stories. Although comics were popular among children, few of them have had Iranian illustrators. One of the main reasons is the shortage of big publishing companies that can afford professional comic artists. Therefore, most publishers prefer to pay only translation fees and publish foreign comics without any change in pictures.

A distinguished example of comic books published before the Revolution was *Rostam va Esfandiar*. The story is based on a section of *Shahnâmeh*, illustrated by Sirous Rad and published by Kanoon-e Parvaresh-e Fekri Kodak va Nowjavn (Kanoon) in 1976. In comparison with other comics by Iranian artists, this book has a higher level of proficiency. Although the pictures are strongly affected by American comics and western culture, the book has a high standard in general and can be compared with international comic books.

Gradually some illustrators tried to use traditional paintings, structures, and elements to create national comics. However, it must be said that their works, which were lucky to be published, were not as successful as the translated ones. Esmaili Sohi says about himself "I tried to create a comic book using traditional styles like Ghahveh Khaneh painting. However, this book has been never published" (1996, p. 22).

Some years before the Revolution there were growing ideological approaches toward children's literature, both among leftists and Islamist people. They considered children's literature as a political and ideological tool. Under the influence of these attitudes, many young writers and artists turned to symbolic literature. Iranian children's literature had an ideological tendency in the 1960s and 1970s.

Comic strips in Iran: After the Revolution

After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, official decision makers started to change the so-called western cultural structure. They tried to give new meaning to children's literature that was compatible with Islamic and revolutionary values. Therefore, works with religious themes were highly supported. This policy continued during the eight years of the Iraq-Iran war. During this period, due to nationalistic and anti-western attitudes of official and governmental figures and experts, comics were controversial and not very welcomed. Thus comics were viewed as shoddy and shallow literature advertising foreign heroes and were considered a source of cultural intrusion. In the mid-1980s publishing comic books was prohibited by a group of experts who were consultants to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Apart from official restrictions, there are different views for and against comics among individual children's literature experts and book illustrators.

Apart from official restrictions, there are different views for and against comics among individual children's literature experts and book illustrators. Some argue that comics are shallow and make children used to poor quality literature. According to them, comics have neither deep nor artistic value. Furthermore, comics do not develop children's imagination and therefore turn them into lazy readers. Another anticomic argument centers on the idea that in Iran there are few artists who can create comics and there are fewer publishers who can afford to publish these books. As a result, by giving permission to publish comic books, translated comics will flood the market and bring foreign culture and values into society. On the other hand, those who argue for comics say these books can

help children start to read. High quality comics will develop aesthetic sensibility in the young generation. A way to strengthen our national identity is to give our artists opportunities to create Iranian comics. Another argument for comics is based on the fact that by banning comics, children will find them in black markets and there is no control on underground activities.

Although comics have been banned for a while, illustrators continued to create comics for children's magazines. A majority of experts and official decision makers had a positive view regarding the existence of comics in magazines, so comics found a way to survive.

After the Iraq-Iran war, the ideological attitude towards children's literature gave way to a more realistic one. It was in part because of the growing cultural exchanges with other countries. More independent authors and illustrators found opportunities to work and create books for children. In spite of many negative factors, including a lack of academic knowledge and poor backgrounds, a few illustrators had the courage to create comic books. These people were mostly self-trained and learned their skills only by looking at and examining existing comics.

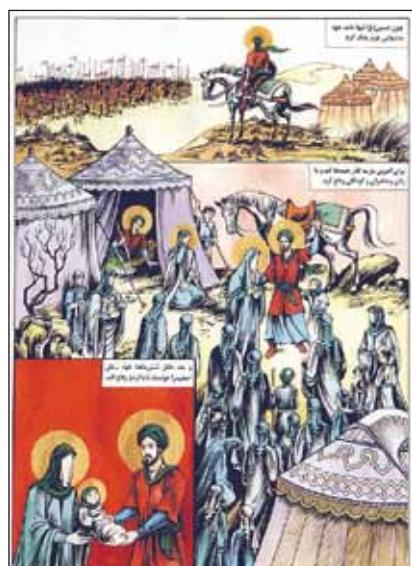
A resolute illustrator is Saeed Razzaghi who started his work by making comics for magazines at the end of the 1980s. In spite of all difficulties, he succeeded in publishing his first comic book, *The Adventure of Amin and Akram*, in 1991. This book was followed by *Kodakiy-e Rostam (Rostam's Childhood)* in 1997 and *Farzand-e Aseman (The Child of Heaven)* in 1999. His next work was based on Persian proverbs and published in 2003 and again in three volumes in 2009. Although Razzaghi has made an effort to use traditional elements in his works, most of them are still under the influence of western comics. However, his unique attempt to continue this way is undeniable.

Another important artist is Parviz Eghbali. Like other comic illustrators he started his work with children's magazines. His first comic strip book was *Hamaseh-ye Haj Younes (The Epic of Haj Younes)*, the first comic about the Iraq-Iran war, which was published in 1997. He spent seven years on the next book, *Ashura*, which was published finally in 2009. *Ashura* was made artistically and is very important for two reasons. First, this book is the first one after the Revolution that shows faces of holy people (Imam and his family). In most religious books there are halos around the faces of holy people and facial details are not recognizable. Eghbali tried very hard to get permission to publish this book. Second, the illustrator managed to use traditional paintings (Ghahveh-Khaneh and miniatures) and merge them into comic structures.

Although it has been forty years since comics were originally introduced into Iranian children's magazines, they have not reached their proper place as they have in many other countries due to the many ups



A frame from *Kodakiy-e Rostam*



A frame from *Ashura*

and downs and difficulties. However, the comic strip is still a popular genre in Iran. The growing number of young cartoonists and illustrators who are interested in producing comics is good news. Currently a special magazine about comic strips is published in Iran (*Jadid*). *Jadid* is devoted to comic strips and to works by illustrators from both the older and younger generations, as well as articles on this subject. There is a great hope to increase the number, as well as the quality, of comic strips in Iran. Also it is expected that new related genres like graphic novels can find artists and consumers in the children's literature market.

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- Mosaferat-e Behroz be Afriqua (Tintin's Adventures), *Etelaat-e Kodakan*, 1957. No 13, p 17.
- Shah Abbas-e Cabir (The Great King Abbas), *Tehran Mosavar-e Kocholoo-ha*, 1957. No 2, p.11.
- The Story of Bob Stanton, *Nonahalan*, 1944. No 19, p. 3.
- Winston Churchill's life, *Nonahalan*, 1945. No 47, p. 3.

This manga is the first in a series of stories featuring the spirited green-haired young girl, Yotsuba, whose origins are a mystery until the last volume. Humorous, silly situations involving other people often happen when this adventurous child is present. In a *School Library Journal* review on Amazon, the reviewer aptly dubs Yotsuba "a Japanese version of Dennis the Menace." In drawing this manga the main point seems to be to present the central character Yotsuba, in a comic way. Her hair is like the four-leaf clover when she is in a happy, healthy state; when she is angry, cries or gets sick, it withers up. Yotsuba makes a charming first impression; she quickly has everyone's sympathy. In conversation, Yotsuba is not only delightfully childlike, she is honest and makes insightful points. This comic reminds us that the importance of manga is to be found as much in the words as the pictures.

Naohiko Ueno, manga writer



Kiyohiko Azuma

YOTSUBA&! Volume 1
(*YOTSUBA and I*)

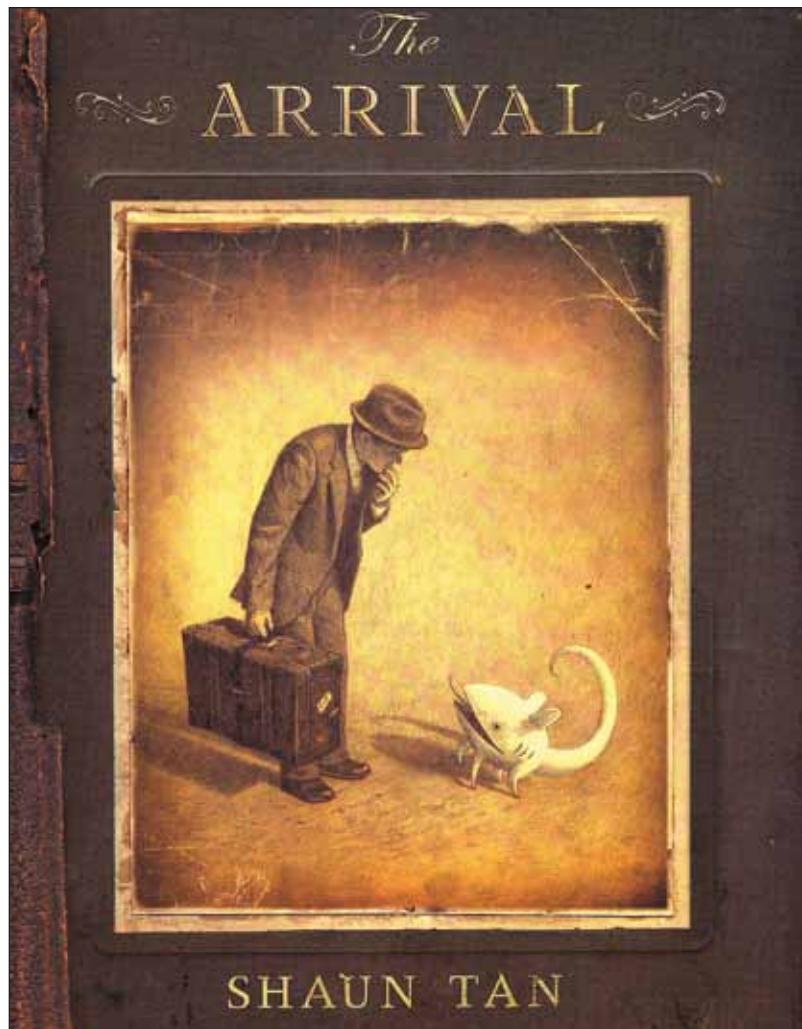
Tokyo, Japan: ADV Manga, 2005
232 pp. ISBN-10: 1413903177;
ISBN-13: 9781413903171
(graphic novel/manga, ages 4+)

The graphic novel in India: East transforms West

by DIPAVALI DEBROY



Dipavali (Sen) Debroy is a free-lance writer for children as well as adults, with expertise in Indian mythology. She resides in Delhi and teaches Economics at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University.



Dipavali Debroy outlines the debut of comics and graphic novels in India. In the process we see how East and West converge as graphic novels have transformed to a truly Indian product. She notes too that when publishers abroad create graphic novels with Indian themes, these novels may lack authenticity and accurate details. She calls for graphic novels infused with Indian themes and innovative Indian art styles.

Only recently has the term “graphic novel” come into vogue in India. *Corridor* (2004) and *Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers* (2007) by author-illustrator Sarnath Banerjee, may be hailed as the first graphic novels in India, although for adults.

Actually, graphic narration in a general sense has a long and rich tradition in India. 7th-century versions of the epic Ramayana have Sita looking at a series of *alekhyas* or paintings chronologically illustrating events in Rama's life.

Epic narratives are sculpted out of stone in Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu. The caves of Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra illustrate the Jataka stories, i.e., stories from the Buddha's previous lives. Later, in the Islamic period, there are also instances of graphic narration, e.g., the 17th-century imperial chronicle *Padshanama*.

In various regions of rural India, wandering minstrels have been illustrating their narratives with Kalamkari pen-work (Andhra Pradesh), Phad and Pata paintings (Rajasthan and Bengal, respectively). In Bihar, villagers have been depicting events from the epics with Madhubani paintings on their mud walls. Continuing through the British rule, this tradition experienced a revival during the renaissance of Indian art (1890s-1940s) which was largely inspired by India's freedom movement. However, it is not from these Indian origins that the present graphic novel emanated.

The debut of the comic strip in India

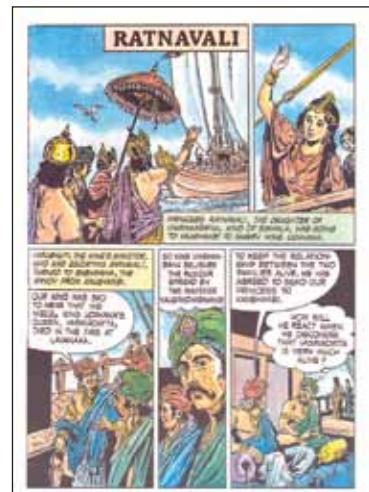
A graphic novel is a variant of the comic strip, a combination of dialogues and drawings, linked by a minimal amount of running text. Comic strips are usually short units published in newspapers and magazines, though often on a continuous or serial basis. When they are longer, or linked together, they can be regarded as graphic novels. However, graphic novels can also be independent full-length works, original creations as well as renderings of existing texts.

So far as the comic strip is concerned, it made its appearance in India in the middle or late 1950s, inspired and influenced by Britain, France, Italy, Germany, the U.S.A., and Japan. As Geeta Menon put it, "India witnessed a belated growth in comic strips. 'Comic' being a Western concept, Indians borrowed it from the American and Western newspapers" (Menon, 1999, p. 204). Indian newspapers began to carry reproductions or translated versions of comic strips such as *Tarzan*, *Phantom*, and *Mandrake*. They became immensely popular and Sarnath Banerjee, the 21st-century pioneer of graphic novels in India, loved his *Phantom* comics (Pisharoty, 2010).

Things began to change from the late 1960s. Anant Pai, a visionary with a publishing background (whom India has lost earlier this very year), stepped into the foray to make history in the field of children's publishing applying the comics format to Indian mythology. He made a major impact on growing minds with the bestselling series *Amar Chitra Katha*.

Amar Chitra Katha

At a quiz contest on television in 1967, Anant Pai was shocked to discover that children in India, especially those in urban areas and going



Excerpted with kind permission of
Amar Chitra Katha, from Ratnavali

to English-medium schools, were not in touch with Indian mythology. Anant Pai felt that the situation needed to be redressed. So he came out with the comic strip series *Amar Chitra Katha* (*Immortal Illustrated Tales*) published through the India Book House and also founded Rang Rekha Features, India's pioneering comic and cartoon syndicate.

Besides being the spirit behind the entire endeavor, Anant Pai was the editor and co-writer of most books of the series. There was excellent teamwork as well by scriptwriters like Kamala Chandrakant and Subba Rao, and illustrators like Ram Waeerkar and Souren Roy. From mythology, the scope has expanded in the course of time to fables and folklore, humor and wit, Sanskrit literature, and biographies of historical figures and nationalist leaders. More than 400 in number, and translated into more than 20 regional languages, they are sold throughout the length and breadth of India, by big-name bookstores as well as railway or roadside vendors, and having been acquired in 2007 by the new venture ACK Media, they are even available online and in electronic versions. Both the economic forces of demand and supply have worked towards the popularity of *Amar Chitra Katha*.

From mythology, the scope has expanded in the course of time to fables and folklore, humor and wit, Sanskrit literature, and biographies of historical figures and nationalist leaders. More than 400 in number, and translated into more than 20 regional languages, they are sold throughout the length and breadth of India, by big-name bookstores as well as railway or roadside vendors, and having been acquired in 2007 by the new venture ACK Media, they are even available online and in electronic versions.

d. 1906) of Travancore, the artist who adapted the Western classical style to Indian themes. As illustrator Subir Roy (1999) pointed out, the colors in *Amar Chitra Katha* were normally "flat," that is, without tonal variations (p. 248). But the details, mythological, historical, or contemporary, were all there. All these factors made parents and teachers look upon the *Amar Chitra Katha* with appreciation.

Figures 1 and 2 provide examples of comics and graphic formats in India spanning the period from the 1960s to today. Figure 1 gives an overview of selected comic series launched by Indian publishers. Figure 2 documents Indian children's magazines that have made contributions to the development of the comic strip.

Figure 1. Sampling of Comics Series by Indian Publishers

Publisher	Series/ Characters	Years	Observations
Indrajal Comics, launched by The Times of India, Bennet, Coleman & Co., 1964.	(a) Phantom, Mandrake, Tarzan (b) Bahadur: Son of a crook turned crime fighter and organizer of a citizen's force. (c) Timpa (36 stories) Teenager (and his grandpa) turned detective. Creators: Jhangir Kerawala and Avijit Chatterjee	1964-90 Ended with discontinuation of Indrajal Comics in TOI. Ended with discontinuation of Indrajal Comics in TOI.	Focus on magical, supernatural and extraordinary powers Modeled on Western comics with Indian settings, dress and characterization; inspired by contemporary events
Diamond Comics Pvt/ Ltd. Available in about ten Indian languages.	(a) Foreign comics (licensed) in Hindi (Phantom, Mandrake, Superman, Batman, James Bond, He-man, Spiderman) (b) Indian characters created: (i)Chacha Chaudhuri, frail, elderly but brainy villager with turban and stick, aided by an alien named Sabu. Creator: Cartoonist Pran (ii)Billo, a lively, school-going kid with a pup. Creator: Pran (iii)Pinki, plucky girl clever with computers and cell phones. Creator: Pran (iv)Mahabali Shaka, mighty jungle king with rippling muscles. (v)Shrimati Ji, Raman, Daabu, Lamboo-Motu, Agniputra Abhaya and Others	1978 onwards First created in 1971 for Lotpot, a children's magazine in Hindi	Most successful An Indian version of the Asterix-Obelix duo An Indian Archie New image of the Indian girl-child. An Indian blend of Tarzan and Phantom. Assorted characters, quite popular, though less so than Chacha Chaudhuri
Raj Comics	Nagraj, snake-man nurtured on snake-poison by a scientist. Creator: Lalit Singh &Pradeep Sherawat	1986	Bizarre blend of mythology, science, and contemporary events to create a super-hero
Madhu Muskan Comics, developed by a family entertainment magazine of the same name	Babloo, the teen detective; Popat-Chaupat, an ill-fated comic duo; Sustram-Chustram, another comic duo; Minni, a mischievous but helpful girl.	1970s and '80s	Real-life characters providing clean fun

Figure 2. Sampling of Comics in Children's Magazines

Magazine	Language and Type of Comic Characters	Observations
<i>Tinkle</i> , launched by Anant Pai in 1980	English; mythological, historical, and new creations like Suppandi, the simpleton, and Shikari Shambhu, the cowardly big-game-hunter.	Popular and now syndicated in regional languages like Malayalam
<i>Children's World</i> , published by the Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, since 1968	English; colorful creations including those of famous cartoonists Shankar and Beeji	Popular; brought out as Comic Annuals
<i>Target</i> , published by India Today Group during 1980-95	English; teenage-oriented; featuring super-sleuth Tegrat.	Excellent quality but limited impact since magazine short-lived
<i>Sandesh</i> , Sandesh Karyalaya, Kolkata, 1960s	Bengali; real-life adventure comics created by Mayukh Chaudhuri	Vibrant but limited in impact because of the magazine's limited circulation
<i>Shuktara</i> , published by Deb Sahitya Kutir, 1960s onwards	Bengali; real-life comic figures Bantu the Great, Handa-Bhonda, and Nonte-Phonte, created by cartoonist Narayan Debnath	So popular that brought out as separate collections, reprinted in color, animated, and televised.
<i>Anandamela</i> , Anandabazar group, Kolkata	Bengali; featuring young sleuth Feluda; Pappu Gappu duo; Aranyadeb (Phantom)	Popular
<i>Telekids</i> , also Anandabazar group, Kolkata	English; featuring Feluda	
<i>Champak</i> , published by Delhi Press group, 1968 onwards	Hindi; Characters are aliens, fairies, animals, and people	Most popular assortments
<i>Nandan</i> , published by Hindustan Times group; 1964 onwards	Hindi; Characters are miscellaneous	Very popular

Comics with a social purpose

The comic or graphic form has also been used for educational and socio-cultural purposes by governmental as well as non-governmental organizations. Figure 3 describes a range of graphic novels that focus on various social justice and cultural issues.

Full-length graphic novels

In spite of their contribution, comic strips in newspapers, magazines, or for that matter, in collected or edited form, cannot really be said to have led to the emergence of full-length graphic novels in the specific, contemporary sense. The credit for that must largely go to the Penguin Group which has recently brought out a series featuring Feluda, the detective-hero created by Satyajit Ray. Campfire, a young Delhi-based publisher, also deserves mention.

Feluda comics

Although the Penguin Group has called their Feluda collection a "comic book" series, it is more than mere collections of comic strips. It is a set of self-contained detective stories by Satyajit Ray, rendered in English by Subhadra Sengupta and illustrated by Tapas Guha. It includes the titles: *A Bagful of Mystery*, *Beware in the Graveyard*, *Murder by the Sea*, *Danger in Darjeeling*, *Calamity in Kailash*, and *A Killer in Kathmandu*. Tapas Guha (2010), their illustrator, when he was a child had "... taught himself to draw by

studying the illustrations of comics like *Tintin*, *Phantom*, *Mandrake*, and of course Satyajit Ray" (unpaged). Both in production and style of illustration, the books do seem to be modeled on the *Tintin* series, although the ambience of the stories is faithfully Indian. Feluda had first made his appearance in 1965 in the Bengali children's magazine *Sandesh* edited by Ray's family, all of whom were children's authors. Soon Feluda became quite popular among children in urban West Bengal. Ray wrote numerous Feluda stories, and with son Sandip Ray, filmed a few of them. Penguin has brought out unabridged translations of all his adventures and now Puffin Books has come out with graphic or comic strip versions. How popular the graphic versions (as distinct from the Bengali stories themselves) become, remains to be seen. But children who grew up on Feluda stories are parents and grandparents

Figure 3. Selected Graphic Novels Focusing on Social Issues

Publisher & Date	Creator/Inputs	Title & Language	Focus
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India; 1960s	Publications Division	<i>The Story of Jawaharlal Nehru</i> (English)	On Nehru's ideals
Diamond Comics Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi; 2000s	Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Dehli	<i>Karmavir Rajiv Gandhi</i> (Hindi)	On Rajiv Gandhi's ideals
National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2001 onwards	Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi	<i>Rajiv Gandhi Pustakmala</i> series (Hindi), e.g., <i>Insan Ki Pahchan</i>	Against social discrimination and gender bias
Indian Institute of Education, Pune & NBT, New Delhi, 1993 & 2006	Chitra Naik	<i>Chatur Ladki, Bhoot Aya</i> (Hindi transactions of original Marathi)	Against social discrimination and gender bias
Viveka Foundation, Delhi, aided by the Ford Foundation, 2000s	Vivalok Comics	<i>The Sunderbans, The Santhals, Itihyamala</i>	Diversity of regional culture as reflected in folklore
India Today group and foreign collaborators like Orcades (France) and the anti-slavery society (UK); late 1990s.	Subhadra Sengupta & Tapas Guha	<i>Shabbir's not so Magic Carpet</i>	Against child labor
World Comics India, Delhi, mid-1990s onwards	Sharad Sharma, volunteering cartoonists, journalists, and activists, local people at the grassroots	Grassroots Comics, e.g., <i>Seema Ki Shadi</i> (Hindi); pasted or put up at village meeting places, bus stops, and even trees	To fight for democratic norms and social change

now. They are spread all over the globe. So Feluda is likely to catch on, especially among the NRI. And this may encourage the publication of other novels (detective or otherwise) in graphic form, especially for a global readership.

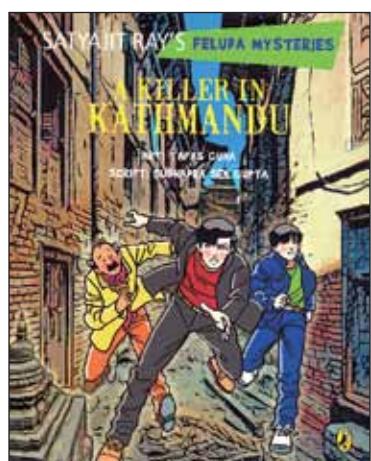
Campfire graphic novels

In the Campfire Graphic Novels Catalogue (2011), the Campfire Company actually uses the term "graphic novel" and indicates that, since 2008, they have turned out attractive products "for a new generation of readers" (back of front cover). Campfire publishes in four categories (Classics, Biography, Mythology, and Originals), catering to the global market. The Mythology titles are mostly Indian, such as Draupadi: *The Fire-Born Princess* and *Sita: Daughter of the Earth*.

Concluding comments:

The confluence of the East and the West

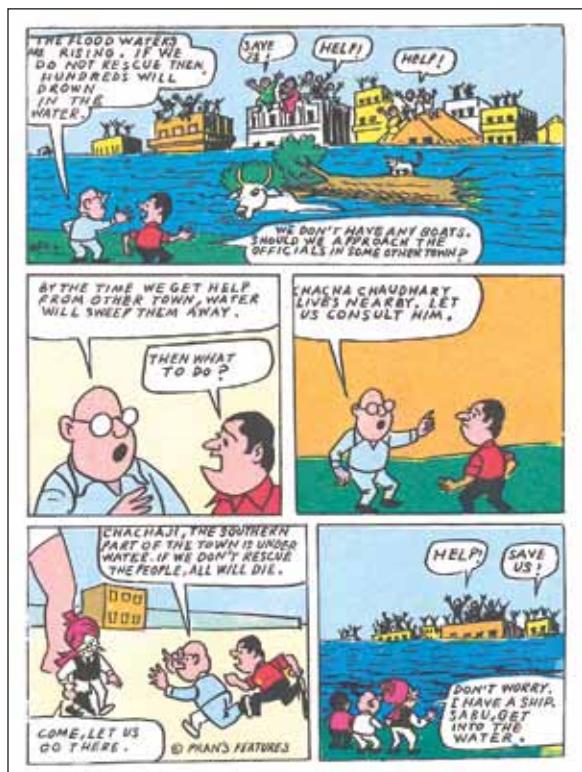
In spite of the threat from animated series in film and television, comic strips remain most popular in India and are strengthened by the recent emergence of the "graphic novel." Undoubtedly inspired



A Killer in Kathmandu by Satyajit Ray

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL IN INDIA: EAST TRANSFORMS WEST

and influenced by developments in other countries, they have Indianized the Western influences on them and successfully grown into a truly Indian product. Popular characters like Chacha Chaudhuri, Timpa, and Nagraj have all evolved an ethnic identity and a relevance to India's socio-economic issues. Graphic novels or comics



Chacha Chaudhuri, Diamond Comics

for children in India thus represent a confluence of the East and the West.

With respect to graphics and text, Indian comics and graphic novels have reached a position on par with the best productions of the world market. Publishers abroad are now taking up Indian themes as in the graphic novel series of the "Great Indian Heroes" by Macaw Books. In spite of the glossy pages and colorful illustrations, such experiments make departures from authenticity in details. The ambience in Macaw, for example, is more Roman than Indian! There is thus scope for competition as well as collaboration between such publications and their Indian counterparts. Indian comics and graphic novels

have a great future in this era of globalization, especially if they can innovatively use Indian art styles like Madhubani or Kalamkari along with Indian themes.

Modern technology is taking comics and graphic novels to new *avatars*. Liquid Comics (founded as Virgin Comics LLC in 2006) has released recently an iPad version of a graphic novel. Named "Untouchable," it is the prime example of collaboration in a globalized world, Indian material transformed by the latest of Western technology for consumption by an international audience. The almost magical service offered by the iPad—a continuously evolving outcome at every interactive touch—might certainly provide a more engaging experience than the printed page. In fact, e-book enthusiasts do not hesitate in sounding a death knell for comics in print because their future lies in the digital and iPad forms. Even the chief of ACK Media, Samir Patil, feels that devices like iPad are best suited for comics. To publishers, digital service makes sense because it reaches a wider audience, and to readers, pads make reading more fun.

It is a long way from Sita looking at the alekhya to Liquid Comics digitalizing the *Ramayana*. But the demand for great stories capable of lifting the imagination and traversing national and cultural borders is an undying one. At every stage of technological evolution in the course of human history, there will continue to be a glorious interweave of narration and graphics.

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Notes

Image used with kind permission of Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, from *A Killer in Kathmandu* by Satyajit Ray, script: Subhadra Sengupta, illustration: Tapas Guha, Puffin Books, Rs 99.

Image used with kind permission of Diamond Comics Pvt Ltd.

In *drüben! (On the Other Side)*, author Simon Schwartz tells his own biography, as well as that of his parents and grandparents, against the backdrop of the general history of the German Democratic Republic. While his father's parents strongly believe in the state and regime, his mother's parents remain skeptical. Coming from such different backgrounds, Simon's parents meet at university and slowly but surely his father's socialist convictions begin to wane. He feels increasingly monitored and patronized by the state. After long discussions, Simon's parents decide to emigrate, even though this causes a rift between Simon's father and his parents. Told in succinct dialogues and narrator's comments in an episodic structure, the book expresses the parents' dreams and longing, their fear and anger. Their mélange of feelings epitomizes that of many other GDR-citizens. The book's visual language is as clear and multifaceted as its linguistic style. Impressive black-and-white illustrations, drawn from various perspectives, not only give insight into the daily life within the GDR in an ingenious way, they also visually express the thoughts and emotions of Simon, his parents, and his grandparents. The book was shortlisted for the German Youth Literature Award 2010 in the category of nonfiction.

Ines Galling
Trans. Claudia Söffner



Simon Schwartz

drüben!
[On the Other Side]

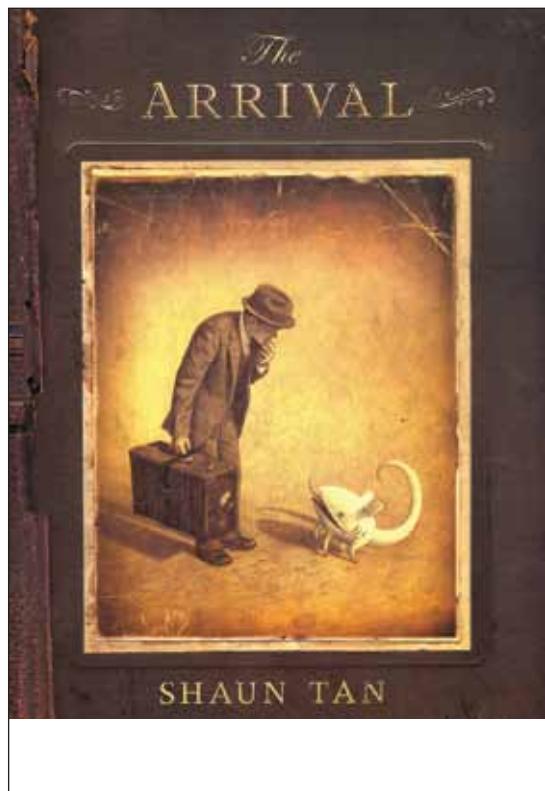
Berlin: Avant-Verlag, 2009
108 pp. ISBN: 978-3-939080-37-4
(graphic novel, nonfiction, 10+)

Educational graphic novels: Korean children's favorite now

by YEO-JOO LIM



Yeo-Joo Lim is a doctoral candidate at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her interest is in library services for youth, multicultural literature, comics and graphic novels, media literacy, and youth media culture.



Yeo-Joo Lim introduces us to Korea's Educational Graphic Novels (EGN) a format that seeks to be both educational and entertaining. We learn about its popularity, its characteristics, and its history as a type of graphic novel from a Korean perspective.

On April 28, 2007 a group of people who were concerned about children's comic book reading gathered at Dongdaemun-gu Public Library in Seoul, Korea, for a panel discussion called *What Shall We Do about Comic Books in Libraries?* The panels included two comics artists, two public librarians, and two citizen representatives. It was the first official panel discussion about comics to be initiated by a public library in South Korea, which indicates that librarians were beginning to seriously consider comics as one kind of library collection. Ra Gyeong-Rae¹, a public librarian in Dongdaemun-gu Public Library, said that the symposium was initiated because Dongdaemun-gu Public Library recently had been “losing control” in dealing with comic book collection management, particularly the Educational Graphic Novels (EGNs) collection (personal communication 2007). According to Ra, when elementary schools dismissed class, huge numbers of children literally ran into the library to read EGNs. This led to other patrons’ complaints; the children’s librarians could barely calm down the noisy children

in the library, which seemed more like a crowded marketplace. As a temporary solution, the children's librarians sorted out the most popular EGNs (250 books) and placed them on a separate bookshelf in the children's library so that the EGN readers did not disturb other library users. However, the congestion did not stop. Moreover, the 250 EGNs quickly became seriously damaged because of frequent use². The librarians collected those damaged EGNs, put them in an archive, and withheld the use of them saying they were "being repaired." After this process, reference questions about EGNs—mostly searching for the missing books—greatly increased both at the reference desk and at the library website³. Still, 60% of the 100 most circulated children's books at Dongdaemun-gu Public Library were Educational Graphic Novels, even without the 250 removed books (Ra 2007).

This is not just a unique situation in a particular library in Korea. Since 2000 most public libraries in Korea have gone through similar situations. For example, the National Library for Children and Young Adults places most popular EGNs in the archive, which is a closed stack. A formal request form is needed in order to check out a book from the archive, but is restricted to in-library use (Song 2009). Cho Jae-Hak, a librarian of the National Library for Children and Young Adults, says that despite this "complicated process," some children go directly to the archive and enjoy reading EGNs (personal communication 2007).

Educational Graphic Novels are recognized as an independent genre in Korea because of the nature of their content: these works focus on "educational" materials such as history, science, and other information areas. The Educational Graphic Novels market has greatly increased over the past ten years in Korea. A recent survey identified 50 bestselling children's books at Kyobo Bookstore—the biggest bookstore in Korea—during the years 2003 to 2008⁴. This survey reveals that 5 books in the top 10 list were EGNs and 17 books in the top 50 list were EGNs (Lee 2009).

Terms and concepts

Definitions of modern comics agree that comics are delicate combinations of text and image (McCloud 1993: 156; Wolk 2007: 14).⁵ McCloud compares the relationship between words and pictures of comics to partners in a dance where each one takes turns leading. He insists that a good balance between the two—words and pictures—intensifies the strength of comics as an art form (1993, p. 156).

Recently in the English speaking countries, there have been discussions about how to name text with "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 1993: 9); "comic books" and "graphic novels" are two of the most frequently used terms to refer to this media. In Korea, however, there is only one general term for referring to this media: *Manhwa*. The term *manhwa* is known to originate from a Japanese word: *manga* (漫画) (Kwon

2009: 33). Minjung Essence Korean Dictionary defines *manhwa* as “An illustration that describes a story in a concise and humorous way (with insertion of conversations)” (2001). Outside of Korea, the term usually refers specifically to South Korean comics (Avila 2004).

Manhwa consists of various genres to meet the interests of its large range of readers. The Korea Manhwa Archive classifies manhwa into 23 genres—science fiction (SF), horror, drama, chivalry, adult/sexual, sport, action, alternative, illustrative, comic, fantasy, school, fight, military/war, romance, historical play, Sunjeong (girls’),⁶ yaoi,⁷ children, essaytoon,⁸ cartoon, exorcism and education (2009). Generally, a manhwa’s genre depends very much on its audience (Cho 2007: 9). The main audience for educational manhwa, that is Educational Graphic

Novels, is elementary school children. I use the term “Educational Graphic Novel” instead of “educational manhwa” in this paper because: (1) the term “manhwa” is not a familiar word to many of the English-speaking audience; (2) “manhwa” cannot be directly translated into one English word; (3) graphic novels and educational manhwa share many characteristics, such as having sturdy bindings and good quality paper and being recognized as being effective in literacy development and education (Crawford 2004: 26).

⁹Hwang Hae-Yeon, a graduate student at Kyung Hee University, insists that “Educational Graphic Novels are made in a popular format to support learning useful information, to cultivate learning motivation in diverse topics, and thus guide readers to more effective education” (2006: 5). Examples of EGN topics are mythology and folk tales, history, economics, science, math,

foreign language, and cultural literacy. Classical literature, popular TV dramas, and films are also reconstructed and published in EGN format. Some EGNs are very relevant to school curriculum: there are EGN titles such as *Textbook Manhwa for 3rd Graders*; *Science* and *Textbook Manhwa Package for 5th Graders*; *Korean*; *Math*; *Social Science*; *Science* (Park 2003; Sim 2001). Comics critic Lee Seung-Nam, however, emphasizes the pleasurable aspect of Educational Graphic Novels. He indicates that even though Educational Graphic Novels can be distinguished from general comic books because of their informational and educational functions, we cannot ignore that they are created in a popular form that can be easily accessed by the masses (2005a: 13).

One distinctive feature of EGNs is their format. Many EGNs that were published recently have very similar shapes: 6.9 x 9.8 inches (B5 size) although the thickness varies. This is not a strict rule, but a convention. Table 1 compares the differences between EGNs and general comic books in Korea.

Manhwa consists of various genres to meet the interests of its large range of readers. The Korea Manhwa Archive classifies manhwa into 23 genres – science fiction (SF), horror, drama, chivalry, adult/sexual, sport, action, alternative, illustrative, comic, fantasy, school, fight, military/war, romance, historical play, Sunjeong (girls’), yaoi, children, essaytoon, cartoon, exorcism, education (2009).

Table 1. Educational Graphic Novels vs. General Comic Books¹²

	Educational Graphic Novels	General Comic Books
Size	6.9 x 9.8 inches (B5 size)	5.8 x 8.3 inches (A5 size) 4.9 x 6.9 inches (B6 size)
Paper Quality	Same as traditional books ¹⁰	Same as regular books or on pulp paper
Contents	History and Science are the most popular topics with Korean, English, Math, and other subject matters becoming more popular	Science fiction, horror, drama, adult/sexual, sport, alternative, fantasy, school, military/war, romance, historical play, etc.
Readers	Focus on elementary school students Some of them are popular among adults as well – e.g., <i>Far Countries, Near Countries</i> ¹¹	Readers of all ages Different types of graphic novels for different types of readers – e.g., Sunjeong manhwa (girls' comics) targets teenage girls

History of educational graphic novels

The term “Educational Graphic Novel” was not coined until the 1970s, even though there were comic books that could be categorized as educational comic books in terms of present perspectives (Lee 2005b: 19). Early EGNs in the 1970s to 1980s focused on delivering educational information but did not pay much attention to the storytelling aspect (Lee 2005b: 20; Lim 2005). Most EGNs during this time period were published as series—10 to 20 volumes in general—and were sold door-to-door, not in bookstores (Lee 2005b: 20).

In 1987 an Educational Graphic Novel that was not only informational but also interesting came out: *Far Countries, Near Countries* by Rhie Won-Bok. Consisting of six volumes in total, *Far Countries, Near Countries* introduced the history and culture of many European countries based on the author’s profound knowledge and personal experience during his visits to Europe. This was such a groundbreaking piece that the media began to pay attention to this somewhat new genre, the Educational Graphic Novel. After the success of this series EGNs started to be sold in bookstores as separate volumes.

In the 1990s more children’s publishers began to be involved in the EGN business. Some of the most popular EGNs in the 1990s include *Textbook Manhwa* by Gulsure and *Manhwa Textbook* by Samsung Books, both of which are comics versions of elementary school Korean, science, math, social science, history, and textbooks (Lee 1990). Other EGNs that were published as separate volumes—as opposed to in series—from many children’s publishers were enormously successful, which resulted in proving EGNs’ marketability and financial feasibility in the Korean publishing market (Lee 2005b: 21).



Why?: Stars and Constellation
(Papyrus 2007: 33)

The main characters converse about earth’s revolution and rotation; detailed illustrations are used to help readers’ understanding of scientific facts.

Despite the success of *Far Countries, Near Countries* in 1987, Educational Graphic Novels were still undervalued by comic artists. EGNs were not particularly popular compared to other comics until the 1990s; during that time many EGNs were illustrated by new comic artists or by



Far Countries, Near Countries: France (Rhie 2003: 24)

old comic artists who were no longer competitive (Cho 2007: 20). However, with the unexpected huge success of one EGN series, *Greek and Roman Mythology Reading in Graphic Novels*¹³, the EGN market instantly soared. Following the success of *Greek and Roman Mythology in Graphic Novels*, other EGNs also gained huge popularity. Some EGNs are even exported to other countries, such as France, Taiwan, mainland China, Japan, and Russia (Kwon 2007; Pyo 2009: 26). Moreover, some EGN characters are adapted into online video games, board games, musicals, food, drink, and other commercial goods, which make EGNs even more popular. For example, *Magic Thousand Characters Text* was adapted into a musical (*Musical Magic Thousand Characters Text*) that was presented in major cities in Korea, software for

Nintendo DS¹⁴ (*Magic Thousand Characters Text DS*), and children's beverages (*Magic Thousand Characters Text: apple and red ginseng taste* and *Magic Thousand Characters Text: plum and red ginseng taste*). *Magic Thousand Characters Text RPG* (Role-Playing Game) is being developed by NC Soft¹⁵.

Characteristics of educational graphic novels

A number of children's literature experts in Korea argue that Educational Graphic Novels comprise a nice combination of entertainment and educational elements in a comic format¹⁶ (Han et al. 2004: 21; Lee 2009: 9; Lim 2005). Hong Jae-Chul, an editor for children's book publisher I-Seum, says that the ratio of the educational element to the entertaining element in today's EGNs is about 65 to 35 and indicates that the portion of entertaining element is increasing (2005: 35). Considering that the ratio of educational element to entertaining element in EGNs until the 1990s was 80 to 20, today's EGNs obviously became much funnier to read (Lim 2005).

Park argues that the greatest difference between EGNs before 2000 and after 2000 is that the latter could overcome "the obsession with being educational" (2005: 268). Instead, today's EGNs actively embrace the distinctive features of major comic books—interesting storylines and attractive illustrations (Park 2005: 270; Pyo 2009: 27).

Park points out that the storyline of *Greek and Roman Mythology Reading in Graphic Novels* is a typical RPG (Role Playing Game)¹⁷ format. *Greek and Roman Mythology Reading in Graphic Novels* follows this format: it has elements such as (1) new adventures, (2) acquisition of items, (3) main characters' learning and development, (4) continuous emergence of new characters, and (5) explicit conflicts and romance (Park 2005: 270). Many other bestselling EGNs follow the same storytelling formula. Usually there is a main character and two sub-characters, all of whom go through the adventure together. The main character is an inquisitive and lively boy, one sub character is a smart girl, the other sub character

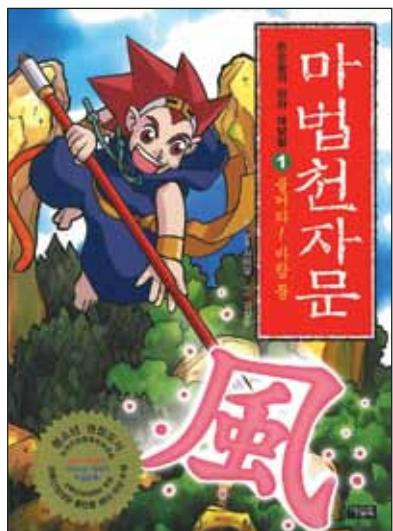
is a male adult who leads the journey and is knowledgeable about the given subject (Kang & Jeong 2009: 170)¹⁸. Because new adventures continually appear, these EGNs are published as series (Park 2005: 270).

The other distinctive feature of new and more recent EGNs since 2000 is attractive illustrations that are indistinguishable from general comics (Lim 2005; Noh 2006: 47). While previous EGN illustrations used simple line drawings and cartoonish characters as a way to more easily approach young readers, today's EGNs apply the major comics' illustration style (Lee: 2005b: 22) with delicate drawings and beautiful colors.

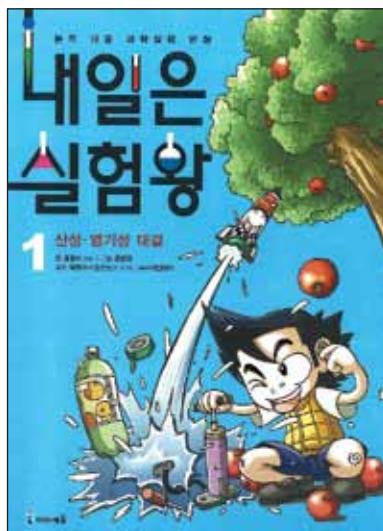
approach young readers¹⁹, today's EGNs apply the major comics' illustration style (Lee: 2005b: 22) with delicate drawings and beautiful colors (See Figure 3). Most Korean children have been familiar with this illustration style through general comic book reading, TV animation, and online/video games, since they comprise their conventional sources of entertainment. Thus, children could acknowledge that the new style EGNs were as much fun as other entertaining media²⁰ (Pyo 2009: 28). The popularity of EGNs led major comics artists to join the EGN field.

Conclusion

Educational Graphic Novels have received much attention from educators, librarians, and parents as the issue of children's reading since 2000 in Korea. Some children's literature and comics experts say that the popularity of Educational Graphic Novels is declining (Lim 2005). Others say the popularity is still going on and will last for a couple more years (Cho 2009; Kim 2009). Still others say that it is up to the publishers' efforts to create better quality EGNs (Choi, 2007). Whether or not



Magic Thousand Characters (2004)



Tomorrow's King of Experiment (2006)



Greek and Roman Mythology
Reading in Graphic Novels (2005)

The other distinctive feature of new and more recent EGNs since 2000 is attractive illustrations that are indistinguishable from general comics (Lim 2005; Noh 2006: 47). While previous EGN illustrations used simple line drawings and cartoonish characters as a way to more easily

the popularity of Educational Graphic Novels continues, it is undeniable that the EGN is a unique medium worth looking at—especially these days when new media is regarded as an important part of young people's everyday lives.

Notes

- ¹ Traditional order of Korean names places the family name first followed by the given name. In this case, Ra is the family name and Gyeong-Rae is the given name of this person. I will follow this traditional order when indicating Korean names in this paper.
- ² The books were not really being repaired. They were not replaced with new copies, either. What the librarians did was physically remove the 250 EGNs from the library collection.
- ³ At that time, Dongdaemun-gu Public Library had about 18,000 children's books; only 7% of them (about 1,000 books) were Educational Graphic Novels (Ra 2007).
- ⁴ This survey is based on the sales database (Lee 2009).
- ⁵ This is McCloud's definition of comics.
- ⁶ Sunjeong manhwa is often translated into "girls' comics," because the majority of its readers are teenage girls.
- ⁷ *Yaoi* is a borrowed word from Japan. It is "a type of story generally involving romantic homosexual encounters" (Aquila 2007: 39). In most cases the main characters in Yaoi are beautiful-looking gay men. Both the main readers and creators of Yaoi are women.
- ⁸ *Essaytoon* is a coined word, which is a combination of "essay" and "cartoon." Generally, *Essaytoons* are published online (Yoon 2004).
- ⁹ Although there exist about twenty master's theses about EGN in Korea, no doctoral dissertation about EGN has been published yet. This is partly because EGNs popularity is a very recent phenomenon, and partly because comics in general have been perceived as a lowbrow medium in Korea.
- ¹⁰ In Korea, there is not a clear distinction between paperback and hard-bound. (In fact, there is no word for "paperback" in Korean.) Books are generally published on good quality paper (similar to what is used in hardbound books in the U.S.) with sturdy bookbinding.
- ¹¹ *Far Countries, Near Countries* is a series of books created by Rhie Won-Bok, who has been publishing the series since 1987.
- ¹² This comparison is based on common characteristics of educational graphic novels and regular graphic novels. This may not apply to some books.
- ¹³ Graphic novel version of *Greek and Roman Mythology*, published by Gana Books. The first volume was published in 2000.
- ¹⁴ Nintendo DS is a handheld game console developed and manufactured by Nintendo – an international software and hardware company.
- ¹⁵ NC Soft is an internationally famous software company.
- ¹⁶ Both Hong and Lim do not specify how they arrived at these figures or the criteria they used.
- ¹⁷ In RPG (Role Playing Game), the game player carries out a given mission that makes him/her grow up (Park 2005: 270).
- ¹⁸ This is not a strict rule, but a general tendency.
- ¹⁹ McCloud says that the more abstract an image of a character is, the more easily readers can identify with the character (1993, p. 30).

²⁰ Because of these dual characteristics—entertaining and educational—EGNs are often referred to as “edutainment comics” (Kang & Jeong 2009: 166).

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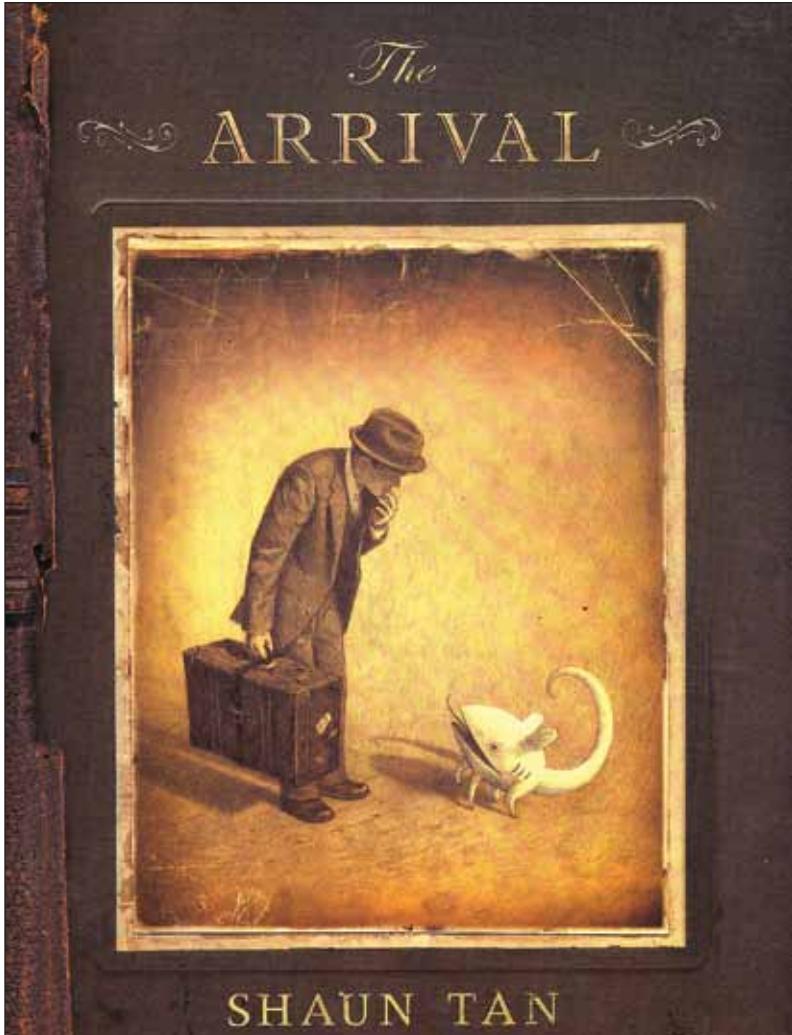
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Raymond Briggs:

Controversially blurring boundaries



Janet Evans provides food for thought examining the work of Raymond Briggs and his conception of his own visual narratives. Evans goes on to analyze the body of Briggs's oeuvre by asking, "Who are Raymond Briggs's books for?" and "What are his books about?"

This paper begins by considering some of Briggs' concerns about the way in which graphic novels have been viewed over time. It then looks at the terms "comics," "graphic novels," "picturebooks" and "illustrated books," and discusses how Briggs has been instrumental in elevating the status of graphic novels by creating texts that engage readers of many different ages.

Raymond Briggs, artist, writer, cartoonist, and graphic novelist, has long been a prize-winning creator of cartoon strips, graphic novels, and picturebooks for readers of all ages. He has used the

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strip-cartoon format in many of his books, and the popularity and greatness of his work demonstrates that comics and graphic novels should not be taken lightly; they are thought-provoking, often deeply controversial texts that challenge the reader at many levels.

Since starting his career as an author-illustrator over five decades ago, Briggs has been controversially and subversively blurring the boundaries of picturebook production for readers of all ages. His books, regarded by many as being for young children, are often complex graphic novels with challenging, underlying messages. Some of the titles representing these genres are looked at along with some of the recently emerging “fusion” texts. Briggs’ books challenge us to think about the implied reader (Iser, 1978; Williams, 2008) and the intended audience, along with considering the artist’s unique style that accompanies the all-important content and subject matter.

Comics and graphic novels – The poor relations of other written and illustrated texts?

Briggs has been highly instrumental in helping raise the intellectual profile of graphic novels. Over five decades he has been given numerous awards for his work, yet during this time he has had ongoing concerns about the way people regard cartoon strips and graphic novels, frequently verbalizing his frustration about the way they were being viewed and treated. Over 18 years ago he realized that the adult strip cartoon was denied the dignity of an accepted form and he knew why. He attributed this lack of dignity to their content, stating that he had never seen a good graphic novel and that any large picturebook format with illustrations is often placed in the under-the-8-year-old section. Adults in England would not be seen reading them as they would in other countries such as Japan and France. It was when speaking of Chris Ware’s graphic novel *Jimmy Corrigan*, the winner of the Guardian First Book Award in December 2001, that Briggs made clear his viewpoint in relation to graphic novels. He stated:

Now that Jimmy Corrigan has won the Guardian First Book Award, it can only mean that the strip cartoon has at long last become intellectually respectable. About time too. In this country there is a hierarchy of snobbery in the arts. Opera, of course, is at the top, then theatre (count the knighthoods), next literature, with poetry hovering uncertainly in the background. Below that comes film, followed by painting, which few people understand. Below that comes illustration and respectable political cartooning ..., and then right at the bottom, in the gutter, is the strip cartoon, a medium for children and the simple-minded (Briggs, 2001).

Despite the fact that cartoon strips, comics, and graphic novels have been the poor relation of other written and illustrated texts for quite a long time, they are now increasingly being studied academically. It was Will Eisner, the legendary cartoonist and author of *Comics and Sequential Art*, who noted that in the last 20 years things have changed radically and comics and graphic

For much of this century the word "comics" has had such negative connotations that many of comics most devoted practitioners have preferred to be known as "illustrator," "commercial artists" or, at best, "cartoonists!" And so, comics' low self-esteem is self-perpetuating!

novels are now much more widely accepted. Eisner also noted that an increasing number of artists and writers were creating sequential art that was more worthy of scholarly discussion. As early as 1985, Eisner stated that:

Unless more comics addressed subjects of greater moment they could not, as a genre, hope for serious intellectual review. As I

often lectured my students, “great artwork alone is not enough” (Eisner, 1985, p. xi).

Scott McCloud had similar concerns:

Some of the most inspired and innovative comics of our century have never received recognition as comics, not so much in spite of their superior qualities as because of them. For much of this century the word “comics” has had such negative connotations that many of comics most devoted practitioners have preferred to be known as “illustrator,” “commercial artists” or, at best, “cartoonists!” And so, comics’ low self-esteem is self-perpetuating! (McCloud, 1994, p. 18).

Evidently the subject matter is a major problem. Briggs himself returned to this issue and the lack of respect that strip cartoons were being afforded when he spoke of his own, incredibly controversial books:

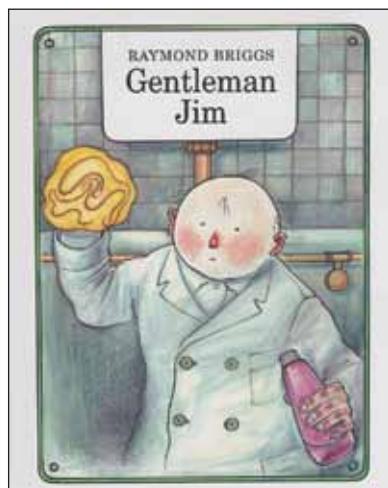
I hoped When the Wind Blows might strike a blow for the much-despised medium of strip cartoons. It showed that it could deal with a profoundly serious subject in a straightforward way and make a valid point. The book was discussed in the House of Commons, made into a radio play and there were theatre productions all over Europe. Strip cartoons do not have to be comic cuts or muscle-bound men in tights socking bad guys on the jaw (Briggs, 2002).

In November 2008 the Cartoon Art Trust Awards were held in London. Alongside prizes for the likes of Young Cartoonist of the Year, that year's Lifetime Achievement Award went to Briggs. This same year saw *Gentleman Jim* republished.

It is a story of an ordinary, rather simple, working-class toilet cleaner who dreams of better things, but however hard he tries he can never quite manage to advance his career. Each time he tries, he comes across red tape and bureaucracy and he eventually ends up in prison. Originally published in 1980, this reissue indicated that

maybe graphic novels were at last beginning to be taken seriously. Speaking of the republished version of *Gentleman Jim*, Briggs, in conversation with Rachael Cooke, commented:

It’s jolly good, a book from 28 years ago being dragged out of the cellars. I read it the other day for the first time in years. I didn’t think it was bad, though I don’t see that it was all that revolutionary in terms of the graphic novel. Not that I like that term; they’re not all novels, and “graphic” is such a meaningless word; it just means writing. I prefer the French, bandes dessinées. If you say strip cartoons, which is what I say, it implies something a bit comic and Beano-ish. It’s never been an accepted form in England, that’s the trouble. I’ve been grumbling about this for years (Cooke, 2008).



What are comics and graphic novels – Are they different from picturebooks and illustrated texts?

The acceptance of comics and graphic novels is growing; there is currently a burgeoning renaissance in their creation and production and they are now much more widely accepted (Arnold, 2003; Couch, 2000; Gravett, 2005; Martin, 2009). However if Briggs himself was unsure of the meaning of the term “graphic novel”, wondering as he did what was different about it and why, then maybe we need to take a closer look at what people think graphic novels are, along with some

of the terminology afforded to comics, graphic novels, picturebooks, and illustrated books. For example, are *all* graphic novels “book-length” comics, and could they also be classed as picturebooks? Sabin (1993) felt that graphic novels were a type of comic, longer than the normal comic, in book form with a thematic unity. Philip Pullman seemed to wonder if the terminology matters anyway when, in speaking of the graphic novel, he stated:

Personally, I'm getting a little tired of the term. It's the form itself that is interesting, the interplay between the words and the pictures, and I'd be happy to call them comics and have done with it (Pullman, 1995, p.18).

Words and images are there in various combinations in all comics, graphic novels, picturebooks, and illustrated books, and they require a similar understanding of the way in which they interrelate, so:

- What, if any, are the essential differences?
- Are the differences clear cut and, anyway, does it matter?
- What dictates the style, audience, and subject matter?

The first question to ask is “What determines when a comic becomes a graphic novel and what are the differences between graphic novels, picturebooks, and other illustrated texts?” The fact that comics and graphic novels are only just gaining respectability can also be said of picturebooks; these too have only recently started to earn serious consideration as a genre worthy of academic and scholarly debate and not just as something suitable only for babies and very young children.

Comics

Eisner, classed by many as the man who pioneered the comic-art field, called comics “sequential art” (Eisner, 1985). Comics are an art form that features a series of static images in sequence, usually to tell a story. Eisner, himself a comics creator, studied and wrote about them until his death in 2005. He studied comics as a form of reading, demonstrating that comics have a vocabulary and grammar in both prose and illustration. He also considered what needed to be in place for a visual text to be called a comic—how were comics different from other visual texts? He realized that creators of comics use a blend of words and images to convey their message. He also noted that many comics creators were artists presenting their work in “a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols,” hence the term “sequential art” (Eisner, 1985).

Scott McCloud, another great master in this field, extended Eisner’s work in relation to defining the art of comics. His eventual definition was more complex, stating that:

“comics are juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud, 1994, p. 9).

The key to comics is the format, what they look like on the page. They are usually printed on paper (although online comics are becoming increasingly popular) with boxes of drawings in sequence. Text is often incorporated into the images, with text bubbles to represent speech and squiggly lines to indicate movement (Brenner, 2002). Typical examples showing these characteristics and fitting in with both Eisner's and McCloud's definitions of sequential art are the well-known comics such as *Beano*, *Peanuts*, *The Simpsons*, and even *Rupert Bear*, which uses a sequential art format but with a less cartoony style of art and which has been continuously in print for over 90 years since its conception in 1920.

Graphic novels/comic strip books

Similar to comics and strip cartoons in form, the graphic novel, often defined as "a book-length comic"—a type of comic book, or a novel whose narrative is conveyed through a combination of text and art, usually in comic strip form—is becoming increasingly popular and is a truly multimodal form of communication. Eisner's book *A Contract with God* was the first published graphic novel to use the term on its cover in 1978, although Eisner disliked the term "graphic novel" and preferred to use the term "graphic literature" or "graphic story." Certain countries and cultures celebrate this form of illustrated text more than others; for example, France with its celebrated bande dessinées in the form of *The Adventures of Tintin* and *Asterix the Gaul* (both by Belgian artists) and Japan with its widely read manga texts. "Manga" is in fact the Japanese term for comics.

When Briggs and Eisner both stated over 20 years ago that in order to be given greater consideration and greater respect graphic novels needed to deal with "subjects of greater moment" they were right, and now graphic novels often deal with serious issues, for example:

- Art Speigelman won the Pulitzer prize in 1992 for *Maus*, a book about his father's survival in the holocaust. *Maus* is often noted as being the quintessential graphic novel.
- Bryan Talbot deals with child abuse in *The Tale of One Bad Rat* (1996) where the story of father–daughter abuse is set against the beautiful backdrop of the Lake District and the life of Beatrix Potter. It is a juxtaposition of extremes—beauty and ugliness.
- Raymond Briggs who strongly advocates for graphic novels to deal with serious issues, created *Ethel & Ernest* (1998), a moving biography of his parents as they lived their lives before, during, and after the war years.

Increasingly there is a blurring of the boundaries (if these ever really existed) and some graphic novels are becoming "fusion" texts that combine elements of picturebooks, comics, and graphic novels to create a category that is a synthesis of aspects from all of them whilst still dealing with very serious issues:

- Brian Selznick combines elements of picturebooks, graphic novels, and film in his “fusion” book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which won the Caldecott Award in 2008.
- Shaun Tan took four years to complete *The Arrival* (2006), a wordless picturebook and graphic novel. Viewers are taken into an unknown land and are presented with unsettling images, making the reader think of what it must be like to be a stranger or a refugee in a new land. The ability of this book to communicate is remarkable and yet it is totally wordless.
- David Almond deals with bereavement and bullying in *The Savage* (2008). This “fusion” book illustrated by Dave McKean is part picturebook, part illustrated story book, and part graphic novel. Elements from all three types of illustrated text are merged to great effect in this award-winning book.

In this blurring of the boundaries it is apparent that there are many similarities between graphic novels and picturebooks, and whilst graphic novels can evidently be viewed as picturebooks, it is obvious that picturebooks cannot necessarily be viewed as graphic novels: the terms are not mutually inclusive.

Picturebooks

A picturebook is an art form that combines visual and verbal narratives in a book format. A true picturebook tells the story both with words and illustrations. Sometimes they work together, sometimes separately. Of this relationship David Lewis says:

The words tell you something and the pictures show you something; the two things may be more or less related, but they may not. Back and forth you must go, wielding two kinds of looking that you must learn to fuse into understanding (Lewis, 2009, p. xii).

It seems that the picturebook is a total entity, something that needs to be considered holistically,

a work of art in miniature. Over 30 years ago Barbara Bader stated:

A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page (Bader, 1976, p. 1).

Orange, Pear, Apple, Bear by Emily Gravett (2006) is a fine example of this definition, the beautifully created images work alongside the words which, minimal though they be, also work alongside the images—the two are inextricably linked. It is a masterpiece in its simplicity and a fine example of an art form where words and images work together to tell a story.

In this sense picturebooks are not at all different from comics and graphic novels, where the words tell and the pictures show. Indeed, McCloud (1994) says that comics communicate in a language that is shared by the creator and the reader; this “word–image” mix is an essential element in sequential art.

Contemporary illustrated storybooks

The illustrated storybook is another variation of the illustrated text. Books with short chapters, which are frequently part of a series aimed at the developing independent reader, are illustrated, often with black-and-white line drawings or occasionally a full-page color palette. It seems that the aim is to encourage young readers to try a book that has more words than a typical picturebook and is therefore more difficult to read. Martin Salisbury states:

The illustrated story book differs from the picturebook and therefore requires a change of approach by the illustrator. Illustrated stories are aimed at an older reading age, and this means the function of the image in relation to the text takes on a completely different significance (Salisbury, 2004, p. 94).

Francesca Simon's *Horrid Henry* series, illustrated by Tony Ross, and Jacqueline Wilson's books, illustrated by Nick Sharratt, are examples of this genre in which occasional, sparse illustrations are used to draw the reader in.

The common factor—What is it?

What do each of the four types of illustrated text—comics, graphic novels, picturebooks, and illustrated books—have in common?

Visual images are the common factor. Combined with words they are used to communicate with the reader to greater or lesser degree in each of these text types. Many contemporary visual texts are a multimodal fusion of different ways of communicating to include images, words, and the way these are positioned on the page. There is a blurring of forms and

Visual images are the common factor. Combined with words they are used to communicate with the reader to greater or lesser degree in each of these text types. Many contemporary visual texts are a multimodal fusion of different ways of communicating to include images, words, and the way these are positioned on the page. There is a blurring of forms and formats and a fusion of styles, however they are all ‘visual narratives’.

formats and a fusion of styles, however they are all “visual narratives”. This term allows us to view illustrated texts as a cohesive whole, a genre in its own right as they all tell their narratives through a blend of visual images and words, sometimes even without words at all.

Clearly we should start to view visual narratives, or “graphic literature” or “graphic stories,” the terms Eisner preferred to use, with more respect, not as “automatic rubbish” which was how some people viewed them (Cooke, 2008). Each type of

illustrated text can play an extremely important role in encouraging reading, especially amongst more reluctant readers; the flexibility of their format allows them to tell complex stories and ideas in an enjoyable and easily digestible way. Comics and graphic novels in particular have recently been attracting academic interest and much research has been done on the role of both comics and graphic novels in schools (Cary, 2004; Bromley, 2000; Fenwick, 1998; Gibson, 2009; Rosen, 1996; Thompson, 2006). However picturebooks too are now beginning to earn serious consideration as a genre worthy of academic and scholarly debate, and not just as something only suitable for babies and young children. There is now a great deal of academic picturebook research being conducted (Anstey and Bull, 2000; Arizpe and Styles, 2003; Evans, 1998, 2009; Lewis, 2001; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001; Nodelman, 1998; Pantaleo, 2008; Sipe and Pantaleo, 2008).

The time for visual narratives to “come into their own” is upon us.

Raymond Briggs: Author and illustrator

Despite his numerous awards, Briggs stated only nine years ago:

I wish I could be a proper writer, having to do only the words. Proper writers can start at the beginning, go on till they get to the end, then stop and hand it in. No drawing and painting, no design, no jacket to do and, above all, no hand lettering. Luxury (Briggs, 2002).

Cartoon strips—Not a job for old men

Briggs has long complained that graphic work does not get the respect it deserves but senses the tide might be turning, as he tells Nicholas Wroe:

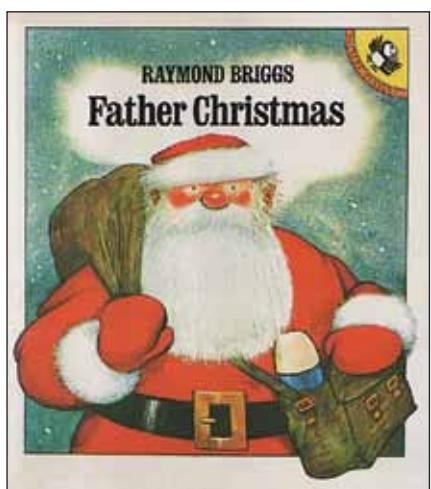
Partly it has itself to blame because the subject matter is often so dreadful and there is still an awful lot of sock-em-on-the-jaw stuff going on. But respectable publishers are putting out graphic novels, although I don't know if I like that term too much, and there is no reason why it shouldn't be as dignified a medium as, say, film, which they are very much like in many ways (Wroe, 2004).

Briggs always wanted to go to art college, however, in the interview with Nicholas Wroe, he states:

I never thought about being a gold-framed gallery artist and was only pushed into painting when I went to art school. I went there wanting to do cartoons (Wroe, 2004).

He remembers the interviewer at Wimbledon College of Art nearly exploding when he expressed his ambition.

He went purple in the face and said, "Good God, is that all you want!" It really was the lowest of the low and so I started to paint because when you're only 15 and the big man with a beard tells you what to do, you generally do it (Wroe, 2004).



Briggs started writing and illustrating his own picturebooks in the sixties, his first one was *The Strange House* in 1961. However, he quickly found that the 32-page space restriction of the picturebook format meant he didn't have enough space for all his images.

It was this pressure of space that forced me into the labor-intensive botheration of strip cartoons. In 1972, while working on Father Christmas, I found I needed far more than the 32 pictures of the standard book and more even than the 64 of two pictures per page. There was so much to go in that 10 or more pictures per page were needed, so leading straight into the bottomless abyss of strip cartooning. Ever since I've been trying to give it up. It's not a job for an old man (Briggs, 2002).

Luckily Briggs didn't give up, and in 1973 *Father Christmas* was published, his first graphic novel, for which he was awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal.

This was Briggs' second Greenaway Medal, the first being for his picturebook *The Mother Goose Treasury* in 1966. *Father Christmas* was a huge success despite the protagonist being a grumpy and rather bad-tempered character. Briggs himself commented:

He's old and fat and has a working class sort of job a bit like my dad, who was a milkman. Because he's been doing it all his life and he gets cold, dirty and tired, it's perfectly logical that he would be fed up with it and so he is going to be grumpy (Wroe, 2004).

It was four years after *Father Christmas* that Briggs created *Fungus the Bogeyman*.

In some ways not unlike *Father Christmas*, *Fungus* was another book featuring a rather miserable, somewhat self-deprecating character who

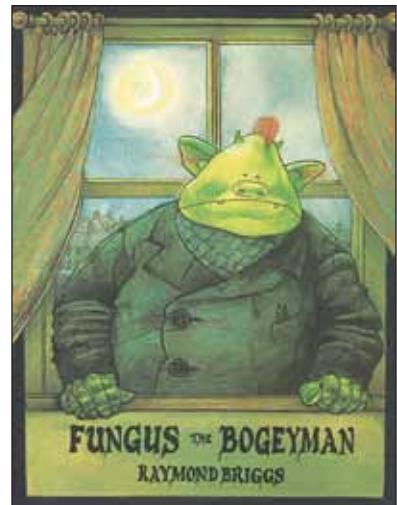
frequently reflected on his own existence and wondered what life was all about. *Fungus* was one of his first really thought-provoking and provocative books—in fact it is very philosophical. On the last two pages Fungus is depicted pondering on the meaning of life in a very existential manner

Why am I a Bogeyman? [...]
What is The Purpose of Our Existence?
I am, Yet what I am Who knows ...
I am the Self-Consumer of My Woes.

In addition to some of the existential elements in *Fungus*, Briggs obviously worked hard and had fun with the subversive word play he used throughout the book.

The next ten-year period was to be a very productive one for Briggs. After *Father Christmas* in 1973 he created nine more successful cartoon strip/graphic novels, five of which were challenging, stimulating, and often very controversial:

Fungus the Bogeyman (1977)
The Snowman (1978)
Gentleman Jim (1980)
Where the Wind Blows (1982)
The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman (1984)

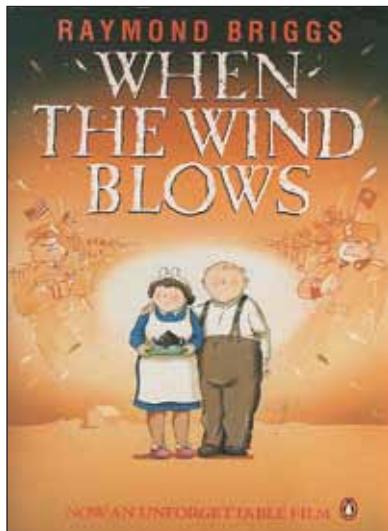


Briggs' graphic novels—What are they about and who are they for?

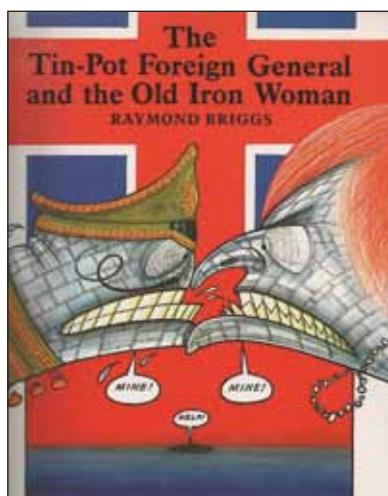
In taking a closer look at the content or subject matter of Briggs' books, one starts to consider who they are for and what exactly are the messages within. Of course each reader interprets in his/her individual way; however, one begins to wonder if Briggs writes for a particular audience, and, thinking about his very controversial books, did he have thoughts, questions, and issues he wanted to communicate?

A lot of his books seem to have social, political, and moral overtones and frequently feature himself, in disguise, as well as Ethel and Ernest, his dear parents who both died in 1971. Many of his graphic novels appear to be obsessed with dark, philosophical issues, including death, dying, tragedy, and the futility of life. In 2004, during one of his interviews, he explained that endings to books are “inherently sad because death is the real ending” (Wroe, 2004). There often seems to be a theme of the underdog running through his books, and, in addition, Briggs’ books engage the reader in issues related to war and conflict and, by definition, politics. *When the Wind Blows* and *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* are both overtly concerned with the after-effects of war. However, war issues and the plight of the individual were also depicted in his earlier books such as *Gentleman Jim*. Even *Fungus the Bogeyman*

features a Weem, or Moss Bunker, which looks remarkably like the air-raid shelter in *Ethel & Ernest!*



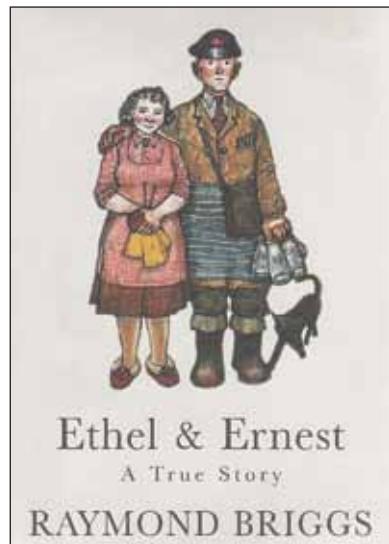
When the Wind Blows is one of the most poignant books, warning us of the atrocities of nuclear war. It is not a picturebook for young children, but a powerful graphic novel for adult and young adult readers. At the time it was published, copies were sent to every member of the House of Commons. Two years after came *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.



This is an overtly political picturebook, illustrated in graphic-novel style, and its content is far from easy to digest. At the time it shocked many people aware of the political

crisis surrounding the Falklands War. In it Briggs openly scorns the principles of power that saw the working man being sent to war over an irrelevant disputed territory.

In both of these books it seems that Briggs wanted to portray a particular view of war and conflict, the government's apparent lack of caring in relation to the suffering of ordinary people and soldiers, as well as its inability to empathize with the suffering of individuals.



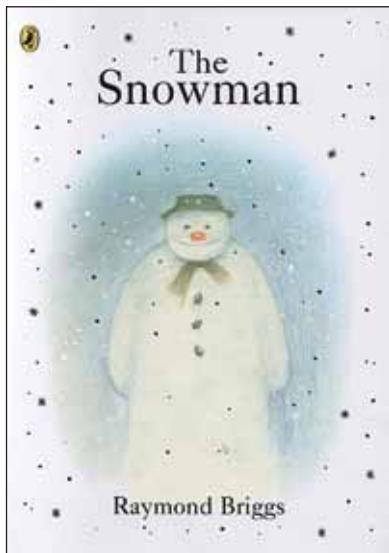
It was, however, in his masterpiece *Ethel & Ernest* (1998), that we saw Briggs at perhaps his most sensitive. It is the biography of his parents' lives and tells of his father, who spent over thirty years as a Co-op milkman and who was proudly working class, and his mother, who was a maid-turned-housewife and who was more conservative, as they live their lives through many social and political changes: the Second World War, the beginning of the Welfare State, and the introduction of television.

In a review of the book in *The New York Times*, Nick Hornby (1999) stated, "Social historians have said much less at much greater length, and with much less warmth and affection."

Conclusion

We live in a multimodal world where visual literacy plays an integral part of our understanding of everyday life. Raymond Briggs has, over a 50-

year period, been continually courting controversy and blurring the boundaries within the different examples of visual texts to include multimodal picturebooks, comics, and graphic novels. His books, perfect examples of their genre, have at times subversively shown the futility of life, but they have also extended our horizons and made us think more profoundly about the meaning of life.



One of his earlier books, *The Snowman*, is still perhaps his most famous. It is in this book, probably Briggs' simplest wordless picturebook/graphic novel from 30 years ago, that we see his genius; the whole story from beginning to end still carries with it a tremendous power to move us in its sheer simplicity.

Raymond Briggs is quite simply a genius!

Note

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Notes

With thanks to Hamish Hamilton, Penguin Books and Raymond Briggs for permission to reproduce cover images of *Fungus and the Bogeyman*, *When the Wind Blows*, *The Snowman*, *Father Christmas*, and the *Tin Pot*

General and the Iron Lady. Thanks to Random House for permission to reproduce cover images of *Gentleman Jim* and *Ethel & Ernest*. This article, including images, is reprinted with permission from Janet Evans. It originally appeared in Carrington, B. and Harding, J. (eds) (2010). *Going Graphic: Comics and Graphic Novels for Young People*. Staffordshire: Pied Piper Publishing.

In the near future, a GPS prototype provides the ability to locate places and to rework deep memory and space as virtual images. A successful publicist who is going through a personal and professional crisis has the opportunity to try this psycho-navigator that leads to a mysterious place and a disturbing possibility: another way of survival after death.

Gisbert is a renowned writer of fantasy and mystery novels. In this work, he shows his mastery in the dosage of intrigue and in the creation of extraordinary and surreal scenes. Among his countless awards, we highlight The Lazarillo and The National Children's Literature Award. Some of his works have been included in IBBY Honour Lists and The White Ravens.

Auladell is an innovative illustrator. In this graphic novel his images intensify the suspense, revealing circumstances that have not yet been narrated and that the reader will have to interpret. His art enhances the dark and light ambiguity of the story.

Alicia Muñoz Alvarez



Joan Manuel Gisbert

El despertar de Heisenberg
(*The Awakening of Heisenberg*)

Illus. Pablo Auladell

Madrid, Spain: El Jinete Azul, 2010
136 pp. ISBN: 978-84-937902-6-4
(Graphic Novel, Science Fiction,
ages 14+)

Dave McKean's art: Transcending limitations of the graphic novel genre

by PETROS PANAOU
& FRIXOS MICHAELIDES



Petros Panaou is Assistant Professor of Children's Literature at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus.



Frixos Michaelides is an acclaimed award-winning author and illustrator from Cyprus and a member of the board of Cyprus Board on Books for Young People (CyBBY).



The authors argue that Dave McKean's art breaks from standard conventions of genre and in doing so transcends their limitations. Panaou and Michaelides analyze several of his books and convincingly portray Dave McKean as an innovative groundbreaker who produces extraordinary visual stories.

Stephen Weiner (2001) defines the graphic novel as “a story told in comic book format with a beginning, middle, and end.” Weiner dates the use of the term graphic novel to the publication of *A Contract with God: And Other Tenement Stories* by Will Eisner in 1978. Eisner himself, in his seminal work, *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), implies that the graphic novel is inherently avant-garde, since it breaks from a tradition of comics being “confined to short narrations or depictions of episodes of brief but intense duration” (p.141). This is why the first attempts of publishing and promoting graphic novels ran “headlong into an unprepared audience” (p.141). The graphic novel’s audience has, of course, increased since 1978.

But this is not the only thing that has changed ever since. In the same text quoted above, Eisner had also pointed to certain limitations of the graphic novel genre:

1. In being specific, images obviate interpretation.
2. Converting a textual passage into a visual image in the mind, rather than viewing a printed version of the image, permits a more participatory involvement.
3. Within the comic book art, there is little time and space to deal with abstract ideas or emotions, such as “the surge of pain or the glow of love or the turmoil of inner conflicts” (p.140).

Eisner concludes his discussion of the medium’s limitations and challenges as follows:

Yet it is precisely in these areas where the opportunity for expansion of the application of comic book art lies. This is the prime and continuous confrontation which the comic book cartoonist must address. There are only two ways to deal with it: to try, and risk failure, or not to do it at all—that is, to avoid any subject not easily expressed by the present state of the art or its existing clichés (p.140).

Breaking away from conventions and transcending limitations

Dave McKean evidently opted for the first way, risking failure but succeeding to produce extraordinary visual stories. He achieved this by breaking away from the present state of the art and its existing clichés. Comic books, graphic novels, picture books, wordless picture books, illustrated books, and novels—as distinct genres—abide to specific conventions. Word-image interaction in each genre is guided by conventions and can only vary within a preset range. These identifiable conventions assist the interpretation of stories; the reader knows what to expect and how to receive it. McKean’s art, however, breaks conventions, resists categorization, subverts reading expectations, and yet is highly successful in communicating powerful and engaging stories.

As defined previously, a graphic novel is a story told entirely in comic book format. This is not the case in most of Dave McKean’s books. *The Savage* (2008) by David Almond and Dave McKean is one of these books. Even though the comic book art is exceptional, especially the witty and diverse design and sequence of panels, several pages in the book are covered by plain, typed text. There are two narrators in this text. The first one is young Blue Baker who writes a story called “The Savage” soon after his father dies. The second narrator is an older Blue

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Baker, who comments on the “Savage” story he wrote when he was younger and relates the events that preceded and followed its authoring. Each of these two narrators appropriates a different genre to tell his story. Young Blue’s story uses conventions from the graphic novel genre, while older Blue’s narration is displayed in the format of a novel with no illustrations. The effect is quite impressive. Older Blue’s solid, typed text relates the voice of a mature, balanced young adult who looks back in retrospect, while young Blue’s visual narration—which combines a sequence of framed and non-framed unsettling images and messy, misspelled handwriting—communicates the intense sentiments of a wild and enraged adolescent; the “Savage.”

Through this ingenious invention, Almond and McKean manage to transcend all three limitations listed above by Eisner. The contrast and interplay between the two modes of narration open up the possibilities of interpretation, encourage a more participatory involvement, and create the time and space to deal with abstract ideas and emotions—especially within the time

The contrast and interplay between the two modes of narration open up the possibilities of interpretation, encourage a more participatory involvement, and create the time and space to deal with abstract ideas and emotions—especially within the time and space gaps between the two narrations.

and space gaps between the two narrations. Moreover, devices such as visual allusions to the act of writing—the symbolical replacement of the knife in Blue/Savage’s hand with a pen—and textual references to the act of drawing—"I realized that the savage had drawn me long before I ever started writing him" (p.75)—enrich the interaction between novel and graphic novel mode.

Emotional complexity, involvement and interpretation are enhanced by additional brilliant techniques, such as the insertion of washed-out, abstract images at the points of transition from one mode of narration to the other and the clever use of color (blue to signify the real boy Blue and green to signify the imagined Savage). All these techniques manage to blend reality with fantasy into an intriguing, challenging whole, mirroring young Blue’s difficulty to distinguish fact from fiction.

Innovative techniques; Combining forms and elements from different genres

Mixed media and innovative employment of comic book codes are further elements that empower McKean’s work to break away from comic book clichés and transcend limitations of the graphic novel genre. Paul Gravett recalls McKean’s 1987 debut with the graphic novel *Violent Cases*, written by Neil Gaiman: “I recall the buzz in Titan Books’ basement when he brought in the moody cover art montaged with faded photos, a torn dollar bill and playing card, and real ivy leaves. Comics weren’t supposed to look like this” (n.p.). Gravett explains that,

...his techniques were pretty radical, at least in Eighties English-language comics: collaging maps, texts, fabric, movie posters, to convey the unreliable, distorting lens of memory; choosing different media for different effects, even in the same panel; reconfiguring panels, balloons and captions into fresh relations (n.p.).

These elements are also displayed in several other books by Gaiman and McKean. In *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* (1997) by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, collages of painted images, photographs, and drawings of basic elements of the story, as well as icons, compose the refined technique of the illustration, enriching the story and adding intellectual and emotional shades. The beginning of the book, with a double spread that depicts the setting of the story in the form of a map and a second double spread that

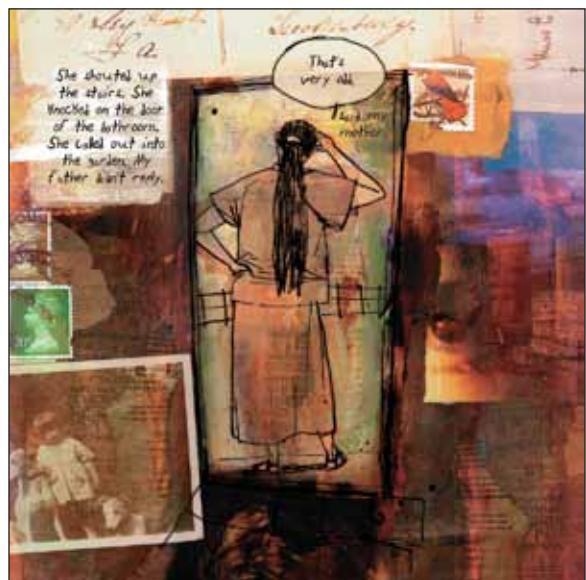
presents eight separate graphic symbols, informs the reader about the story's context. Photos of two paper clips with humorous text complete the introduction of the story, providing a sample of the creators' humor and creating a positive mood in which to read the narrative that follows.

The first page of the narrative resembles an illustrated story written in a handwriting that reveals the age and mentality of a child-narrator. All the remaining pages oscillate between genres. Panels and balloons are overused on one page and not used at all on the next. There is a continuous fluctuation of the text-image interaction and expressive mannerisms. The book combines forms and elements from different genres, all at the same time and sometimes on the same page. There is no specific pattern, but rather a constant change and blending. The only limitation is the story; anything that contributes to the narration of a good story is permissible, anything that enlists the different strengths of images and words and overcomes their individual inadequacies. Thus, text and illustrations break every rule, forming a hybrid picture book, comic book, illustrated book, graphic novel.

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The Wolves in the Walls (2003), also by David McKean and Neil Gaiman, is yet another hybrid. The book's cover shows that something is really

behind the walls of the child-protagonist's house, but the pencil in the child's hand and the child-like drawing of the wolf's figure make you wonder if the wolves are real or something she has imagined. In stark contrast, the eyes of the wolf on the cover look disturbingly real. The use of mixed media and the blending of genres once more transcend limitations, bringing into the story intense emotional mood, abstract ideas, and possibilities of interpretation.



McKean's techniques take the reader on a journey between imagination and reality: drawings and paintings (fictional part), photos (the real part), collages and graphics (somewhere in-between). A film-like effect is achieved, with the illustrator functioning as a film-director, choosing long shots or closer shots to the faces, depending on the desired effect. The girl protagonist, Lucy, is sure about the wolves in the walls, while the rest of the family is certain that there are no wolves. The text seems to be ignoring the illustrations. While words agree with the rest of the characters' version that the wolves are not in the walls, the illustrations seem to retell the story, agreeing more with Lucy's version of reality. A battle between reality and fiction is taking place through the opposition of text and image. At first we have realistic elements in the pictures

which make Lucy's story appear true, but then, when this outrageous story is recognized as real by the text, the illustrations suggest otherwise, using simplistic ink drawings to depict the wolves, making fun of the text, playing with the reader's perception of reality. One could say that the walls represent the borders between reality and fiction, which the mind can easily transgress, as Lucy does, and as the creators of the book do, showing that there are really no borders. The relations and contrasts between text and illustrations are so intense, and the combinations and alterations so vivid, that you have to go along and agree with them.

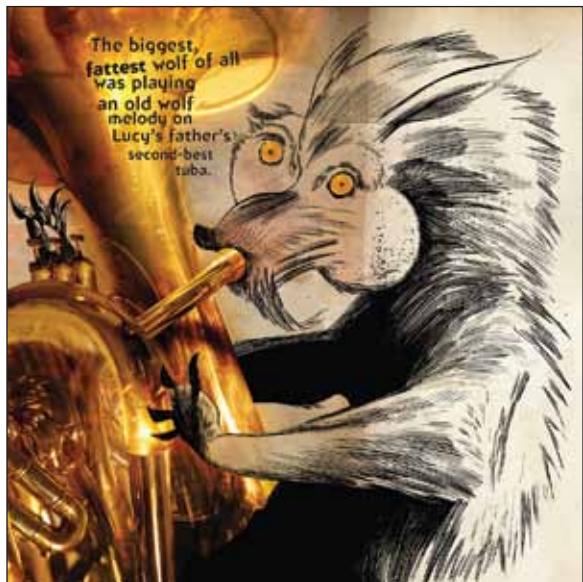
One could write forever about the numerous exceptional works by McKean. The fact is that through his innovative work in successful collaborations with award-winning authors such as Neil Gaiman and David Almond, Dave McKean has been extremely influential. As

Gravett asserts, even though "plenty of pen-and-ink cartoonists were wary, even disdainful, then of the fancy, "fine artsy" experiments McKean was making," "so much of what McKean started introducing in the late Eighties, such as overlapping images on acetate or playing with the distortions of video and photocopiers, can be seen now as hands-on precursors to the image manipulation software common in comics today" (n.p.).

The present discussion has focused on the ways in which the narratives of McKean's books are constructed through a powerful fusion of generic conventions, a combination that prompts the reader to stay constantly alert, assessing the nature of word-image interaction on each page, and switching from one mode of interpretation to another. While these "hybrids" certainly do

imply an experienced reader—one who is familiar with the conventions of each of the enlisted genres—they also imply a reader who, being a child of the postmodern era, accepts and celebrates flexibility, fluidity, and transmutation.

Scott McCloud draws a triangular diagram, an area described by three vertices ("reality," language symbolic meaning, and the picture plane) to present "the total pictorial vocabulary of comics or of any of the visual arts" (p.51). He then positions some artists on this diagram. In the diagram he sketches for McKean's body of work, he makes it clear that, unlike most artists whose work covers only small areas, McKean's spreads through the entire surface of the triangle. The following caption is written above the diagram: "Some artists, such as the irrepressible Sergio Aragones, staked their claim on a particular area long ago and have been quite happy ever since. Others, such as Dave McKean, are forever on the move, experimenting, taking chances, never satisfied" (p.56).



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Note

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Excalibur, although published in the USA, is the creation of two Englishmen. Writer Tony Lee, the prolific comic book writer, lives in England. Illustrator Sam Hart, born in England, now lives and teaches comic art in Brazil. The two collaborated on the highly acclaimed *Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood* (Candlewick, 2009). In *Excalibur* they continue to demonstrate their inventiveness and skill as they take a fresh look at the Arthurian legend. Here, although the familiar aspects of the legend are included, the focus is on Arthur's coming of age and his early years as king. Both dialogue and illustrations possess subtle artistry lacking in many graphic novels. Language manages to be direct even as it evokes the times of the ancient tale. In this striking presentation, the various vivid color schemes used in the illustrations effectively reflect the changing moods and spirited action of the adventurous plot. This is a superior example of the genre.

Glenna Sloan



Tony Lee

Excalibur: The Legend of King Arthur

Illus. Sam Hart

Somerville, MA, USA: Candlewick Press, 2011
144 pp. ISBN-10: 076364644X;
ISBN-13: 9780763646448
(graphic novel, ages 13+)

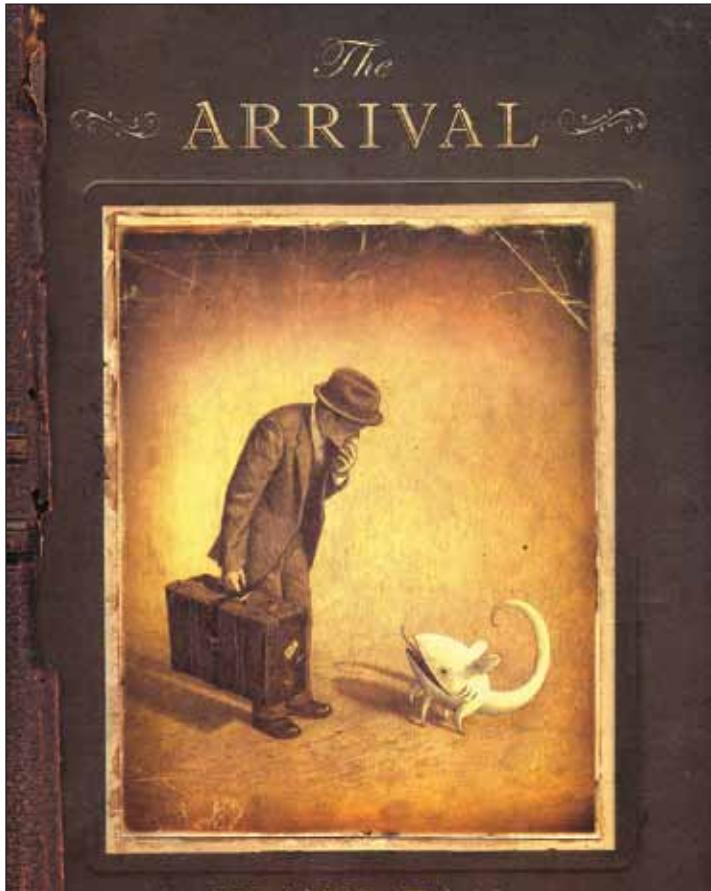
Picture books as graphic novels and vice versa: The Australian experience

by JOHN FOSTER



John Foster has taught children's literature at the University of South Australia and its antecedents for over 30 years. He has written one book on children's literature and co-authored four others, and has spoken at conferences on five continents.

His doctoral thesis was on Australian children's comic books, and today he writes chiefly on graphic novels.



What is the state of the graphic novel and picture book in Australia? In this thought provoking article Foster explores the current tendency for picture books in Australia to include features that fulfill criteria that for some define graphic novels. At the same time, he argues that graphic novels sometimes contain important aspects of picture books. The nature of these new hybrids gives one pause to reconsider our understanding of what is and what is not a picture book.

Teachers hate comic books. Librarians hate comic books. Parents hate comic books. Publishers in recent decades have ignored them and reviewers have always done so. In contrast, everybody loves picture books: Saxby even entitled a chapter in one of his children's literature texts: "A time of wonder: entering the world of picture books" (Saxby, 1997, p. 104).

How is it, then, that the graphic novel, that shares many features with the comic book, has been embraced by all of the above-mentioned groups? More pertinently here, why are those involved with picture books claiming that they fit into the newly-popular category of graphic novel when, seemingly, they barely—if at all—fit the definition? With the average age of a graphic novel reader supposedly 30 (Rousseau, 2010, slide 2), it might seem strange that books for the youngest readers are being labelled as graphic novels. However, this does seem to be the case, so the reasons that lie behind it and the implications of it, should be considered.

The research on graphic novels to date has emphasized their relationship to comic books. The morphing of comic books into graphic novels is a tale frequently told, but the topic here is not the evolution of *comic books* into graphic novels but, rather, of *picture books* into graphic novels. So, this discussion will be centered on works that previously would have been “picture books” but are now considered “graphic novels” or, in one case, a “graphic picture book” (Walker Books, 2010, p.10), by at least one source.

The examples examined are Australian, because this country has been in the forefront of the recent development of the graphic novel for both older and younger readers. All five works examined have been at least short-listed—and in four cases, have won—Children’s Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Book of the Year Awards, in two different categories. These works are:

- *The Arrival* (2006) – illustrated by Shaun Tan. Picture Book of the Year.
- *Requiem for a Beast* (2007) – written and illustrated by Matt Ottley. Picture Book of the Year.
- *Captain Congo and the Crocodile King* (2008) – written by Ruth Starke, illustrated by Greg Holfeld. Short-listed for Picture Book of the Year.
- *How to Heal a Broken Wing* (2008) – written and illustrated by Bob Graham. Early Childhood Book of the Year.
- *The Hero of Little Street* (2009) – illustrated by Gregory Rogers. Picture Book of the Year.

It should be noted that the CBCA warns that a Picture Book of the Year listing is a matter of format, not of implied audience, unlike that for Early Childhood Book of the Year which, as its title suggests, is for works suitable for the youngest readers.

The morphing of comic books into graphic novels is a tale frequently told, but the topic here is not the evolution of comic books into graphic novels but, rather, of picture books into graphic novels.

The nature and popularity of graphic novels

“Graphic novel” is a slippery term to define. Goldsmith, for example, merely places it “on the continuum of sequential art that also comprises comic strips, comic books and Latin American *fotonovelas*.” (Goldsmith, 2010, p. 3). The most-quoted definition is that by de Vos, in which

graphic novels "...are bound books, fiction and non-fiction, which are created in the comic book format and are issued an ISBN." (de Vos, 2005, p. 1). This assumes, of course, that the reader can actually identify "the comic book format."

In contrast, defining a "picture book" is straightforward. According to Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, picture books are "profusely illustrated books in which the illustrations are, to varying degrees, essential to the enjoyment and understanding of the story" (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 73). This requires little explanation, despite the vagueness of "to varying degrees."

Sales of picture books in the United States are falling because, it is claimed, many parents are "mindful of increasingly rigorous standardized testing in schools" (Bosman, 2010) therefore forcing their young children to bypass the picture book stage and progress to "chapter books." However, some of the most popular chapter books borrow heavily from graphic novels, with Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series and Jennifer and Matthew Holm's even more comic-book-like *Babymouse* notable examples. Dav Pilkey's *The Adventures of Ook and Gluk* (Beard & Hutchins, 2010) is described as being a graphic novel on the author's homepage (Pilkey, 2010); moreover, it was listed as one of the best-selling "Graphic Books" in *The New York Times* listings, rather than being on the "Children's Books" list (*The New York Times*, 2010).

In contrast, until the global financial crisis, sales of graphic novels had been increasing (ICv2, 2010), although most of these were works for adolescents, and even for adults. Although there is no apparent causal relationship between a decrease in the sales of one and an increase in those of the other, the fact is worth noting and may be a portent.

Recently, much has been written by the newly converted on the educational advantages of graphic novels: school and children's librarians, who would not stock comics, regard graphic novels as—amongst other things—a response to falling literacy rates; a way of attracting reluctant readers to texts, and an adjunct to multiliteracies,

as they incorporate both visual and (usually) linguistic literacies, plus a form of media literacy. Interestingly, Cagle, in her article on enticing children to read, equates picture books and graphic novels (Cagle, 2010).

The centrality of the graphic novel in popular culture is demonstrated by the fact that both classic and modern novels—for children and adults—have been adapted to the format, as have movies, videogames, poetry, and plays. In return, new episodes of existing novels and movies have been brought out as graphic novels, while graphic novels themselves have been adapted into movies and videogames.

This, then, is the current world of the graphic novel. Even so, it is essential to understand the current compulsion to label picture books, most of which are for young children, as graphic novels. Perhaps this question may be answered by examining the five works listed above, discovering why they might be considered graphic novels, and determining what that means.

The Arrival

Considered by Tan himself to be "a picture book" (Tan, 2010), *The Arrival* was listed as one of YALSA's "Top Ten Great Graphic Novels for Teens" (Young Adult Library Service Association, 2008). The story of an immigrant who leaves his homeland and family to seek a new life in a foreign country, *The Arrival* is noted for

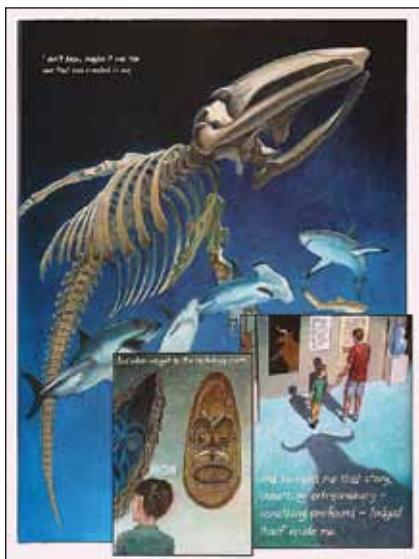


Tan's ability to involve the reader despite (or even because of) the wordless narrative and surreal nature of the new land. Additionally, he used existing photographs of immigrants in order to honor the real people.

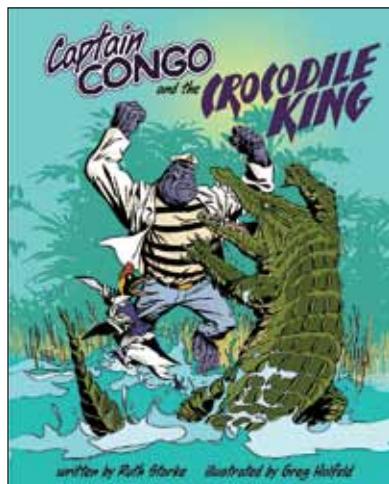
The variety in layout is noteworthy, from the endpapers, with their dozens of "portraits" of immigrants, to the pages with a dozen small, rectangular illustrations, full-page pictures, and double-page spreads, plus combinations of those, all of them in black, sepia, and white for maximum effect.

Requiem for a Beast

Requiem for a Beast may be the least accessible of the examples under discussion here. Its success at winning the Picture Book of the Year award was marked by controversy, given its language and cruelty to both people and animals. Subtitled "a work for image, word and music" (Ottley, 2007), the book is accompanied by a compact disc with chanted, instrumental, and spoken word tracks. The narrative is a non-linear and multi-voiced exploration of injustices done to Indigenous people, such as the mother whose child has been taken by the white authorities, with a second plot strand involving a boy who becomes a "jackaroo" mustering cattle in the Outback, but is haunted by the metaphorical Beast of authority, given shape as the Minotaur.



Ottley uses different fonts, such as handwriting and italics, superimposed on the illustrations to represent the perspective of different characters, and there are full pages—even a double-page spread—of text, with other pages of mainly text but with a comparatively small illustration as well. The text itself is quite advanced, with examples like "pendulous swing of its testicles" (Ottley, 2007, p. 9). Elsewhere in the volume are full- and double-page illustrations, pages containing several illustrations either with text within illustrations or without text on the page, and unusual formations of illustrations. *Requiem for a Beast*, then, contains elements of the novel, the picture book, and, by any definition, the graphic novel. Each element complements the others to further and give meaning to the narrative, with symbolism, such as that of the Minotaur, adding an allusive layer.



Captain Congo and the Crocodile King

This African adventure, with a gorilla and penguin as protagonists, would be the archetypal graphic novel to many readers if not for its external picture book form and easy-to-understand content. The illustrations are arranged in comic-strip fashion, with speech in balloons, and there is comparatively little variety in layout from page to page. It is reminiscent, in fact, of what are probably the earliest examples of graphic novels, even though the term was not yet in existence: the Tintin and Asterix series. The almost geometric layout obviously retains its popularity some 80

years on, although the illustration of the semi-nude woman, however culturally accurate, indicates that it is not for the youngest readers.

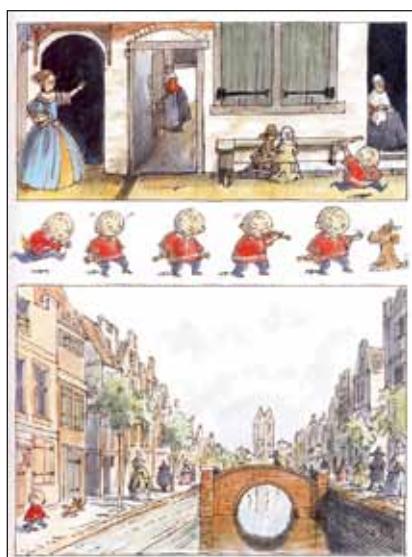


How to Heal a Broken Wing

Superficially, *How to Heal a Broken Wing* appears to be "just" a picture book. Certainly, it is not on Snowball's otherwise complete list of recent Australian graphic novels (Snowball, 2010); but given that it is listed by the publisher in its "Walker Books Graphic Novel Kit 2010" as a "graphic picture book" (Walker Books, 2010, p. 10), it merits consideration here.

In this uplifting tale, a small boy rescues an injured pigeon from a city pavement and takes it home—much to his parents' initial displeasure—in order to nurse it back to health. He does so, of course, releases it, and happily watches it fly away. *How to Heal a Broken Wing* won the award for Early Childhood Book of the Year, so is indeed a book for the youngest readers, as is apparent from its subject matter, clear illustrations, and limited, simple, text. That Graham wanted those who read the book to children to gain something from it is made clear with an endorsement of the book by of Amnesty International (Graham, 2008) echoing the theme.

It is apparent, however, that this book, with multiple illustrations on a page, fulfills that particular criterion for graphic novels; indeed, the use both of pages with that layout and those with a single image, including double-page spreads, give the work a variety missing from many picture books—and some graphic novels. Moreover, there is a degree of sophistication in this work, such as the use of phases of the moon to demonstrate the passage of time in the illustration.



The Hero of Little Street

Another wordless work, *The Hero of Little Street* is the story of a small boy who, escaping from bullies in modern-day London, runs into the National Gallery—and is joined by a dog from a painting by Van Eyck before jumping into one of Vermeer's works and having adventures in his 17th century Delft. As with *The Arrival*, the layout of this book varies from a number of small illustrations on a single page to double-page spreads; where it differs, however, is the exuberance of Rogers' illustrations, so that small, often movement-filled illustrations can appear in a single line.

There are two distinct styles of illustration here: an authentic rendering of the buildings of Vermeer's Delft and Rogers' own cartoon-like characters. This approach is similar to that found in many *manga*, in which the realism of settings creates "a mood or sense of place" (McCloud, 1993, p. 79), while the characters are mere caricatures. As often found in *manga*, the two approaches are combined in a single page.

Summary and conclusions: The picture book/graphic novel nexus

The simplicity of *How to Heal a Broken Wing* can be contrasted with the complexity of *Requiem for a Beast*, but it is apparent that they, together with the other three works discussed here, share important features. The defining characteristic for this group is not the reliance on illustrations to further the narrative, as all picture books fit that, but the element of having a number of pictures on a single page, even occasionally, giving them at least a partial comic book format. This, it would seem, defines a graphic novel for some in the field, whatever the implied audience, and complies with de Vos's requirement of a "comic book format" (de Vos, 2005, p. 1).

In fact, only *Captain Congo* can be regarded as a "pure" graphic novel; the remainder are hybrids of picture book and graphic novel with elements of the novel thrown in for *Requiem for a Beast*. Moreover, *Captain Congo* is also the only work of the five to lack thematic depth, seeming only to be written to entertain, and to be part of a series. Although little can be read into this, it could be a sign of the times: a more sophisticated, varied format is accompanied by a more sophisticated, deeper meaning—even for young readers. It may only be a perception that the graphic novel is superior to the picture book as a vehicle to deliver "messages," but, even so, it is a perception that seems to be growing.

Four of the five works were at least shortlisted for the Picture Book of the Year award, but it has been demonstrated they can be seen, also, as at least hybrid graphic novels. The implications of this are considerable. Readers who are unused to the sophistication of the graphic novel layout, especially those only used to picture books, have a steep learning curve ahead of them so far as the combination of media, visual, and (probably) linguistic literacies are concerned. Learning to read the juxtaposed illustrations on one page in *How to Heal a Broken Wing* or speech balloons in *Captain Congo* or a wordless narrative in *The Arrival* or *The Hero of Little Street* or—at an even greater degree of complexity—the combination of full- and part-page illustrations, different layouts, and different fonts in *Requiem for a Beast*, all require skills of varying degrees of difficulty to be acquired.

Still, the graphic novel format, even a partial one, seems to allow the creator to explore possibilities not available in a "straight" picture book. Having a series of illustrations on a page allows for a real exploration of both character and event; in fact, the rather lengthy and nuance-filled plots of the two wordless books would require formidably long texts if words were to be utilized. The same is true of *Requiem for a Beast*, in which the content and juxtaposition of the illustrations, together with

The defining characteristic for this group is not the reliance on illustrations to further the narrative, as all picture books fit that, but the element of having a number of pictures on a single page, even occasionally, giving them at least a partial comic book format.

the different fonts to represent the perspective of different characters, facilitate the illustration of different stages of events and the incorporation of subtle allusion. Even in *How to Heal a Broken Wing*, Graham's ability to use the format to indicate the passage of time shows the reader how long it takes to recover from a serious injury.

That many picture books have been described as graphic novels has been demonstrated, but the reverse, too, is true: works that could be classed as graphic novels because they fulfill the basic "comic book format" criterion are actually picture books and have been winning awards as such. Thus, the common assumption that a "picture book" is an easy-to-read, brightly illustrated work for small children, while a "graphic novel" is a deeper, probably darker work in comic-strip format for older readers, is often demonstrably incorrect.

Indeed, the "marriage" of the two formats—particularly when the resulting work is suitable for younger readers—is noteworthy, combining, as it does, the accessibility of the one with the sophistication and depth of meaning of the other. This allows readers of all ages to enjoy visually-oriented material while gaining ideas, concepts, and an introduction to issues which, otherwise, they might come to much later. Perhaps the term "graphic picture books" is an idea whose time has come.

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Note

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Rutu Modan's graphic novel tells the story of a young Tel Aviv cab driver named Koby Franco. His routine is interrupted one day when he is approached by a young female soldier who claims that his estranged father has been killed by a suicide bomber at a train station. Together they look for clues to determine whether he is indeed dead. The plot unfolds around this mystery as well as around the participating characters. Despite the unusual, surrealistic circumstances, this story deals with identity, family, love, and loss. It presents a humane approach to relationships, in spite of the uneasy place where they sometimes intersect. This novel was created by an artist who can both tell and illustrate a story. She combines elements from art, illustration, comic strips, literature, and film to create something completely new. Translated into many languages, this book was awarded the 2008 Eisner Award for Best New Graphic Novel and was ranked by *Time* magazine among 2007's top ten graphic novels.

Murit Shilo-Cohen



Rutu Modan

Karov Rabok (Exit Wounds)

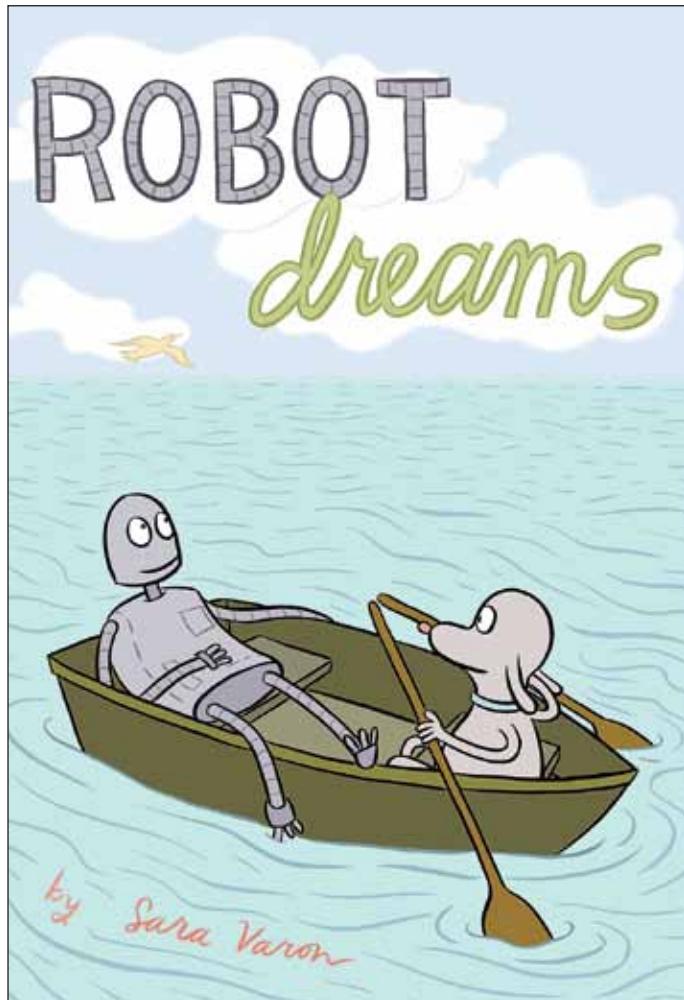
Tel Aviv, Israel: Am Oved, 2008
Montreal, Canada: Drawn & Quarterly,
2007
172 pp. ISBN: 978-1-897299-06-7
(graphic novel, ages 15+)

Robot Dreams and the language of sound effects

by COLLEEN AF VENABLE



Colleen AF Venable is the Art and Design Editor for First Second Books and the author of the kids' graphic novel series *Guinea Pig, Pet Shop Private Eye*, illustrated by Stephanie Yue.



*What happens when sound effects are translated to various languages? Colleen AF Venable appreciatively describes the beauty of sound effects around the world in her discussion of translations of Sara Varon's *Robot Dreams*.*

Even in one language, or maybe more appropriately in the lack thereof, Sara Varon's wordless *Robot Dreams* is a story that can be translated many ways. It starts out clearly enough: A 208-page friendship tale about a dog and the robot he builds when he is lonely. The two instantly become the best of friends and go on adventures—visiting the library, making homemade popcorn, going to the beach, and generally having a great time with smiles permanently drawn on their adorable patented Sara Varon faces.

...Well, at least until page 17. Yes. That's right. Page 17: when the two realize that the robot has rusted from seawater and can't move; he is stuck paralyzed in the beach sand that had just been their playground.

This is where the true beauty of the story kicks in; because, as opposed to piles of children's books that come out every year, this is a book about friendship, *real* friendship, which, unfortunately, often includes a lot of heartache. *Robot Dreams* asks the question, "What do you do when your best friend breaks you and leaves you paralyzed on a beach while they go on to befriend bunnies, snowmen, and anteaters—only to realize none of them can actually replace you?" Or, perhaps a little more universally: "What do you do when circumstances make you and someone you really care about grow apart?"

One book, varying audiences and interpretations

Robot Dreams is a wordless book, one that can be read and understood entirely by looking at the pictures. Because it's a complex tale told in the most understandable way, I've always thought about *Robot Dreams* as a book for the very young, a book I wish I had had when I was in fourth grade and my best friend Kim Anderson moved away. Despite the fact we tearfully promised in our secret language—which just consisted of putting

"What do you do when your best friend breaks you and leaves you paralyzed on a beach while they go on to befriend bunnies, snowmen, and anteaters—only to realize none of them can actually replace you?"

the letter W in front of every word we spoke—that we "would walways write wto weachother," I never heard from her again. Countless readers have doubtless felt the same way that I did, including kids all over the world who have had the pleasure of discovering *Robot Dreams*, thanks to Dargaud in France and Ravensburger in Germany, who both put out their own editions. But for as many people who think *Robot Dreams* is a young child's story, there are also those who think it's a book about first love and loss, a book

for teens. And then there's a whole other group convinced it's a book for adults, one that is so complex in emotional content that it surely can't be appreciated unless you've been through a bad divorce. I had one librarian in particular tell me the book got her through her rough marriage split and helped her realize both that her ex was a dog (um...pretty sure that wasn't the point...) and that it was okay they were both moving on (which is a lot closer to the message of the tale).

Other editions in other languages

When I first read it in 2006, *Robot Dreams* instantly became one of my most-cherished graphic novels of all time. Prior to coming to First Second for design, in 2007 I got a job working in marketing for Roaring Brook Press, First Second's parent company, and had the pleasure of working next to what soon became one of my favorite things: The Bookcase of First Second Foreign Editions—something I love so much I feel the need to capitalize all of the letters of the words to describe it!

From a designer's standpoint, it is fascinating to see which foreign editions use the original cover and which get a new cover, which logos undergo font-overhauls, and which countries seem to think all of the text of a book should be stuck on the outside as well as the inside. Of all the books, including the seemingly two-mile long shelf of *American Born Chinese* translations, the one that made me smile the most was *Robo und Hund*, the German edition of *Robot Dreams*. Rough translation: Robot and Dog, with their new subtitle, "Wahre Freundschaft Rostet Nicht," which translates as, "True Friendship Does Not Rust." I was so smitten that my favorite online translation widget and I spent almost two hours in an attempt to order a copy of my own from a German website – two hours well spent.

What I loved most about the German edition, and later on about the French edition which followed in 2009, was that it had been *completely translated*...despite the fact that most people consider *Robot Dreams* to be a wordless story.

There are 115 sound effects in *Robot Dreams*, all lovingly hand-drawn in the original by Sara

Varon (the author-illustrator), sometimes in fluid script, sometimes in large colorful block letters. Part of our mission at First Second is to spread good books around the world, both by publishing our own homegrown projects but also by publishing the best from international creators—



Top panel from *Robo und Hund*, the German edition of *Robot Dreams*, bottom panel from *Rêves de robot*, the French edition

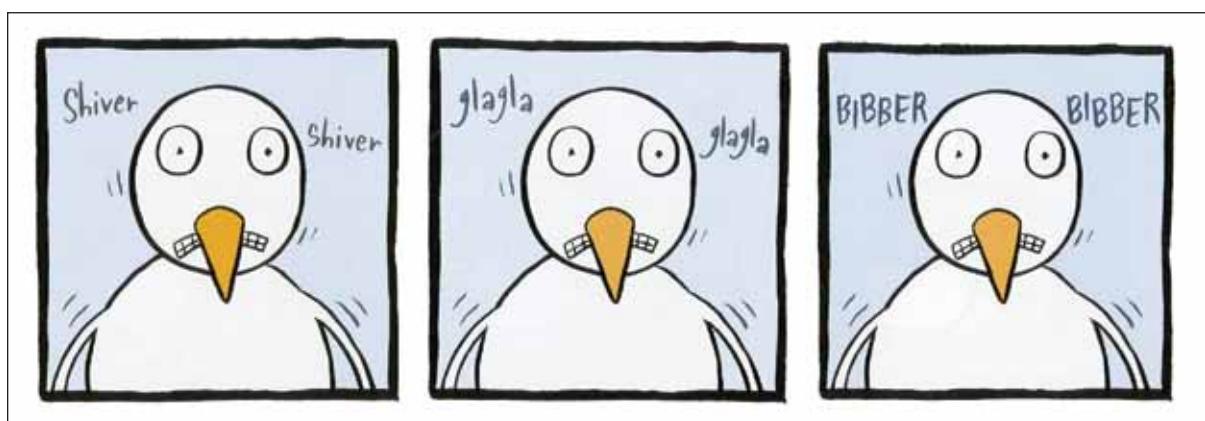
brilliant minds like Emmanuel Guibert, Joann Sfar, and Gipi. As a party to that mission, part of my job as the designer for First Second includes prepping the files for international editions: separating the image, hand-lettered text, and all sound effects into separate “layers,” so when we

sell the foreign rights just the click of a button makes it ready for translation.

I can't even begin to count how many hours this sometimes takes, especially because the sound effects are often embedded in the art so that seamless removal takes a surgeon's touch. Some of you might think I'm wasting my time doing this, since how different are sound effects around the world? Can't it just stay the same?

I distinctly remember the day I learned dogs don't always go “woof woof.” Someone on the playground tried to tell me that French dogs say “ouah ouah.” Being a geeky kid with my nose in a book, and quite often gum in my hair, I was pretty sure I was having my leg pulled. “Ouah ouah”? Barks didn't sound anything like that! So I ran away to my safe haven, the library, to find out that not only were they telling the truth, but there were hundreds if not thousands of ways dogs barked around the globe. The world felt huge to me that day and language was suddenly even more fascinating.

The sounds we make when we are surprised, when we laugh, when we walk, when our hearts beat: these are universal emotions and motions that can be described so many ways in so many tongues. There is real beauty to be found in the language of sound effects around the world: An American “Gasp” becomes a startled German “Schluck” and a French “OOOH” of surprise. The “Shiver Shiver” of a snowman becomes “Bidder Bidder” in Berlin and “glagla glagla” in Grenoble. (Also, can we stop and take a moment to appreciate



One of Sara Varon's creations in three languages, l to r: English, French, and German

that these are images of a snowman shivering?
While he may be chilly, it warms my heart.)

Here's a list of just a few of the sound effects translated in *Robot Dreams* in order of their appearance. You'll notice not only variations on words but also capitalization and punctuation; many times in the German edition they favored removal of the words entirely, leaving the image to do the talking:

The book I love has now become the three books I love, and I have my fingers crossed that one day I'll get to read *Robot Dreams* in even more languages. But there's one thing I've definitely learned. Reading *Robot Dreams* in any language always makes me cry. If you can somehow make it through the book without crying, you might be a robot...though definitely not one from this story.



English	French	German
bzzt bzzt!	ding dong!	DING DONG
POP POP POP	POP POP POP	POP POP POP
OW	OUILLE	-
tug tug	tic tic	-
CREEEAK	CRIIIIC	IIIIEK
EEEAK	RIIIIC	IIIIEK
PAT PAT	Frott Frott	-
splash! splash!	splatch! splatch!	
Gulp!	Gloups!	-
twitch twitch	gling gling	GRUMMEL GRUMMEL
KNOCK KNOCK	TOC TOC TOC	KLOPF KLOPF
CRACK!	CRAAC!	KNACKS!
pluck	ploc	-
HOP!	HOP!	HOPS!
SNAP	SNAP	RATSCH
HONK HONK!	HONK HONK!	HUP HUP!
thump thump	poum poum	poch poch
GASP	OOOH	SCHLUCK

English	French	German
whump!	paf!	-
sip sip	Glou Glou	-
dig dig	gratt gratt	BUDDEL GRAB
WA HA HA	OUA HAHA	HA HA
shiver shiver	glagla glagla	BIBBER BIBBER
ssSNAP!	ccCRAC!	KRACKS!
Streeeetch	Yoouuhhouuu	STREEEEECK
hurfl!	hon!	-
SNIFF! SNIFF!	SNIFF! SNIFF!	SCHNUPPER! SCHNUPPER!
dig dig	gratt gratt	SCHÜRF
scoop!	Froucht!	GRAB!
sigh	soupir	SEUFZ
yank!	crac!	-
bend!	tac!	KNICK!
phew	OUF	UFF
POKE	touc	STUPS
YAWN!	YOÂÄ!	GÄHN!

Books cited

- Varon, S. (2007). *Robot Dreams*. New York: First Second Books.
 Varon, S. (2008). *Robo und Hund*. Ravensburg: Ravensburger Buchverlag.
 Varon, S. (2009). *Rêves de Robot*. Paris: Dargaud.
 Yang, G. (2006). *American Born Chinese*. New York: First Second Books

Note

All images in this article are from *Robot Dreams* by Sara Varon, printed with permission by First Second Books.

Books On Books

Edited and compiled by
CHRISTIANE RAABE

Translations by NIKOLA VON MERVELDT



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



Here you will find intriguing reviews of new resource books in the field of children's literature including an Austrian work that examines how world literature is transformed or "translated" into picture book format, conference proceedings with contributions by experts from eight European countries exploring the interaction between political and social ideology and the aesthetics of literature for young people, an examination of the development of Irish children's literature in English written within the past three decades, and a handbook examining different aspects of literary reading from the scholarship of three disciplines: literacy education, English, and library sciences.

AUSTRIA

MARLENE ZÖHRER

Weltliteratur im Bilderbuch

(World literature in picture books)

(Series: Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung in Österreich; 12)

Wien: Praesens-Verlag 2010 249 pp

ISBN 9783706906227 € 38.90

There is a long tradition of transferring “world literature”—either the original text or adapted versions—into the system of children’s literature. Whereas they used to be published predominantly in anthologies and digests, there is a recent trend for picture books to take up texts of world literature. In her study, Marlene Zöhrer examines how world literature is transformed or “translated” into picture book format. To do this, she analyzes the picture books on three levels, looking at the text, the paratext, and the pictures and paying close attention to the interplay and changing functions of these elements.

Zöhrer focuses on picture books and illustrated children’s books that showcase literature from German—and English—speaking authors, such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Shakespeare. Considering the wealth of material, this limitation is understandable, but nevertheless regrettable. In determining the target audience of the picture book adaptations, Zöhrer observes that they generally address children as well as adults and demonstrates that the change in medium can open up new perspectives on world literature. Which productive tensions, shifts, and new references between the original and adapted text (or paratexts) result from this cross-writing



technique and change in medium? Do the illustrations rejuvenate or update the text? Which strategies motivated the choice of this new presentation? Which opportunities arise for the promotion of literature from “world literature in picture book form” and how does this form influence the shaping of the literary canon?

Stylistically, this insightful study is brilliant and also an enjoyable read for non-academics; Zöhrer works with concisely defined terminology and follows a clear, convincing outline. The argumentation is informed by the latest academic debates, touching on issues discussed by research in world literature and the literary canon on intertextuality and intermediality and productively relating these debates to current scholarship in children’s literature.

Sibylle Weingart

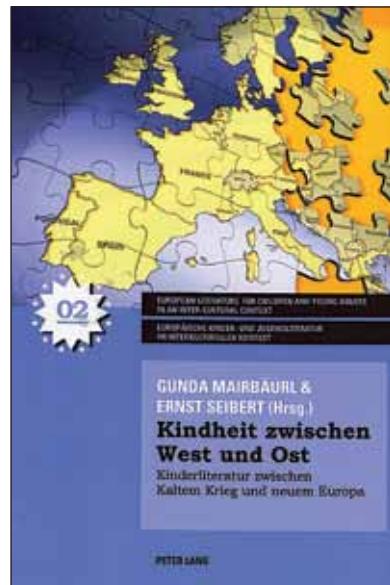
GERMANY

GUNDA MAIRBAURL AND
ERNST SEIBERT (EDS)

Kindheit zwischen Ost und West. Kinderliteratur zwischen Kaltem Krieg und neuem Europa
 (Childhood between East and West: Children's literature between the Cold War and new Europe)
 (Series: Europäische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur im interkulturellen Kontext; 2)
 (Series: European Children's and Youth Literature in intercultural contexts; 2)
 Berlin [et al]: Peter Lang 2010 198 pp
 ISBN 9783034305600 € 40.00

The conference proceedings for "Childhood between East and West," which unite contributions by children's literature experts from eight European countries, explore the interaction between political and social ideology and practice on the one hand and the aesthetics of literature for children and young adults on the other. Examples from Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia demonstrate how political and social developments shaped children's literature in the East and West, before and after the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

Using a socio-literary approach, Caroline Roeder portrays the pains and perils children's book authors from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had to suffer in the face of state censorship. Similar considerations underlie the essay tracing the controversial debate that took place in 1950s Slovakia (Andrea Mikulášová) on the "Westernness" of Erich Kästner's children's books. Other contributions assess the importance of specific literary genres. The parable, for example, established itself as the traditional form of children's literature in Bulgaria because



it allowed authors to comment upon human society in the guise of harmless animal stories (Lilia Ratcheva-Stratieva). In Hungary, it was and still is the genre of the fairy tale that served as a medium of indirect social criticism; however, this led to a lack of problem-oriented realistic literature for children and young adults (Sarolta Lipóczki). The situation was different in the GDR: while reflecting the extra-textual world with changing character constructions, East-German children's literature also obeyed intrinsic aesthetic impulses (Karin Richter). Zuzana Stanislavová observes a similar development in Slovak young adult fiction, which repeatedly shifts its focus from the collective socialization of the child in the 1950s and 1970s to the individual coming of age in the 1960s and 1980s.

The twelve essays differ not only in methodology and thematic focus, but also in their level of sophistication, ranging from personal, anecdotal accounts to more complex academic arguments.

Ines Galling and Katja Wiebe

IRELAND

VALERIE COGHLAN AND
KEITH O'SULLIVAN (EDS)

Irish Children's Literature and Culture.

New Perspectives on Contemporary Writing

(Series: Children's literature and culture)

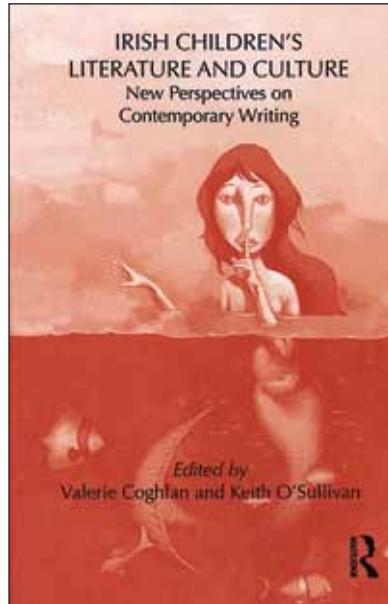
New York and London: Routledge 2011 X pp

+ 213 pp

ISBN 9780415877893 GB £ 80.00

Compared to the children's literature output in other European countries, the body of contemporary books for young readers published in and about Ireland is still fairly small. "Irish Children's Literature and Culture" is a fresh and inspiring collection of essays looking at the development of Irish children's literature in English written within the past three decades. The editors clearly state that the volume does not claim to cover Irish literature for young people in its entirety, but that their aim was "to provide an insight into the variety and complexity of contemporary writing." In order to do so, the various contributors examine children's books from Irish and non-Irish authors both in Ireland and abroad. Not only do they analyze a broad selection of books, authors, and illustrators, but they also examine Irish works for children in relation to Irish literature for adults and to international children's literature, as well as to literary and cultural theory.

The topics, forms, and genres discussed in the book's thirteen chapters include mythology,



religious and cultural identity, globalization, historical fiction, picture books, the gothic, speculative fiction, and children's poetry. Although each essay focuses on a different topic and can be enjoyed separately, a certain amount of overlap in the texts under scrutiny allows readers to experience contrasting perspectives and invites the audience to compare them and participate in the discussion. This study offers indispensable insight into topical questions and developments for both academics and the general children's literature aficionado.

Claudia Söffner

USA

SHELBY A. WOLF, KAREN COATS, PATRICIA ENCISO, AND CHRISTINE A. JENKINS (EDS)

Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature

New York [et al]: Routledge 2011 XII

pp + 555 pp

ISBN 9780415965057 (hbk)

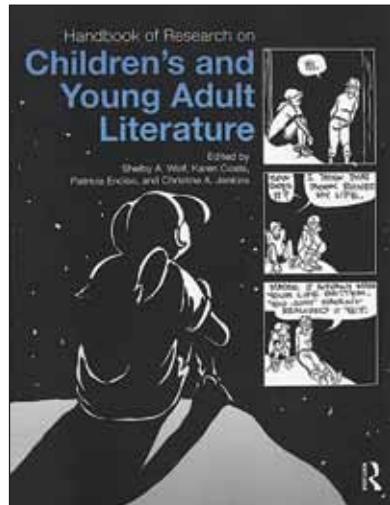
ISBN 9780415965064 (pbk)

ISBN 978023843543 (ebk)

US \$ 295.00 (hbk) / US \$ 94.00 (pbk)

US \$ 101.83 (ebk)

The purpose of this handbook is to describe and analyze “different aspects of literary reading, texts, and contexts” from the scholarship of three disciplines: literacy education, English, and library sciences. Each field has developed its own “tradition for interpretation” for youth literature and these perspectives are woven throughout the three parts of the handbook. Part I, “The Reader,” explores social, political, and historical contexts of readers and reading in home, school, library, and community settings, from literature with LGBT themes to reading literature with children in elementary schools. Part II, “The Book,” provides analytic frames for examining genres in contemporary literature, such as graphic or indigenous novels and textual studies. Particularly thought-provoking are commentaries provided by renowned authors and illustrators including David Wiesner, Lois Lowry, and Philip Pullman. Part III, “The World Around,”



looks at the contexts and issues of access that surround books and youth, such as literature around the globe, censorship, publishing policies, and institutions that support and preserve literature.

The multiple authors represented in this volume—nearly 130 academics, authors, and illustrators—come from wide-ranging backgrounds and raise many questions and sometimes contradictory perspectives about contemporary literature; yet these articles serve to open up new conversations among disciplines with often disparate parameters of scholarship. As the authors note, it is perhaps in the books themselves where “people, regardless of academic discipline, theoretical persuasion, or age, can find true common ground.”

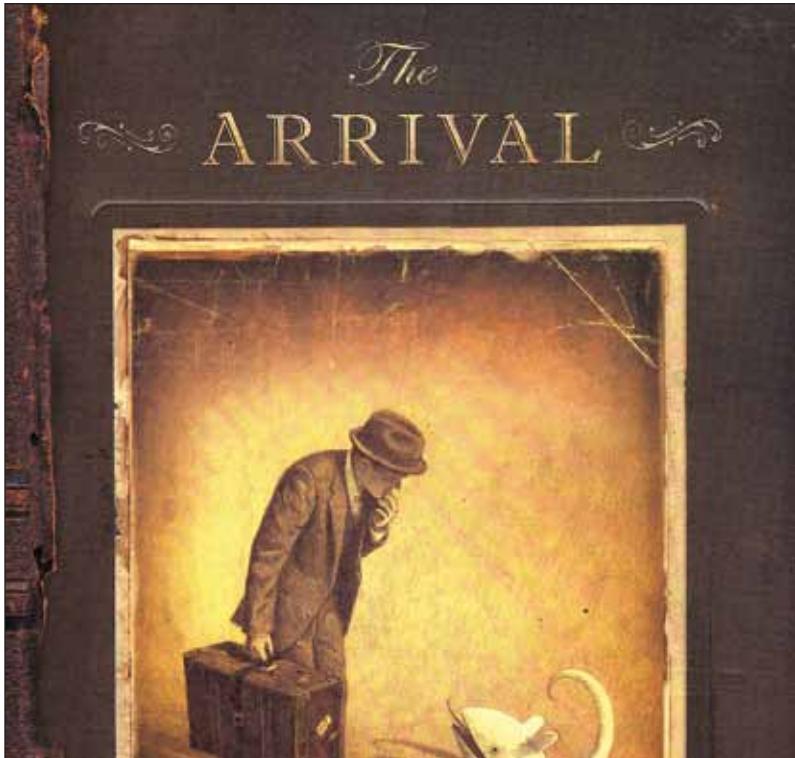
Donna Adomat



Correction:

The editors regret that the photo at the head of the article by Robyn Sheahan-Bright (pictured here), Red, yellow, and black: Australian indigenous publishing for young people. *Bookbird.*, 49(3), 1-17 was incorrect. The photo is actually of Bronwyn Bancroft the Aboriginal artist and picture book creator. Robyn Sheahan-Bright is pictured here.

Focus IBBY



In this issue, we have the pleasure of reading the acceptance speech given by Jutta Bauer upon receiving the Andersen Illustrator Award, learn more about the next IBBY Congress in London, get an insider's perspective on the recent ALMA awards presentation from IBBY Vice President Wally De Doncker, and find out about IBBY-Uruguay's reading promotion project focused on the very youngest children and their families and sponsored by the IBBY-Yamada Fund.

Compiled and edited by
ELIZABETH PAGE



2010 Hans Christian
Andersen Illustrator
Award Winner
Jutta Bauer



Elizabeth Page is
IBBY's Executive Director.

Hans Christian Anderson Illustrator Acceptance Speech

by Jutta Bauer
Santiago de Compostela, 11 September 2010

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, *Buenas noches señores y señoras!*

Thanks to the International Board on Books for Young People for giving the award to me. Thanks to the Queen of Denmark and thanks to all the people who organized everything here so well.

Somebody said to me last week: "Oh, you get the Andersen Award. Then you are the world's best illustrator of this time!" I felt quite strange and could not agree.

I think, whatever you do or are, is not just yourself. You are always a part of a whole.

So, I'll try to show something of that whole, that made me standing here.

First of all—as a part of the whole, I should talk about my family, of course. For the family is the first and biggest influence of all.

I'm part of a big family. The youngest of a long row of (mostly) sisters.

And not a rich family... that may be a line from Andersen.

When I was at primary school, the teachers went to my parents and said: Jutta has such a gift for drawing, she should take some extra art classes after school! But my father said: Well, she can always have paper and pencils; that is enough.

I think it was enough.

In our basement, there was a huge pile of leaflets—something about safety in traffic for pupils (for my father was an elementary teacher). They had a white backside. I used them a lot.

Maybe I should feel a little ashamed, that so many pupils did not get their safety instructions.

But more important it seems to me, that I had parents who sang songs by my bedside and brothers and sisters who tried to steal the potatoes from my plate. So thanks to them!

Many of my loved ones are hidden in my books, like my father and Grandma (the angel) in *Grandpa's Angel* and of course you will find in

my books, disguised as a penguin, a bear, or a child, the one I love most: my son, Jasper. So, thanks to him for joining me here tonight.

But, when I was young I had other good companions and they were book characters. They stay in the back of your head the whole life and they will never leave you. My favorites were: Petzi Bear (Rasmus Klump, from Denmark!), Brumm and Brown by the German writer Ida Bohatta, and best of all, Moomin. Until today, I admire Tove Jansson from Finland! Really good characters in children's stories do a really



A young Jutta drawing
(Picture credit: Jutta Bauer private archive)

good job: they help us to carry our cares, problems, and emotions. So thanks to all of them.

I studied Illustration at the Hamburg School of Applied Art. I think these schools in Hamburg or Leipzig for example, are one of the reasons why we have such a well-developed book illustration culture in Germany. My professor was Siegfried Oelke. He was often annoyed that I spent more time with political things, such as dispensing leaflets and student strikes, rather than practicing my drawing. But once he said: You can do what you want. You will become an illustrator. This optimism felt good, it was holding me. So thanks to him.

When I began to work as an illustrator after graduating, I found another “professional father,” Jochen Gelberg, from edition Beltz & Gelberg. We just celebrated his 80th birthday. He was the one who published and promoted Janosch, F.K. Waechter, Rotraut Susanne Berner ... and me.

So thanks to him.

Jochen put me in touch with many good authors: Klaus Kordon, Christine Nöstlinger, Peter Härtling, Benno Pludra, to name just a few. I was very lucky to sail with them as a beginner.

So thanks to them.

Beltz & Gelberg and their authors were the epitome of the 1970s atmosphere of emancipation and fight for freedom in Western Germany. That was a good motor for a young illustrator like me. We believed we could change the world, if we just worked hard enough. I think that might be different today!?

In addition to people, editors and authors, there may be some other parts of the “whole” that made me what I am: Places, atmospheres, the feeling of a period...

First of all, the chance to live and work in peace and without fear. We’ve had it for a long time. I hope it will never change.

Thanks for that...

My native city, Hamburg, with its open-minded atmosphere, lots of green and water, is important to me, too.

In 1983, myself and 18 other artists established the *Goldbekhof*—a place to work in a converted factory in the middle of Hamburg by an old canal. It’s an important part of the whole—my really loved professional home, with sunlight from morning to evening, and good company of my colleagues there, especially my assistant, Annette. So thanks to everybody there, too!

Now after talking about all these people and places, maybe some of you might be interested in my work, my pictures. I just can show a little bit.

One of the books that means the most to me is *The Queen of Colours*. It’s



The *Goldbekhof* in Hamburg (Picture: Goldbekhof e.V.)

also a very personal book. It has been published in many countries. But most of you might not be aware that it was originally a short animated movie, which I made together with the animation filmmaker Katrin Magnitz. We spent weeks cutting out the images with nail scissors and arranging them in front of her huge old camera.

I'm very happy that the *Queen of Colours* (and *Grandpa's Angel*, too) has also been turned into a play by many theatre companies and school projects. I thank them all for their good work!

Schreimutter was originally just a short bedtime story for my son and I am still a bit surprised at the success of this book!

Opa's Engel or *Grandpa's Angel* is a book into which I worked my father's and grandmother's life stories. Among other things, the book talks of war, hunger, and Nazism. I think that if you are sensitive enough, and find the right form, you can touch upon these dark topics in children's books, too.

Homelessness, too, can be a subject for a children's book, if you have a sensitive author as Kirsten Boie writing the text.

The story of *Selma*, the sheep, was created in just one long night. It was the first of my books that made it all the way to China, which is quite a long journey for a sheep.

Thank you, Selma, you did a great job!

There are some books, which I illustrated because I respect and admire their authors. First of all, I would like to name Jürg Schubiger (fellow Andersen Prize winner), Franz Hohler, and Peter Stamm. I think it's probably not a small risk for an author to put his story into the hands of an illustrator. It's a bit like handing a child into somebody else's care, and you can't be sure what's going to happen to him! So thanks to them for trusting me.

Over the last few years, something in my work, and in my attitude towards my work, changed significantly. I used to think that the work of an illustrator is a solitary affair, just me and a sheet of paper and some pens. But recently, I have spent a lot of my working time travelling around the world, holding workshops and summer academies and things like that.

I met many people, adults and children, in many countries.

And this makes me very happy, to be in contact with so many interesting and wonderful people all over the world. The people who invite me to their school or academy or library think that it's me who is giving something to them—a talk, a workshop, whatever. What they don't know is: They give something to me, especially the children!

So... thanks to them!

I admire their way of drawing so much: their freshness, their directness and I hope that you can find some reflection of that in my work.

Well, I have tried to show you a little bit of my world and of all the different people and places that have helped me to become who I am and to do what I do. What I learned from all of them is: If you want to do a good work—books and illustrations—try to keep a little bit of the child inside you. Be simple and authentic; be true. That's all I can say.

Hans Christian Andersen, to whom I owe the honor of speaking to you today, did not see himself as an author who wrote especially for children. And so we read his fairytales today, for adults and for children. This is what I think about good children's books: Aren't they for everybody? It would be interesting to talk about that with good old Hans Christian Andersen.

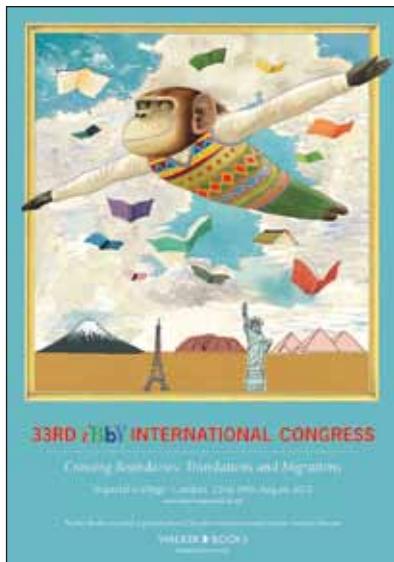
Thank you!

IBBY World Congress: London

23–26 August 2012

The 33rd IBBY World Congress will be held in London 23–26 August 2012, the first IBBY Congress in the UK since the 18th Congress in Cambridge in 1982. The venue is the Imperial College London in the capital's cultural heartland.

The Congress with the theme, *Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations*, will explore translations between languages and the migration of people and the stories they carry with them. It will also encompass translations and migrations across media, for example from book to film or theater, as well as many other aspects of this



very relevant topic. Speakers so far announced are: Shaun Tan, Emer O'Sullivan, Patsy Aldana, Aidan Chambers, and Bart Moeyaert.

Registration opens on 1 October 2011. For all the latest information go to www.ibbycongress2012.org or follow news on Twitter: twitter.com/#!/ibbyuk.



THE ASTRID LINDGREN MEMORIAL AWARD

Illustrations: Björn Borg, Ingrid Väng Nyman, Ilon Wikland

ALMA, the hand of Astrid Lindgren
by Wally De Doncker, IBBY Vice President
2010-2012

When I received the official invitation to attend the presentation of the 2011 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in Stockholm as a vice-president of IBBY, I did not have to ponder long: since childhood Astrid Lindgren has been my idol.

The presentation of the ALMA takes place

every year in Stockholm in the blue concert hall—the same place where the Nobel Prizes are presented. This magnificent room was packed to the doors and I felt a bit ill at ease with my front-row VIP-seat. To be honest, I did not dare sit down because the front seats stayed empty for so long. Just minutes before the doors closed, the other VIPs took their seats. The director of the ALMA, Erik Titusson, greeted me immediately and told me he was honored by my presence. I nodded briefly and sat down, quite taken aback by his kind words.

When HRH Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Trade, Ewa Björling, and the 2011 winner Shaun Tan entered, the crowd respectfully rose to its feet. And the celebration began.

Well-known Swedish journalist Mark Levengood vividly hosted the presentation. He reported that just minutes before the award ceremony started he had bumped into an old lady. She was half blind and somewhat querulous due to the fact that he was standing in her way. It was Astrid Lindgren in person. During their short conversation, she had told him she was thrilled by the presentation of the ALMA, the royal presence, and the 2011 winner. She did not want to stay though, as it was all a bit too formal in her opinion.

The presentation of the ALMA was a tasteful mix of song, dance, and music. Meanwhile, the illustrations of Shaun Tan were projected on giant displays. Kennet Johansson, director of the Swedish Arts Council, encouraged those present to open their eyes to a new universe: the world created by Shaun Tan. Ewa Björling said that she was, like all Swedes, inspired by Astrid Lindgren. She caused some frowns, however, when she admitted not to have had the chance yet to read any of Shaun Tan's work! The Swedish reputation for children's literature is renowned all over the world and the ALMA is a symbol for Swedish values, of which democracy and human rights are the most important.

Larry Lempert, foreman of the ALMA-jury, noted that a deep sense of humanism speaks from the oeuvre of the 2011 winner from Australia.

He said that this was the deciding factor in the jury's decision to award the prize to Shaun Tan.

HRH Crown Princess Victoria presented Shaun Tan with a huge certificate and you could clearly see that, as she congratulated Tan, she spoke words of appreciation. However, her words were not amplified. Pity. I am starting to wonder whether this is a typical Scandinavian custom. In Copenhagen, the few words Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark spoke while presenting the 2008 Hans Christian Andersen Awards to Jürg Schubiger and Roberto Innocenti were not shared with the audience either.

The first words of thanks delivered by Shaun Tan were, "Oh, my gosh!" He expressed his gratitude to those who had helped him on his way and those who devote themselves to the promotion of children's literature, adding that well-thought-out children's books teach their readers to respect the world.

After a short interview with the winner, the Crown Princess rose to her feet and left the room together with Tan. This was such a shame for them because all the other invited guests were treated to a showing of the animated film of Tan's book, *The Lost Thing*, the short movie that yielded Shaun Tan an Oscar in Hollywood this year. It is an absolute gem!

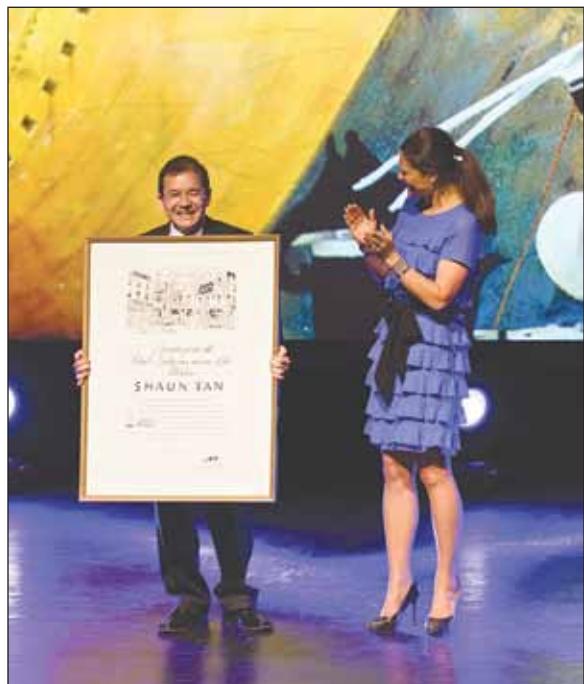
All guests were invited to a bountiful reception in the magnificent *Gruenewaldsalen*. However, I had to rush away because I had been invited to join a small group having dinner with Shaun Tan that evening. I shared a cab with the foreman of the Jury and as we sped through the city, he told me how much he admired the worldwide mission of IBBY.

An elevator took us 33 metres to the private terrace of the *Gondolen* restaurant with a spectacular view over Stockholm. There we were greeted

by the members of the 2011 ALMA Jury and other honorary guests. Many guests came up to me and expressed their appreciation of my presence. They considered me the incarnation of IBBY-International, the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, and a representative of IBBY-Flanders that (along with two other organizations) had nominated Shaun Tan for the ALMA.

I spoke to the Australian Ambassador who was worried about Belgium not being able to form a new government. I told him that the 2016 IBBY World Congress will be held in New Zealand and of course he was delighted with this choice—Auckland is just around the corner from Australia, about a three-hour flight...

During dinner, Stockholm changed into an entrancing illuminated



Shaun Tan receives the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award from HRH Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden. (Photo: Stefan Tell)

city at our feet. Sitting opposite me, the 2010 ALMA winner Kitty Crowther told me she has no idea what impact winning the award will have on her life. Perhaps, she said, we should ask her that question again in ten years. However, she has bought a house this year and her books are now being translated into 26 languages.

The spirit of Astrid Lindgren permeates the Swedish people. We discussed the tough-girl characteristics of her leading characters; in particular Pippi and Ronja, the robber's daughter. When I suggested that the Swedish men were often portrayed as being quite soft, our male dinner companions readily admitted that this image was accurate.

When asking about the jury composition, I was told the following: the Swedish government has stipulated that all jury members must be Swedish. This certainly facilitates easy communication. "Five award-winning candidates came to the surface spontaneously," a jury member whispered in my ear. "The merits of those five were then discussed fiercely during the period of deliberation."

I told Shaun Tan that *The Lost Thing* reminded me of the work of Hieronymus Bosch. He admitted he admired Bosch's work, although he actually felt more influenced by Pieter Breughel. Tan is an intelligent man with a vast knowledge of the world—that is certain. Currently, he is thinking about turning his wordless picture book *The Arrival* into a film.

Just before parting, I had the chance to talk to Astrid Lindgren's granddaughter and discovered that she is the true Annika of the island *Saltkrokan*. When we shook hands, I felt Astrid Lindgren's touch through her hand. Small wonder. If Astrid Lindgren was already wandering about before the award-ceremony, she could well have been at this dinner as well—just to hear what everybody had to say about her!

The ALMA is presented annually and amounts to five million Swedish crowns. Every IBBY Section is a nominating body and together with other organizations involved in children's and adolescent literature from all over the world, they submit the nominations. Authors, illustrators, storytellers, and promoters of literature are eligible for the award. This year there were 175 nominations from 62 different countries.

The IBBY has been nominated for the ALMA for the past three years and maybe one day it will happen... After all, the Palestinian Tamer Institute (winner in 2009) and *Banco del Libro* from Venezuela (winner in 2007) were once seeds of IBBY. What is more, Astrid Lindgren herself was a founding member of IBBY.

If IBBY ever wins the ALMA, Astrid Lindgren, Jella Lepman, and Eleanor Roosevelt will toast the thousands of children who will benefit!

Early childhood reader: Preparing for tomorrow

This article is about a Project for Encouragement and Promotion of Reading among children in early childhood (0-3 years) who have shown low levels in language development. IBBY-Uruguay is implementing this Project with the support of the IBBY-Yamada Fund.

"Early childhood, and in particular the period from 0 to 3 years, is qualitatively more than just the beginning of life; it is actually its foundation" (UNICEF, 2004).

This reading promotion project arose from concern on the part of members of the Uruguayan Section of IBBY and members of the work teams from CAIF Centres (Centre for Integral Attention to the Family) in Uruguay following results of evaluations of children who attend the Centres and showed very low levels of language development. These pre-school children who attend the Centres come from families experiencing poverty, social vulnerability, and in many cases,



physical and emotional abuse. They have little opportunity for exposure to reading, and therefore even less opportunity to develop reading habits for the future.

Although the CAIF PLAN makes great efforts in regard to the rights of the child by covering their basic needs from birth until the age of three (nutrition, integral development, and family bonds), it has not as yet provided for reading and promotion in its specific objectives for pedagogic proposals. Nor has it considered reading as a fundamental component for the cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development of individuals.

Bearing in mind that all children have the right to full physical, intellectual, and emotional development and that early childhood is the period of life in which the foundations to achieve this are laid, we proposed:

- the creation of reading spaces or libraries
- the donation of collections of books selected for their literary and artistic quality
- mediating workshops for training educators and sensitizing parents
- working with children from different age groups
- encounters-workshops for pregnant mothers in the CAIF Centres.

These activities are being implemented and evaluated as a pilot project in the *Abuelo Ubaldo* CAIF Centre, which will produce a reference model that can later be repeated in all the CAIF Centres in Uruguay. As of December 2009, these amounted to 331 centres, reaching more than 42,600 children aged three and under and their families.



This reading promotion project aims not only to facilitate language development—thus improving the current low levels—or to awaken the pleasure of reading in these children by introducing them to books, but also to sensitize and create awareness in educators, parents, and adults as to the significance of reading, and especially the significance of reading in the twenty-first century.

Today's society is volatile, dynamic, and global and will be increasingly dominated by an innovative and trans-national scenario based on information, communication, and new technologies in which new skills and competencies will be required. Facilitating the integral development of these children, preventing the loss of their reading potential, and improving the disadvantageous situation in which they find themselves

is a task that is a concern of all members of the community and for which we are all responsible.



What have we done up to now?

In December of 2010, IBBY-Uruguay received the support of the IBBY-Yamada Fund and we started work in January 2011. On 19 May of this year, after several months of planning, remodelling, and working with members of IBBY-Uruguay, the CAIF Centre, and with family members of the children, the *Abuelo Ubaldo Library* was inaugurated. It was a very important event that was enjoyed by children, families,

neighbors, and educational and government authorities. The library opened with one hundred twenty books, specially selected for their literary and illustrative quality. The first training workshop for educators was held in early June. It resulted in a rich and profound exchange of ideas and experiences.

What remains to be done?

The activities to be carried out during the rest of 2011 and part of 2012 include more workshops with educators, children, pregnant mothers, and groups of parents who have shown interest in participating. Upon finalizing the stages of the project, the projected evaluation will be carried out.

Adriana Mora, IBBY-Uruguay

References

UNICEF (2004). *Desarrollo infantil temprano y derechos del niño.* (Paula Bedregal y Marcela Pardo).- Santiago de Chile: UNICEF (Serie Reflexiones Infancia y Adolescencia, Nº 1).

Lyrical black and white illustrations tell the story of young Eunha and her widowed mother living in a traditional Korean village. The themes of the previous volumes of the trilogy (*The Color of Earth* and *The Color of Water*) come to fruition as daughter discovers and mother re-discovers love. The games, gossip, and small happenings of rural life are interwoven with all the phases of love: crushes, curiosity, suspense, sensuality, and consummation. Nature is ever present both as setting and as metaphor for the characters' moods. Landscape, architecture, clothing, and gesture evoke a particular place and time in Korean culture as the setting for universal emotions. The relationship between mother and daughter, always loving, yet credibly full of daily ups and downs, is as central to the story as the adventure of love. A rare and possibly uniquely frank exploration of emerging sexuality in adolescent literature, *The Color of Heaven* and its preceding volumes will entrance readers, particularly girls, with its evocation of spring rain, flowers drifting in the wind, and the passion of love.

Constance Vidor

**SEOUL
2003
KOREA**

Kim Dong Hwa

The Color of Heaven

New York and London: First Second Press, 2009. (First published in Seoul, Korea in 2003 by Yeolimwon.)

320 pp. ISBN: 978-1-59643-460-8
(graphic novel, 16+)

Bookbird manuscript submission

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) invites manuscripts on a broad array of topics and formats related to children's literature that will be of particular interest to an international audience. 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.

Bookbird is a peer reviewed journal and is published quarterly (January, April, July, October). Manuscripts will be judged on a variety of criteria including professional/scholarly qualities and the degree to which the content is of interest to an international audience. Articles are published in English, but where authors have no translation facilities, we can accept contributions in most major European languages.

Call for manuscripts for themed issues

Submissions are also invited by **31st December 2011** on **Children's Literature from the United Kingdom**, the country which is hosting the 33rd IBBY International Congress "Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations." This issue will be guest edited by Elizabeth Thiel and Alison Waller from Roehampton University, London.

Manuscript format: Word for Windows as an email attachment;

Manuscript length: Up to 4000 words

Blind review: The full name/s of author/s, address, telephone, email and affiliation should appear ONLY on the title page of the manuscript.

Cover email: 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.

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Editorial contact information: Please send a copy of your manuscript to both of the new incoming Editors, Roxanne Harde and Lydia Kokkola at rharde@augustana.ca and lydia.kokkola@utu.fi

International Conference on Book Therapy

9 February – 11 February, 2012

at India Habitat Centre

New Delhi, India

Dear friend,

I am very pleased to invite you to participate in the three-day **International Conference on Book Therapy–Reading is Healing** to be held in New Delhi, India from 9 February – 11 February, 2012.

In the current climate of terror, friction, conflicts along with natural disasters the world over the healing touch of books assumes importance in nurturing an all-round development of children. The problem exists in greater or lesser measure everywhere. All the people connected with children in education, libraries, hospitals, trauma centers and the community feels concerned about the issue. The common strain, however, remains that books can brighten the child's world with hope and inner peace. An international gathering will be discussing the difficulties, mitigation techniques for disaster management and promotion of books to heal.

The gathering will raise vital issues and highlight the essential direction to this dimension of books in restoring an environment of peace in the world. Your participation in this Conference will contribute immensely to the global concern.

I am attaching a brief about the Conference. Once again, I extend my warm invitation to participate in the Conference.

Regards.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Ira Saxena

Secretary, AWIC

Convener – **International Conference on Book Therapy**

International Conference on Book Therapy

9-11 February 2012, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

EXHIBITIONS

HIROSHIMA PEACE MEMORIAL MUSEUM, JAPAN

**Exhibition of Posters, Photos and Books
of Recovery from the Holocaust in Japan.**

OUTSTANDING BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, NORWAY

**An international selection of specially produced books
for young people by IBBY Documentation Centre of
Books for Disabled Young People.**

READING IS HEALING

**International Exhibition of Picture Books and Books
for all ages from many Countries and in many
Languages prepared by,
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Poem

by ANDREW FUSEK PETERS



Andrew Fusek Peters is a children's poet and novelist who has written and edited over 70 titles including *Switching On The Moon; A Very First Book of Bedtime Poems*. More information about Peters and his work is available at <http://www.tallpoet.com>

Imagination—An Infringement of Health and Safety Regulations

New health and safety regulations require pupils visiting streams to wear wellington boots and rubber gloves in case they catch diseases. (*As parents of a school-age child we were actually told this last week.*)

A boy had a bag of dreams.
It was filled with
Impossible ideas, annoying noises
and dangerous dares.

The boy went to school.
When it snowed outside,
He peeked in his bag.
There were:
Snowballs and slides,
Clouds made from breath and brilliant bruises.
The door to the playground stayed locked.

The boy went to school,
Where a tree stood alone in a field.
He climbed inside his bag:
There were:
Handholds and hidden heights
At the top, a whole class of views
Was learning how to dream.
But the tree was out of bounds.

The boy went to school,
To do a project on rivers.
He dived into his bag:
There were splashes and screams,
A nice new net and oodles of wet.
Instead,
They studied the properties of water
And the real stream wept as it wound its way.

The boy was so angry,
He emptied his bag
And the rules blew away in a blizzard,
Leaving only a lonely tree.
For a dare,
The boy leapt into the sky.
When the snow melted,
He dreamed up a river,
And a dangerous horse
That he rode all the way
With a bag of dreams
To the sea, the sea,
The impossible blue-black sea.

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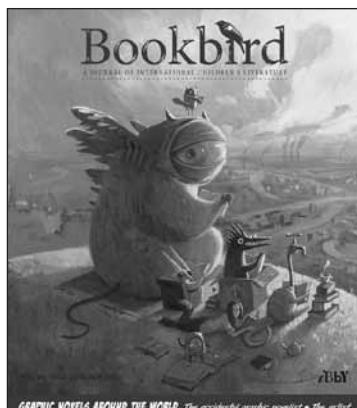
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