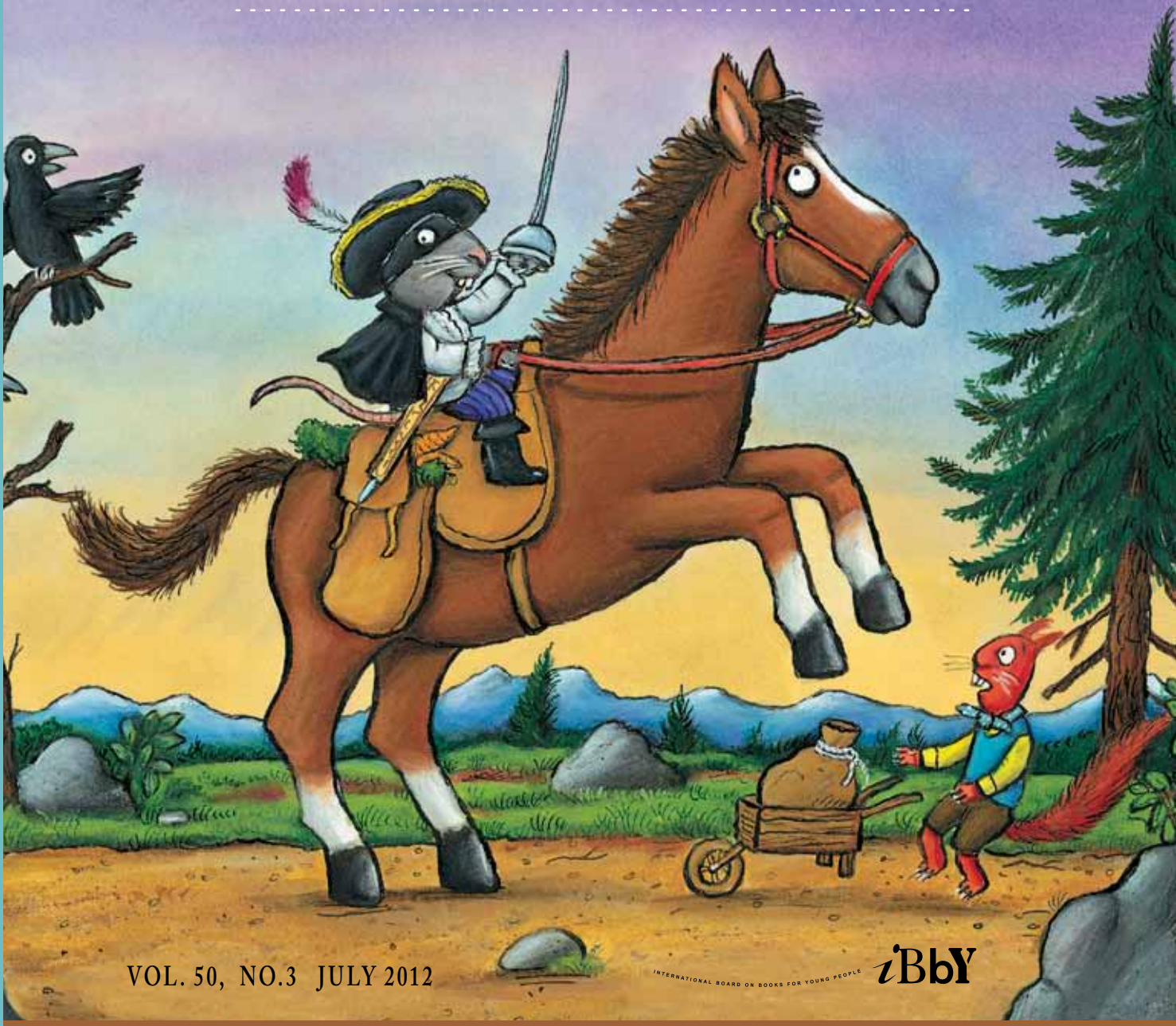
Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



VOL. 50, NO.3 JULY 2012

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IBBY

FEATURED ARTICLES: My (Black) Britain: The West Indies and Britain in Twenty-First Century Nonfiction Picture Books • "Stories from the Outside": Representations of the Underclass in Nineteenth and Twenty-First Century Britain • Michelle Paver: Ancient Magic for a Modern, Greener World • Rewriting Colonial Histories in Historical Fictions for the Young: From Below and Above

Bookbird
A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The Journal of IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People

Production: Design and layout by Bill Benson, Texas, USA
Proofread by Erin Peters, Alberta, Canada
Printed by The Sheridan Press, Hanover, Pennsylvania, USA

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature (ISSN 0006-7377) is a refereed journal published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People, and distributed by The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363 USA. Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, Maryland, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Bookbird*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Journals Division, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363 USA.

CANADA POSTMASTER: Bookbird, Publications Mail Registration Number 40600510. Send address corrections to The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363 USA.

Subscriptions to *Bookbird*: See last page.

IBBY may be contacted at Nonnenweg 12 Postfach, CH-4003 Basel, Switzerland, tel: +4161 272 29 17
fax: +4161 272 27 57 email: ibby@ibby.org <www.ibby.org>.

Bookbird is indexed in *Library Literature, Library and Information Abstracts* (LISA), *Children's Book Review Index*, and the *MLA International Bibliography*.

Cover image: Cover art taken from *The Highway Rat* by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler © 2011. Used with permission from Scholastic Press.

Bookbird
A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Table of Contents

Reviews of Secondary Literature

Postcards

Editorial

Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

This issue of *Bookbird* comes to you with greetings from the 33rd IBBY Congress, which will be held in London, 23-26 August 2012. The Congress theme—*Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations*—follows the goals Jella Lepman held when she founded IBBY and the International Youth Library in Munich. Lepman returned to war-torn Germany convinced that children's literature could play an important role in helping to rebuild human relationships. Lepman spent the war years in London, exiled with her son and daughter from their home in Germany. Now, 60 years after the meetings that were to lead to formation of IBBY in 1953, the Congress returns to Lepman's war-time refuge.

The London that is hosting the IBBY Congress is not the London Lepman knew, although many landmarks remain the same. Along with the architectural skyline, the people of London have also become more diverse. This vibrant, culturally exciting city is home to communities from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, China, Greece and Latin America. As these communities mingle, they share the stories they have brought with them. Some of these are traditional stories that have been passed down from generation to generation, but others are the new stories created as their tellers forge connections with their new environments and

Bookbird Editors

Lydia Kokkola is Professor of English and Didactics at Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. Her main areas of research are English as a Foreign Language, Second Language Acquisition, Holocaust Fiction, Trauma Fiction, Adolescent Sexuality, Advanced Literacy Skills and Ekphraxis.

Roxanne Harde is an Associate Professor of English and a McCalla University Professor at the University of Alberta, Augustana Faculty. She studies and teaches American literature and culture. She has recently published *Reading the Boss: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Works of Bruce Springsteen*, and her essays have appeared in several journals, including *International Research in Children's Literature, The Lion and the Unicorn, Christianity and Literature, Legacy, Jeunesse, Critique, Feminist Theology, and Mosaic*, and several edited collections, including *Enterprising Youth* and *To See the Wizard*.

new compatriots. At the Congress, the keynote speakers as well as the presenters in parallel sessions will explore how children's literature can cross boundaries and migrate across different countries and cultures, and what the consequences of such boundary crossings might be. The Congress organizers have put together a vibrant program that will include the presentation of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards, sponsored by Nami Island Inc., and the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award, which is sponsored by Asahi Shinbun.

London is also home to the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature at Roehampton University, which focuses on academic research on literature, creative writing and publishing. With their commitment to excellence in academic research and their promotion of children's literature in all fields, it is unsurprising that the dedicated team of researchers and lecturers at the Centre works so closely with IBBY UK, including the annual conference these organizations co-host. Thus we were delighted when two senior lecturers from the Centre—Alison Waller and Liz Thiel—accepted our invitation to guest edit this issue of Bookbird and introduce our readers to children's literature from the U.K.

See you in London!

Introduction *Bookbird* Guest Editors

Liz Thiel is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Roehampton where she teaches children's literature at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Her research interests include19th century literature, historical children's fiction, pony stories and young adult novels. Recent publications include *The Fantasy of Family* (Routledge, 2008/2011) and "Degenerate 'innocents': Child Gangs, Criminality and Deviance in Nineteenth-century Texts" in *The Child in British Literature* (A Garvin, ed. Palgrave, 2012).

Alison Waller is a Senior Lecturer at Roehampton University, where she convenes the MA in Children's Literature. Her research interests include young adult literature, forms of fantasy and literary space/place. She is currently researching the role of memory in reading and writing in a study of adults rereading childhood books. She published *Constructions of Adolescence in Fantastic Realism* with Routledge in 2009/2011 and is editing a New Casebook on Melvin Burgess for Palgrave MacMillan.

British Children's Literature in the Twenty-First Century

Here at the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature we promote excellent scholarship in children's literature. Based at the University of Roehampton in London, we are well aware of the wealth of literary tradition we can draw on in our capital city: the birthplace of Peter Pan and Mary Poppins, travel destination of Paddington and Harry Potter, and vision of the future in *Mortal Engines* and *Un Lun Dun*. We were thrilled to be asked to edit this special issue of *Bookbird* to mark the IBBY Congress in London as we have always enjoyed our long-running partnership with IBBY UK. We find the international outlook refreshing and are stimulated by the exchange of ideas with

academics, writers, educators and children's book professionals.

As guest editors our aim is to present something of the current state of British children's literature, giving a sense of our established and thriving national literary scene and thinking about recent trends, but also celebrating challenges to our canon with views from the inside and out. Canonical texts, from Carroll to Lewis, continue to flourish and to be read by new generations of readers, but we also want to showcase some of the exciting innovations in the world of British children's literature. We are very pleased that in our 'Children and their Books' section we have been able to include a piece by the Children's Laureate, Julia Donaldson, and an introduction to Newcastle's Seven Stories archive, along with a fascinating account by Beverley Naidoo of her publishing history in the UK and an exploration of young children's talk about picture books. Donaldson and the former Laureate, Jacqueline Wilson, feature as the subject of our Letters, along with another award-winning British author-illustrator, Mini Grey.

We have enjoyed working with new and established researchers in the field who have distinct perspectives on how twenty-first-century British children's literature is located within a historical, political, and global context. Michele Gill's article on Tim Bowler opens the issue, using his "Blade" novels as a touchstone for examining a narrative of attitudes towards the working classes in fiction and social history, from Dickens and nineteenth-century children's literature to the present day. Gill's exploration of London's dangerous cityscape and the portrayal of a "feral underclass" takes us some way from the pleasures offered by our capital city this summer (when the Olympics vie with the IBBY Congress for top tourist event), but demonstrates the continuing discourses of demonization that surround young people who fall outside of the normal structures of society.

At the other end of the spectrum to Bowler's futuristic vision of a crumbling social urbanity is Michele Paver's "Chronicles of Ancient Darkness" series, set in a prehistoric past and structured around questions of human interaction with the natural landscape. Our academic section concludes with Anthony Pavlik's ecocritical exploration of the "green world" portrayed by Paver and we hope it provides a vision of the way that children's literature can still engage with this sceptred isle in optimistic ways.

There is assuredly evidence of optimism for Britain's future in contemporary writing for children, although the comforting closures beloved of authors in earlier centuries have long been superseded by far grittier realism that exposes the flaws within Britain and attitudes to those who are relatively recent inhabitants. Intrinsic to that realism is acknowledgement of what might be perceived as discomfiting 'truths' about contemporary Britain and, perhaps most importantly, about its imperial and colonial past, acknowledgement which is essential if the country is to embrace the idea of a truly multi-cultural island and celebrate Britishness in all its diversity. Children's authors have always had an important role to play in engendering and perpetuating new ideologies and it is perhaps not surprising that a number of today's writers for children have chosen to expose preconceptions and present new and inclusive models of British identity.

In her examination of historical fictions for young readers, Blanka Grzegorczyk explores how Bali Rai, Jamila Gavin, and Jason Wallace interrogate the past to expose history as fiction. As she shows, they do so with sensitivity, resisting any impulse to replace the imperial point of view with other supposedly reliable voices. Instead, these writers offer alternative narratives that resist objectification of the "other" and so simultaneously reinvent and redefine the past for those marginalized by prior ideologies.

Redefinition of "otherness" in contemporary Britain is also central to Karen Sands-O'Connor's examination of twenty-first century picture books as she explores nonfiction from the past and present to identify the new spaces that authors are creating for British identity and citizenship. Focusing on work by Kate Taylor, Malcolm Frederick and Trish Cooke, she asserts that the integration of Caribbean and British

identities creates an altogether more fluid concept of Britishness and that such texts offer new paradigms—and ideologies—of what it means to be British.

The breadth of material covered here is necessarily constrained, but we hope that the selection provides some indication of the vibrant and often innovative authorship that is produced in and about Britain and that contributes to the experiences of both young readers and academic scholarship around the world. While many of our choices for this volume are primarily concerned with new developments in children's literature and, to some degree, with visions of the future, they also reflect the Congress theme of "Crossing Boundaries." We are extremely pleased to have attracted contributors from both Britain and overseas which is not only especially appropriate for this issue, but we feel is a characteristic reflective of the international emphasis of the children's literature community and particularly of IBBY itself.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed producing it.

Soonchild is a graphic novel: Russell Hoban's prose dances in the smoky charcoal work of Alexis Deacon. The latest in a series of graphic-intensive works commissioned by Walker, it represents a commendable investment in book illustration and recognition of young readers' receptiveness to the unconventional. Hoban, best known for **The Mouse and his Child** (1967), tends to approach ideas of mysticism and philosophy with lyricism and bold idiosyncrasy. The eponymous Soonchild isn't the hero of this tale in fact, she refuses to be born. Her father, once the local shaman and now the "shamed man," must undergo a Big Dream trance and bring the World Songs that will entice her out. Despite the potential for New Age cuteness, this is not a simple story about getting in touch with oneself. One character says: "When you boil up a Big-Dream Brew, you better be ready to drink to the bottom of the cup." John's experiences are apocalyptic, and Hoban explores ambitious themes of being, creatorship and fatherhood. Understatement is key, however. The warmth and clarity of the prose invite us to share in John's shamanic view of the world in which these big ideas are the natural, demotic material of folklore and myth. Deacon's fine marks and smudges conjure the Big Dream with an appropriate balance of animation and heavy substance, shifting snow-like inside, around or in place of text. And there is something about the shamed man in the charcoal too, something about redemption, the material transmuted by extremes into something suited to new, unexpected purposes.

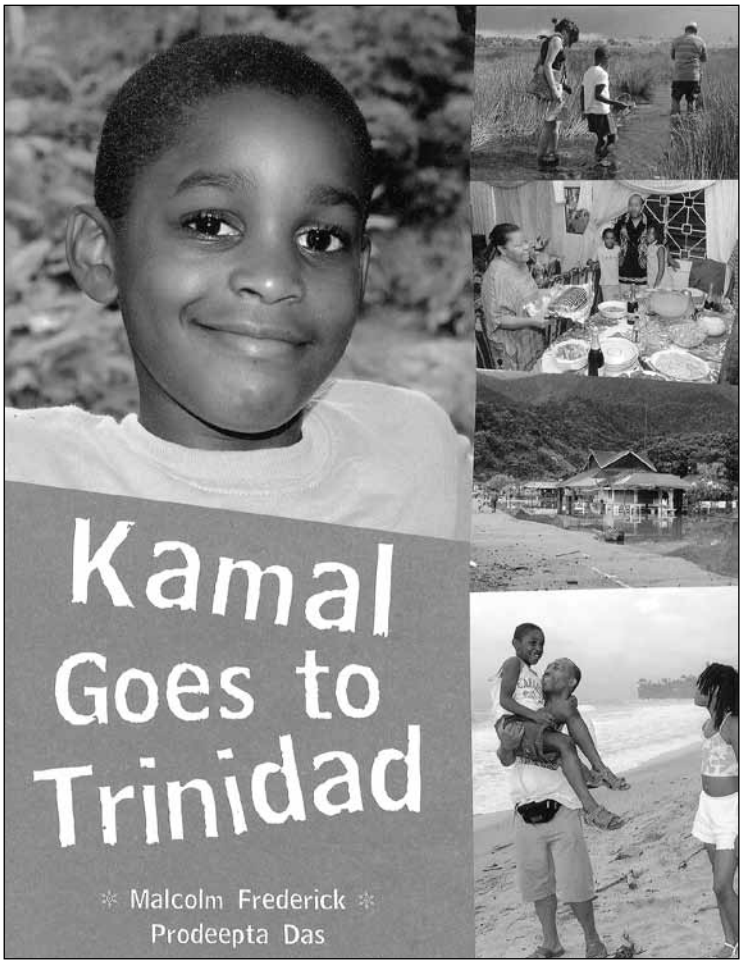
Nick Campbell

Russell Hoban

Soonchild

Illustrated by Alexis Deacon
London: Walker Books, 2012
144 p.

ISBN: 1406329916
(Graphic Novel, 12+)



My (Black) Britain: The West Indies and Britain in Twenty-First Century Nonfiction Picture Books

by KAREN SANDS O'CONNOR

Prior to the twenty-first century, nonfiction picture books in Britain rarely focused on the Black British community. As twenty-first-century Britain struggles to define itself, the education system is one way of institutionalizing and standardizing what it means to be British. By aligning with the National Curriculum standards, publishers of children's nonfiction have found ways to negotiate boundaries and re-envision meaning. Recent texts have used traditional models for British children's nonfiction to focus on areas of citizenship, identity, and history, but by redefining the boundaries between nation/outsider, self/other, and insider/outsider, have created new spaces for British identity and citizenship.

Karen Sands-O'Connor is associate professor of English at Buffalo State College in New York, where she teaches courses in children's literature and twentieth century British literature. She has published widely on the Caribbean in literature, and on Caribbean diasporic literature, most notably in her book, *Soon Come Home to this Island: West Indians in British Children's Literature* (Routledge 2007).

Before the twenty-first century, nonfiction picture books in Britain rarely focused on the Black British community in their texts, and even illustrations and photographs tended to depict an all-white Britain. The absence of Black Britons in textual representations, particularly those designed for the school population, contributed to a crisis in the concept of the British identity of its Black citizens. In 1999, Ron Ramdin pointed out that Black British youth were moving "away from their parents' British-based culture and traditions" (*Reimaging Britain* 250); in the same year, Paul Gilroy called for historians to "produce histories…which allow the presence of diverse colonial peoples and their stubbornly non-colonial descendants far greater significance than they have been allowed in the past" ("A London sumting dis…" 60). However, as Gilroy had earlier posited, the creation of a British community which embraces all citizens can be problematic when it comes through official channels: "Community is as much about difference as it is about similarity and identity. It is a relational idea which suggests, for British blacks at least, the idea of antagonism—domination and subordination between one community and another" (*There Ain't No Black* 322). Identity and community are not concepts that can be imposed from a "top-down" perspective. Indeed, Homi Bhabha points out in "Narrating the Nation" that in order for concepts such as nation, community, and identity to have functional meaning, they must cease to be envisioned as binary oppositions between, for example, nation and not-nation:

As twenty-first-century Britain struggles to define itself, the education system is one way of institutionalizing and standardizing what it means to be British.

> The "locality" of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as "other" in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new "people" in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. (4)

As twenty-first-century Britain struggles to define itself, the education system is one way of institutionalizing and standardizing what it means to be British. By aligning with the National Curriculum standards, publishers of children's nonfiction have found ways to negotiate boundaries and re-envision meaning. Recent texts have used traditional models for British children's nonfiction to focus on areas of citizenship, identity, and history, but by redefining the boundaries between nation/outsider, self/other, and insider/outsider, have created new spaces for British identity and citizenship. Three such texts are Kate Taylor's *My*

African Caribbean Community (2005), Malcolm Frederick's *Kamal Goes to Trinidad* (2006), and Trish Cooke's *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* (2007), all of which present the integration of British and Caribbean histories and people.

The National Curriculum and Nonfiction Picture Books

Many nonfiction picture books in the UK are designed specifically to meet National Curriculum standards, and often individual titles are part of larger series produced by a single publisher (and sometimes a single author). Curriculum standards concerning citizenship, geography and history guide textbook, and sometimes trade book, production. Maylor and Read note that diversity had not been included in the original National Curriculum Standards, but "following the publication of the Macpherson (1999 – following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry) and the Parekh Reports (2000a), it became more widely accepted that a diverse curriculum was an essential prerequisite for understanding contemporary British society (14). Research findings based on the 2006 review suggested that "identity and diversity are more often than not neglected in Citizenship education" (Ajegbo 7), and that teachers "felt hampered by…a lack of resources" (Ajegbo 6). This report also concluded that "There should be explicit links between the Programmes of Study for History and Citizenship Education" (Ajegbo 12). For a number of political and cultural reasons, diversity became particularly important to the National Curriculum early in the twenty-first century, but many critics doubted the ability of teachers to deliver such a curriculum due to its conflicting aims of valorizing the individual and community while at the same time producing uniformly "British" citizens. Partly this is due to the racial component of diversity; as Dyer writes, "As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples… they/we function as a human norm" (*White* 1). Educators must choose between diversity and unity; and thus, as Lambert and Morgan write, many critics believe that "education is torn and has to mediate between the legacies of the past (tradition) and the challenges thrown up in the present" ("Corrupting the Curriculum" 149). The confusion about aims of the National Curriculum and the concern about availability of resources to deliver it have been addressed in part by the publishers of British nonfiction for children; the publishers and authors discussed here highlight the ways in which citizenship education might negotiate some of the difficult waters of identity and nationality.

Recent texts have used traditional models for British children's nonfiction to focus on areas of citizenship, identity, and history, but by redefining the boundaries between nation/outsider, self/other, and insider/outsider, have created new spaces for British identity and citizenship.

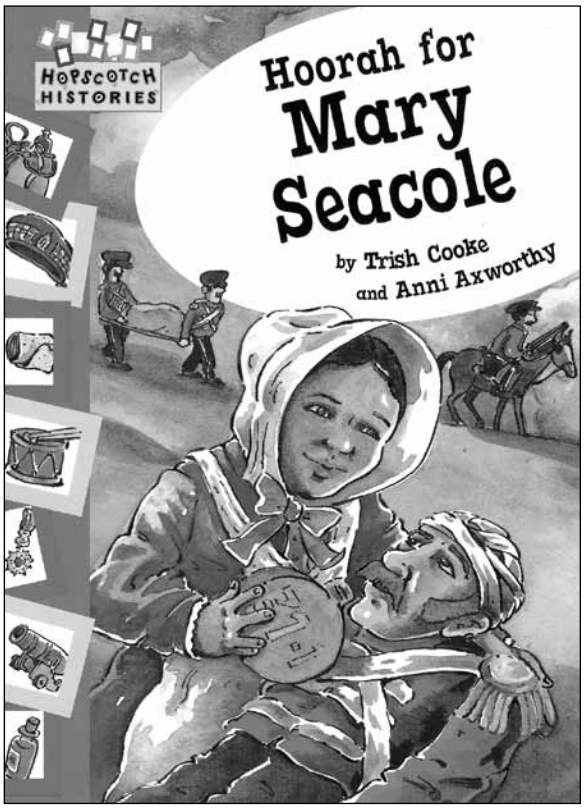
Curriculum standards concerning citizenship, geography and history guide textbook, and sometimes trade book, production.

My History

One traditional model for nonfiction for children is the Famous Briton biography, a type of book which teaches facts (about political and cultural events) through the adventures of a Famous Briton. One of the first publishers to produce a picture book series of biographies was Ladybird, who in the 1950s began producing its "Adventures from History" series, including *Florence Nightingale* (1959) by L. DuGarde Peach. *Florence Nightingale* is typical of the Ladybird biographies. It opens with the child Florence playing with her dolls: "her favourite game was to pretend that they were sick and that she was nursing them back to health" (4). The text follows with a discussion of the roles her parents played in her life; "with her mother she used to visit sick people…taking food and medical comforts" (4). Florence learns to be a nurse, through her "inquiring mind" (8) and her persistence, and then "something happened which was to change her whole life. The Crimean War broke out" (10). Florence sees it as her "duty" (22) to go, and she is supported by the government in the figure of Sidney Herbert, the Minister of War (26). She endures the scorn of others, particularly men (22), dangers at sea (26) and shortages of supplies (32) but "nothing… would stop her" (36). Her determination wins her the gratitude of soldiers (36), admiration from doctors (36) and a letter of thanks from Queen Victoria (40). At last she returns to England as a heroine (50). The Ladybird *Florence Nightingale* suggests the ability of a single woman to change history through determination, hard work, and indifference to criticism.

One traditional model for nonfiction for children is the Famous Briton biography, a type of book which teaches facts (about political and cultural events) through the adventures of a Famous Briton.

Although Ladybird only occasionally publishes biographies now (for royal weddings or Charles Dickens' anniversary, for example), other publishers have taken up the format, and for younger and younger readers. One of the series that followed Ladybird's "Adventures from History" was Franklin Watts's "Hopscotch Histories" series, which included Trish Cooke's 2007 *Hoorah for Mary Seacole*.



Like Florence Nightingale, Seacole was a Crimean War nurse. The most detailed account about Mary Seacole's life is her autobiography, published as *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* in 1857. In it, she describes her upbringing in Jamaica, her education concerning the medicinal value of plants, her success with cholera treatments for soldiers in Jamaica and Panama, and her Crimean adventures. Having returned from the Crimea to England, she wrote the autobiography to raise money to support herself. She remained well-known enough in her time, according to Sarah Salih, to have her bust sculpted by Queen

Victoria's half-nephew ("Introduction" xvii) and to have her obituary published in the *London Times* ("Introduction" xl), but after this slipped into relative obscurity until the twenty-first century. *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* is one of several biographies published in connection with the anniversary of the abolition of slavery, but one of the few written by a Black British author. The book parallels—and changes—the model introduced by Ladybird.

Like *Florence Nightingale*, *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* begins with a picture of a little girl playing with a doll that she is bandaging (5). Mary learns from her mother how "to look after" (6) the injured and sick. As she grows older, she trains as a nurse, but her training is very different from that described in *Florence Nightingale*. Whereas Nightingale "studied all the books on medicine she could get" (10), "Mary helped her mother make medicines from the herbs and plants in the garden" (8). Nightingale must wait, in the Ladybird history, for the Crimean War to begin her career, but Seacole has a hospital in Jamaica where she treats cholera patients (14), many of whom are soldiers. When the Crimean War does break out, Seacole is determined to nurse them. "The trip was long and the sea was rough," the text states, but "Mary wasn't afraid of the big waves" (18-19).

Hoorah for Mary Seacole is one of several biographies published in connection with the anniversary of the abolition of slavery, but one of the few written by a Black British author. The book parallels—and changes—the model introduced by Ladybird.

Following Nightingale's journey to the Crimea, the Ladybird text discusses the sexism she faced, and Cooke's book could have addressed Seacole's struggles with the racist attitudes she faced, including from Nightingale herself. Instead, *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* chooses not to discuss racism, and even shows Nightingale and Seacole side by side, smiling. The accompanying text reads: "Mary went to the hospital in Scutari. There she met a nurse called Florence Nightingale. Mary saw lots of injured soldiers and wanted to help them. But there was no room for her to stay" (20-21). *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* introduces the Jamaican-born nurse into the curriculum and puts her on an equal footing with her more famous colleague, Florence Nightingale. By allying Seacole and Nightingale in smiling unity, the book makes room for West Indians to be a part of British history and tradition. By equating herbal remedies learned orally with medical book-learning, *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* expands the definition of nursing in a way favorable to the (historical) Black British community. At the end of Cooke's text, following several more acts of bravery (24-29), Mary leaves the Crimea, not for Jamaica, but "to live in England" (30) where she is honored by the British people. Cooke's text makes Seacole a Famous Briton.

By reproducing the form of the Famous Briton biography, the "Hopscotch Histories" series expands the definition of Famous Britons to include West Indians. By limiting the discussion of Seacole's struggle to rough seas and the dangers of battle, the text both highlights and denies the racial component of her story. *Hoorah for Mary Seacole* suggests that famous Britons are defined by their bravery and not their race, but

By reproducing the form of the Famous Briton biography, the "Hopscotch Histories" series expands the definition of Famous Britons to include West Indians. By limiting the discussion of Seacole's struggle to rough seas and the dangers of battle, the text both highlights and denies the racial component of her story.

through the medium of the illustrations it also introduces the idea of Black British history to the youngest readers.

My Heritage

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British children's nonfiction included many texts about British children traveling through the various countries of the Empire and reporting on the various sights and people they saw. A typical example is *The Adventures of Peter and Tess* (1945) by Stella Mead, where Peter and Tess's parents buy a plane and fly their children "Through the British Commonwealth" over the course of four picture book volumes. They visit Trinidad, and in Port-of-Spain, "with its population of more than sixty thousand people of many races" (n.p.), they see the Queen's Park Savannah, Botanic Gardens, and Government House. They visit the Imperial College of Agriculture, a Diego River Valley waterfall, and Pitch Lake. They also investigate Trinidad's products, including pitch, bananas, coffee, and cocoa, and a wide variety of flowers. Peter and Tess's father remarks, "'I was over here a few years ago…the island was brilliant with scarlet poinsettias, yellow creepers covering the trees, giant blue convolvulus, and palms of freshest green'" (n.p.). The passage emphasizes British involvement in the island's history—Charles Kingsley and Sir Walter Raleigh are both mentioned—and progress—the Imperial College "has been set up" (n.p.) for Trinidad by the British, and Trinidadian products benefit the British. Poverty on the island is mentioned: "Mother took the children to see where the poorest people lived. Tess did not like the ugly barracks and hovels in which some of the little children lived. But she felt very pleased when they passed on to the model dwellings that had lately been built for workers" (n.p.). These "model dwellings" were also a result of British action; following riots in Trinidad in the 1930s, the Moyne Commission reported on the conditions of the poor, recommending "social reforms such as poor relief, education, and subsidized housing" (Lewis 123). British subsidized housing created to replace "hovels" built by native Trinidadians are, according to Tess, "much better" (n.p.). In short, Trinidad exemplifies the good that the British do with their Empire; Trinidadians could not succeed without them. These books set up a hierarchical structure of nations in which the colonizers control knowledge and commerce and the relationships between colonizer and colonized and between nation and citizen are fixed and unchanging. Peter and Tess are not of Trinidad, but they have a defined role to play in and for Trinidad.

These books set up a hierarchical structure of nations in which the colonizers control knowledge and commerce and the relationships between colonizer and colonized and between nation and citizen are fixed and unchanging. Peter and Tess are not of Trinidad, but they have a defined role to play in and for Trinidad.

In 2006, London-based publisher Frances Lincoln introduced the "Children Return to Their Roots" series. The publisher's press release about the series states: "This unique series of photographic information

books, told in the first person, accompanies children who have grown up away from their family's homeland, and are now visiting it for the first time" ("Children Return"). In fact this "unique" series has many parallels with travel books produced in previous centuries such as *The Adventures of Peter and Tess*. One of the books in the series is *Kamal Goes to Trinidad* (2006) by Malcolm Frederick, with photographs by Prodeepta Das.

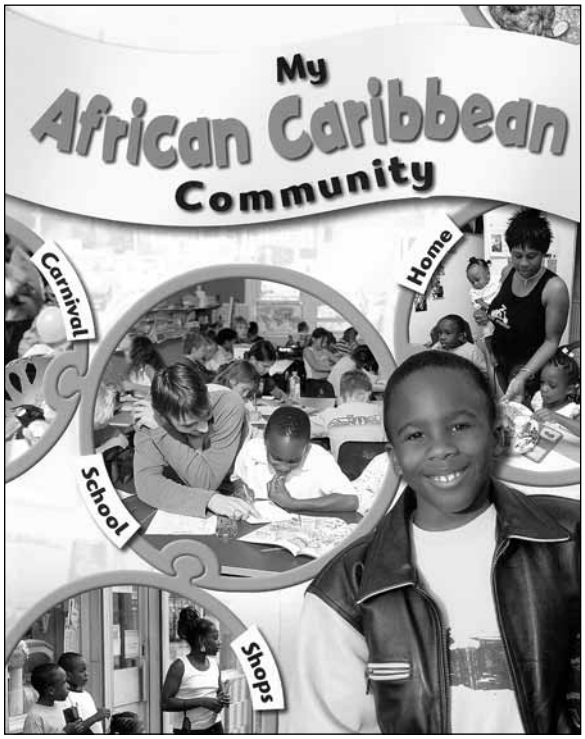
In Frederick and Das's book, British-born Kamal goes to visit his Trinidadian grandparents for the first time. Like Peter and Tess, Kamal and his father explore Port-of-Spain and the Queen's Park Savannah (17); they visit Pitch Lake and discuss Sir Walter Raleigh (22); and Kamal mentions "flowers and fruit trees I've never seen before," and the agricultural products of the island, which include "banana, mango, avocado and pineapple" (11) as well as coconuts (19). Kamal does not visit the Botanical Gardens or the Diego Martin river valley, but he does see the Asa Wright Nature Centre (24) and the Caroni Swamp where he sees "boa constrictors, some tree crabs, caimans and lots and lots of scarlet ibis" (28). In these passages, Kamal could have been accompanying Peter and Tess more than sixty years earlier in their travels.

However, *Kamal Goes to Trinidad* is different from earlier travelogues in key ways. First, where the "people of many races" in *Peter and Tess* remain for the most part shadowy figures, Kamal interacts directly, not only with his own (Afro-Caribbean) family, but also with guides and street vendors of various races and religions. Kamal's father shows them the Anglican-run school that he attended as a child, but they also visit a Hindu temple (27). The people of Trinidad work, not for some distant imperial power, but for their own economic and creative benefit. Kamal meets a calypsonian (16), goes to an art camp (18), and visits a panyard where steel drums are being made (20). Kamal's father tells him that the steel drum is "Trinidad and Tobago's national instrument—and the only musical instrument invented in the twentieth century" (20). Trinidad's contributions to the world at large are further emphasized when Kamal visits his grandfather, a former World War II soldier. Significantly, the text does not indicate that his grandfather fought for Britain, but just that he was "in the army" (29), fought in many battles and visited several "places in Europe" (29). Trinidad thus becomes not a small part of the British military machine, but a fighting force in its own right, active in global affairs. The historical past and cultural present of Trinidad are not erased or elided, but seen as part of a larger national identity, both separate from and connected to Britain and Kamal.

However,* Kamal Goes to Trinidad *is different from earlier travelogues in key ways. First, where the "people of many races" in Peter and Tess remain for the most part shadowy figures, Kamal interacts directly, not only with his own (Afro-Caribbean) family, but also with guides and street vendors of various races and religions.

Leaving Trinidad, Peter and Tess "flew on to Jamaica" (n.p.). While they see several sites they find "lovely" (n.p.), Trinidad for them is just one of a string of British possessions with slightly different foliage and

industries. For Kamal, however, Trinidad has a personal connection; it is not an inheritance of empire but a true heritage. And though he returns to Britain at the end of the book, he is "sure we'll be coming back one day soon" (32). *Kamal Goes to Trinidad* stresses the mutability of borders and identities, and in so doing extends the definition of "British."



My Community

In 2005, Franklin Watts began publishing the "My Community" series by Kate Taylor. This series highlights diversity within a community context and within Britain as a whole. One of the books in the series, *My African Caribbean Community*, tells the story of Bristol resident Luchiano Barnes, an eight year old with Jamaican ancestry. The book is divided into sections based on different aspects of Luchiano's life, including family, school, religion and language. Much of the book underscores the ways that Luchiano and his family are similar to white Britons; Luchiano uses his pocket-money to buy "lollies from the newsagents in the summer," plays football, and thinks a dinner of baked beans and sausages is "the best!" (12, 17, 18). British readers from various communities can connect with Luchiano and his family; in some ways, Taylor implies, we (British) are all the same.

However, the guiding principle of the book is *difference* (the book is not, after all, called *My British Community*), and perhaps because of this the book's content (and even, sometimes, structure) mirrors texts about *foreign* countries produced throughout the twentieth century, such as John and Penny Hubley's *A Family in Jamaica* (1982). Many of these books, including *A Family in Jamaica*, use photographs and tell a story of a single, "typical" family. The focus of the narrative is generally a school-aged child in the family; in *A Family in Jamaica*, ten-year-old Dorothy Samuels from Cascade, near Montego Bay. To illustrate similarities between *My African Caribbean Community* and *A Family in Jamaica*, it is useful to consider the books' discussions of clothes. *A Family in Jamaica* includes this passage: "School children in Jamaica wear uniforms. Dorothy's uniform is blue, but each school has a different uniform. Some of the girls in Dorothy's school have their hair braided in fancy styles. This keeps them cool. The girls get their mothers or their friends to braid their hair. Some of the hairstyles can take hours to do" (11).

The passage in *My African Caribbean Community* is quite similar, and despite having a male central character, also discusses hairdressing:

> Ria [Luchiano's sister] doesn't wear jewellery, but she has lots of different hair bobbles. My mum sometimes *braids* her hair. I think that looks good. When it's not braided though, it's really curly, which is nice too. There is a uniform at my school but you only have to wear it if you want to, so sometimes I do and sometimes I don't (25; italics in original).

These passages are strikingly alike, even though one book is about a UK community and one about a foreign community. The subjects of clothing and hairdressing in both cases are related to getting ready for school, and thus

may be seen as 'safe' or noncontroversial ways of being different, since every child participates in similar preparations. However, one key difference between the books is the presentation of information that might be seen as having "negative" connotations.

While books for older readers often address "problems" in communities, books for younger readers tend to obscure problems through textual absence or elision. *A Family in Jamaica* glosses over controversial issues such as poverty and slavery. The photograph of Dorothy's house shows a rusting roof, broken wood trim, and peeling paint, but the text states only, "Their house is made of wood and has an iron roof… To catch the breeze, Dorothy's house is built on pillars" (6). The section about slavery states the obvious: "The slaves wanted to be free" (27), and at the same time shifts blame for slavery away from the British, "Some Europeans felt that the slaves should be free, but others wanted to keep them enslaved. In 1834, the British Parliament passed a law that freed the slaves" (27). The British are the heroes of the story, and the hardships of slavery are never mentioned. *A Family in Jamaica* presents a nation in stark contrast with the British standard of living, but does so in a way that suggests that the people are content with their current situation, and do not blame the British for their historical lack of freedom and opportunity. Additionally, the presentation suggests a clear separation between Jamaica and Britain; the boundaries are firmly demarcated.

Although the "My Community" series is designed to show communities living within Britain, the very premise of the series suggests that the communities are also marked out as different. In the other titles in the series (*My Muslim*, *My Sikh*, *My Kurdish*, *My Jewish* and *My Hindu Community*) the difference is primarily religion. Luchiano, however, is Christian, so differences discussed (such as food, musical preference, and language) derive mainly from his West Indian/Jamaican background. The book's title suggests this, but also includes a racial component (one does not have to be from a particular racial group to be Caribbean, but this is not the case with *African* Caribbean). *My African Caribbean Community* is a generally positive text, but also remarks upon negative aspects of Luchiano's life in Bristol, and stereotypes about African Caribbeans as viewed by white Britons (albeit somewhat obliquely). Thus the border lines of community are more fluid than in *A Family in Jamaica*; the interaction indicates that the smaller community (whether defined as African Caribbean, the neighborhood of St. Paul's, or the city of Bristol) is a (porous) part of a larger community (Britain).

Some stereotypes are reinforced, but not embraced by the book's main character. These are addressed in the "Where I Live" section of the book (8-9). Although Luchiano says, "I like living in St. Paul's. It's noisy and busy and people look out for each other" (8), he also admits that the noise has its negative side: "my neighbours play *reggae* and *rap* really loud. It's nice to listen to, unless I'm trying to get to sleep!" (8; italics in original). Luchiano's comment echoes those of white Britons about music played in West Indian neighbourhoods; as early as 1960, the sociologist Ruth Glass commented that, "If a few West Indians sing or talk loudly in the street late at night, or have extended parties in their rooms, they are all thought to be inconsiderate" (56). Another stereotype concerns the criminality of the West Indian community; Darcus Howe writes that the "notion of blacks [in Britain]

The British are the heroes of the story, and the hardships of slavery are never mentioned.* A Family in Jamaica *presents a nation in stark contrast with the British standard of living, but does so in a way that suggests that the people are content with their current situation, and do not blame the British for their historical lack of freedom and opportunity.

being loose in morals" (19) dates from at least the 1950s. Luchiano admits that, "St. Paul's can be a bit rough. Gangs hang around at the end of my road and sometimes they have fights. But they don't bother me and I like living here" (9). The book thus acknowledges and reinforces some potentially negative stereotypes about the West Indian community, but does not necessarily defend them. By having Luchiano mirror the attitudes of (some) white Britons, the text allies him with the wider British community, as well as connecting him to the area where he lives.

One stereotype turned from negative into positive (or at least neutralized) in *My African Caribbean Community* is the issue of language. Much discussion, both critical and popular, has been given to the English-speaking ability of West Indians. Historically, linguistic differences have been labelled as "deficits" (Rampton 23) or even "disabilities" (Evans and LePage 17) by teachers of West Indian students. Patois, particularly, has been treated as a "broken" form of English. Taylor's book, from Luchiano's perspective, is written in standard English throughout, thus addressing the stereotype that black Britons cannot speak English. Additionally, under the "Languages" section (22-23), Luchiano treats Patois as a language separate from English: "English is the only language my family speak, and people in Jamaica use it too. But sometimes Jamaicans speak Patois. My dad talks to me in Patois all the time and I can understand some of it" (22). Patois is further emphasized as a separate language by placing it on par with French, which Luchiano learns at school (23). The separation of Patois and French from English has the effect of binding Luchiano more closely to Britain and its linguistic community, while also opening up possibilities of crossing borders between linguistic communities.

The separation of Patois and French from English has the effect of binding Luchiano more closely to Britain and its linguistic community, while also opening up possibilities of crossing borders between linguistic communities.

By using the model of the "family in a foreign land" nonfiction text, *My African Caribbean Community* shows ways that West Indian British families can be members of multiple communities, bound together in different, but not immutable, ways. Communities are not fixed and stable, but alter as the individual crosses both physical and ideological boundaries.

Conclusion

The twenty-first century opened with a renewed interest in ideas of citizenship, identity and community, especially as these ideas were communicated to children. Traditional nonfiction posited racial identity as being potentially at odds with British identity, but children's nonfiction publishers began to produce books that expanded the definition of "British". They often used traditional nonfiction models to achieve their ends, but in so doing the traditional boundaries between self and other, community and nation, and nation and world became more flexible and porous. Ultimately this gave all Britons, regardless of race, the option of identifying with multiple communities, which overlapped and interacted in ways that could only strengthen the nation as a whole.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Cooke, Trish and Anni Axworthy. *Hoorah for Mary Seacole*. Hopscotch Histories. London: Franklin Watts, 2007. Print.

Frederick, Malcolm and Prodeepta Das. *Kamal Goes to Trinidad*. London: Frances Lincoln, 2008. Print.

Hubley, John and Penny. *A Family in Jamaica*. London: A&C Black, 1982. Print.

Mead, Stella. *The Adventures of Peter and Tess in British West Africa, British Honduras, British West Indies, Canada, Newfoundland*. London: Amex, 1945. Print.

Peach, L. DuGarde. *Florence Nightingale*. Ladybird Adventures from History series 561: 7. Loughborough, England: Ladybird, 1959. Print.

Salih, Sarah. "Introduction." *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*. 1857. London: Penguin, 2005. xv-l. Print.

Taylor, Kate and Luchiano Barnes. *My African Caribbean Community*. London: Franklin Watts, 2007. Print.

Secondary Sources

Ajegbo, Keith, Deena Kawan and Seema Sharma. *Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship*. Runcorn, UK: Department for Education, January 2007. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

"Children Return to Their Roots Series." London: Frances Lincoln, 2006-2009. Web. 12 January, 2012.

Dyer, Richard. *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Education Act 2002 (UK). London: UK Government Document, 24 July 2002. Web. 13 January 2012.

Evans, P. C. C. and R. B. LePage. *The Education of West Indian Immigrant Children*. London: National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, 1966. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. 'A London sumting dis… '*Critical Quarterly* 41.3(1999): 57-69. Print.

—. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. 1987. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Glass, Ruth. *Newcomers: The West Indians in London*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1960. Print.

Howe, Darcus. *From Bobby to Babylon: Blacks and the British Police*. London: Race Today, 1988. Print.

Lambert, David and John Morgan. "Corrupting the Curriculum? The Case of Geography." *London Review of Education*, 7.2 (2009): 147-157. Print.

Lewis, Linden. "Re-regulating the State, the Celebration of the Market, and the Crisis of Civil Society in the Commonwealth Caribbean." *Caribbean Quarterly.* 2006. 52(2/3): 121-137. Print.

Maylor, Uvanney and Barbara Read, with Heather Mendick, Alistair Ross and Nicola Rollock. *Diversity and Citizenship in the Classroom: Research Review*. London: Institute for Policy Studies in Education, 2007. Print.

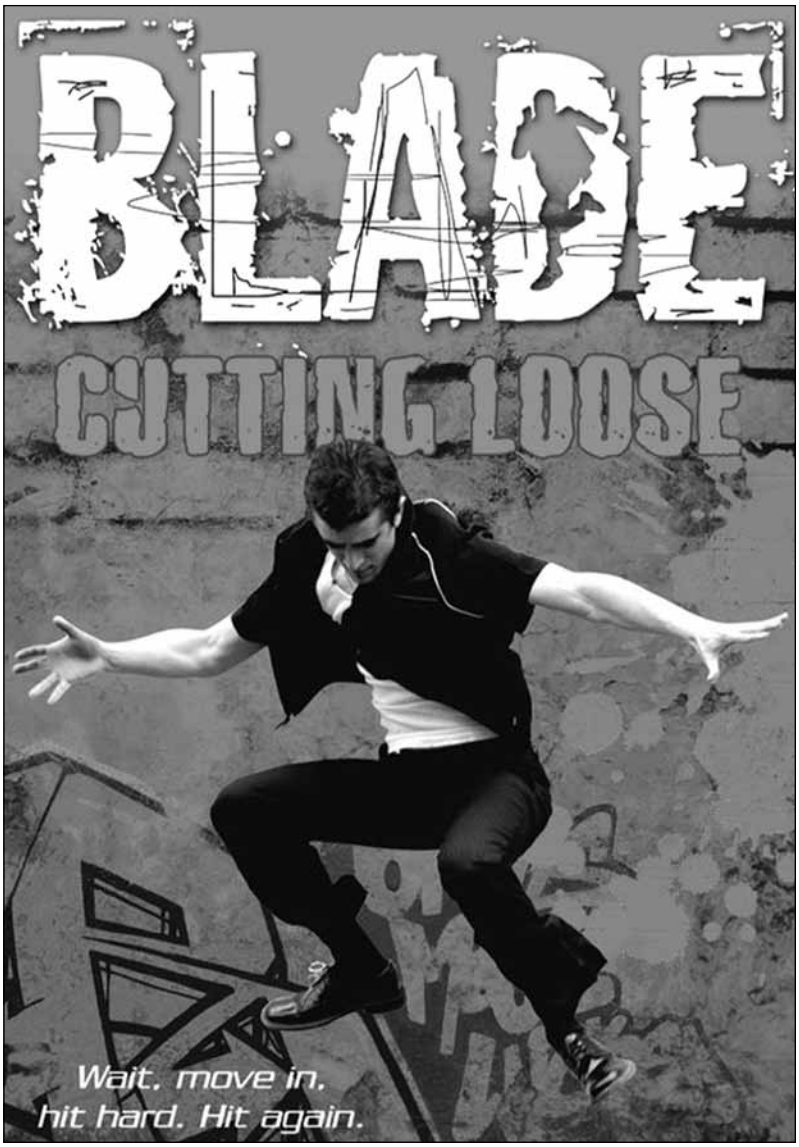
Ramdin, Ron. *Reimaging Britain: 500 Years of Black and Asian History*. London: Pluto, 1999. Print.

Rampton, Anthony. *West Indian Children in Our Schools*. Interim Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981. Print.

"Stories from the Outside": Representations of the Underclass in Nineteenth and Twenty-first Century Britain

by MICHELE GILL

Michele Gill teaches children's literature at The Open University in London. She is a committee member of IBBY UK and while a PhD student was one of the co-founders of "The Child and the Book," now an annual conference for postgraduate children's literature students. Michele studied for her PhD at Newcastle University. Her current research includes analysis of changing portrayals of the male in award winning novels of the 20th century.



In contemporary British society images of a dangerous, feral underclass have taken root in popular culture although the reading middle classes know very little about the everyday lives of people who are routinely marginalised and stigmatised.

This paper analyses how the so-called underclass has been represented in British culture by comparing Victorian "street arab" tales' overt ideological intent with a series of novels by Tim Bowler. Blade (2008-2010) is a fast-paced crime fiction series which raises pertinent questions about the lives of disenfranchised people in anonymous city landscapes. As a vision

of Britain in the twenty-first century, the work both challenges and tunes into current anxieties about youth, violence, and the existence of a "feral underclass," ultimately offering diverse perspectives on a complex and troubling subject.

> BLADE
>
> That's what they used to call me. And I liked it. Bit of style, bit of clash. But remember – it's a secret. Don't be a claphead and spew it. If I find out you've blotched on me, then you'll find out why Becky called me Blade.
>
> As for the rest of the world, I don't give two bells what people call me. Why fuss about a name when you can make 'em up so easy? And you know what? Life's a bit like that too.
>
> Easy, simple, no sweat. (*Playing Dead* 9)

The confrontational first person narration of Blade sets the tone for Tim Bowler's portrayal of urban anonymity, violence and despair in which a dying woman searches for her brother, a runaway girl finds herself dangerously out of her depth, a small child is kidnapped, and a grieving mother looks for answers. All of their lives are connected by one person: Blade, a boy damaged beyond repair, who is being pursued by thugs and villains from a past that will not let him go…

The Blade series, published between 2008 and 2010, describes the life of a homeless boy fleeing from thugs and villains while searching for a sense of safety he has never known. Bowler presents Blade as existing in a harsh, urban environment where crime, poverty and brutality are part of the characters' daily lives. In light of current imagery surrounding poor, urban landscapes in Britain, Bowler's work can be interpreted as resonating with anxieties about the lives of those considered to be living on the margins of society, people who have come to be known as a "feral underclass." Bowler's narratives are concerned certainly with the difficult subjects of homelessness, violence and crime. However, he simultaneously challenges assumptions about the lives of those who form this "underclass" by the way that he portrays supposedly "respectable" and respected individuals living in different strata of society who exert their authority over the underclass. This creates ambivalence and moral ambiguity in the narratives, resulting in uncertainty as to how the novels' portrayal of the lives of the dispossessed in twenty-first century Britain should be interpreted.

In light of current imagery surrounding poor, urban landscapes in Britain, Bowler's work can be interpreted as resonating with anxieties about the lives of those considered to be living on the margins of society, people who have come to be known as a "feral underclass."

This complex representation of life among the underclass, both in Bowler's novels and other popular discourse, is the subject of this essay, specifically considering the relationship between the images which are portrayed, those who create them and their impact on the subjects

themselves. In developing this argument, I draw comparisons between current representations of, and attitudes towards, those in society's lowest strata, comparing Bowler's novels with images found in nineteenth century literature when similar concerns and fears were being expressed. In both eras, I suggest that power plays a significant role in how and why the concept of an underclass is described in terms of "otherness," leading to a sense of vilification which is present in both our current culture and that of nineteenth century Britain.

Children's Literature and Ideology

That literature for young people should explore the contemporary world in which it is written is unsurprising, for as John Stephens (1992) points out: "Since a culture's future is, to put it crudely, invested in its children, children's writers often take upon themselves the task of trying to mould audience attitudes into 'desirable' forms, which can mean either an attempt to perpetuate certain values or to resist socially dominant values which particular writers oppose" (3). This intent is clearly evident in much of the literature written for children in the nineteenth century, from adventure tales set in the far flung corners of Empire to family stories situated closer to home, where maturation is sought on a smaller, though no less significant scale. Specifically in relation to class, the "street arab" tales, which saw the redemption of the street child, reaffirmed the status quo of the class structure as the destitute child was assimilated into his or her "natural" position in the world, grateful for the patronage of the wealthy philanthropist.[1] Working-class or more accurately, underclass parents in these tales are portrayed as ineffectual or degenerate. For the child to be "saved," the parent(s) must be discarded; for instance, in Hesba Stretton's popular and commercially successful *Jessica's First Prayer* (1867), Jessica's mother is portrayed as a drunkard who is incapable of caring for her daughter. Jessica is rescued by a churchwarden and subsequently cared for by a minister. At the heart of these tales is not only a Christian message, but also one which reasserts the Victorian social class system. Further, as Elizabeth Thiel (2008) highlights, the idea of the street child as an innocent victim is paramount to these tales. She continues, "[t]o perceive street arabs as innocent and prey to the vagaries of circumstance was certainly a more palatable option than conceptualizing them as rampaging hordes of savages, and it was with the former image that many writers of fiction for children chose to align their work" (Thiel 49). Ultimately, in order to be rescued, one must be worthy of salvation and

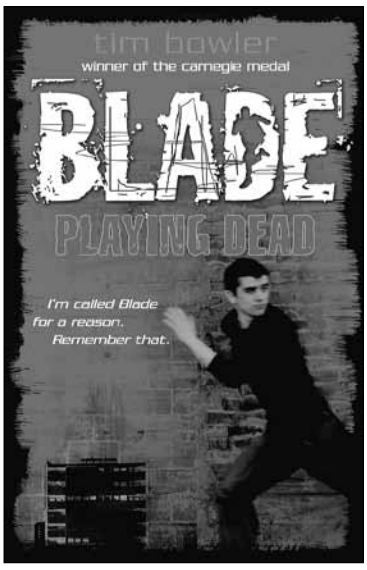
…I draw comparisons between current representations of, and attitudes towards, those in society's lowest strata, comparing Bowler's novels with images found in nineteenth century literature when similar concerns and fears were being expressed. In both eras, I suggest that power plays a significant role in how and why the concept of an underclass is described in terms of "otherness," leading to a sense of vilification which is present in both our current culture and that of nineteenth century Britain.

therefore innocent.

The erasure of the "rampaging hordes" from the pages of Victorian children's literature through rescue and redemption meant that a key anxiety of the age was extinguished from the middle-class child's view of the world, keeping these young readers innocent about the "real" lives of those in the underclass. However, the ideal of childhood innocence, at its pinnacle during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, has become somewhat more multifarious in its interpretation in contemporary literature for the young. While the desire to maintain at least a degree of childhood innocence in the content of children's literature lives on (for instance, in the "positive" endings of Jacqueline Wilson's realistic family dramas), the desire to inform the young about the world they live in without redress to overt ideological messaging of the kind found in *Jessica's First Prayer* and its contemporaries is still in evidence. Further, the question of class and one's place in society has become more fluid, certainly in terms of aspiration. In the case of Bowler's novels, he presents a complex and at times contradictory picture of both the character of Blade and the world he inhabits. The first person narration means that from the outset the reader travels with Blade, a prickly, challenging companion, who attempts to give the impression he is in total control of his life. Blade constantly tries to convince the reader, whom he addresses directly as "Bigeyes," that he does not need anyone; that he can manage alone:

Ultimately, in order to be rescued, one must be worthy of salvation and therefore innocent.

> I call the shots here. I choose what I say and what I don't. You can choose whether to stay or wig it somewhere else. And if you choose to wig it, that's fine with me. I don't need you. Remember that.
> I don't need anyone.
> Thing about lying—we're all told it's wrong. Tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth. But where's that ever got anyone? I've been lying since as long as I can remember. Why? Cos everyone I've ever known has lied to me. (*Playing Dead* 8)



However, as the monologue above demonstrates, the reasons for Blade's aggressive and defensive behavior are complex; his natural distrust of people has deep roots which are revealed slowly and painfully as the narrative progresses, and Bowler adeptly signals his character's vulnerability and longing through his all too strenuous assertions of independence. The desire for human contact and kindness becomes more urgent but equally, full of risk, as people move into his orbit enabling the reader to encounter a different character, a vulnerable boy trying to survive in a hellish, criminal underworld created by adults who have shaped the course of his life. One of the major differences between Bowler's portrayal of Blade and the constructions of nineteenth-century street-arab tales rests

in the ambivalence and complexity with which the character of Blade is drawn; he is not representative of the child as a force for good, but is the product of a dysfunctional world, simultaneously both a victim and perpetrator of crime. The use of a first person narrator gives the character more depth and adds a sense of agency, however misplaced this may be.

To find a more comparable analogy between Bowler's work and the portrayal of the child in

The use of a first person narrator gives the character more depth and adds a sense of agency, however misplaced this may be.

nineteenth century literature, it is necessary to look to the fiction written ostensibly for the adult market and to its chief chronicler of working-class experience during this period, Charles Dickens. The representation of Blade resonates with Dickens's "street boy" Jack Dawkins or "the Artful Dodger," as he is more commonly known in *Oliver Twist* (1838). Both Blade and Dodger are seemingly without family, cast adrift on the city streets to fend for themselves by any means possible and both are surrounded by ambivalent adults who both use and abuse them. Dickens's portrayal of Dodger is not straightforward; his ambiguity is instantly recognized by Oliver when they first meet: "He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man.… He was, altogether, as roistering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers" (*Oliver Twist* 53). Dickens is unapologetic for his street thief, and encourages the reader to feel sympathy for Dodger, even when he is hauled off, unrepentant, to prison for his thieving:

> "Come on," said the jailer.
> "Oh ah! I'll come on," replied the Dodger, brushing his hat with the palm of his hand. "Ah! (to the Bench) it's no use your looking frightened; I won't show you no mercy, not a ha'porth of it. *You'll* pay for this, my fine fellers."… With these last words, the Dodger suffered himself to be led off by the collar; threatening, till he got into the yard, to make a parliamentary business of it; and then grinning in the officer's face, with great glee and self-approval. (336)

While order is restored in that Dodger ends up in prison and justice is meted out to the criminal fraternity among whom he lives, Dickens portrays his street urchin in such a way that he cannot be reduced to a "morality tale." The exuberance and wit with which he is presented remain long after the prison door is closed and as such, pose questions about the stereotyping and general demonization of a whole stratum of society. It is this complex characterisation which Bowler has drawn on in his characterisation of Blade.

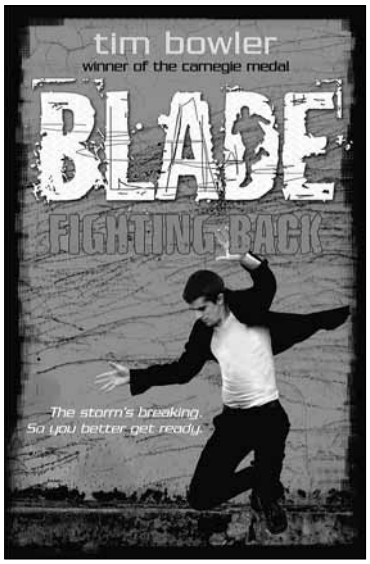
Throughout the Blade series, Bowler presents pictures of "dangerous" landscapes as Blade moves around the city.

The State of the Nation: Now and Then

Throughout the Blade series, Bowler presents pictures of "dangerous" landscapes as Blade moves around the city. He visits Ruby, the mother of his one real friend, Becky, who died before the narrative begins because of her connection to Blade, something which overwhelms him with guilt and has led to his subsequent avoidance of "good" people. As he passes through the estate where Ruby lives he is continually aware of potential danger:

> Hood up, down the street, moving fast. Shadows on both pavements, front and behind. Might not be interested in me. Can't tell yet…
> Don't recognize any faces.

> More figures ahead, lounging by the bus stop. Same sort of age. Glance behind. Shadows following, both pavements. Think it's all teens whipping this street. Three or four talking on mobiles. (*Fighting Back* 94-5)



Although Bowler creates a menacing atmosphere, not every situation leads to confrontation or violence. On several occasions, Blade's heightened sense of danger as he is being chased leads him to draw unsubstantiated conclusions about the threat posed. Bowler creates an image of contemporary UK as a place occupied by a dangerous, feral underclass, undeserving of sympathy or understanding. These are people often condemned out of hand because of where they live, especially the gangs of young people who inhabit the streets of rundown, urban housing estates.

Bowler creates an image of contemporary UK as a place occupied by a dangerous, feral underclass, undeserving of sympathy or understanding.

In *Yob Nation* (2006), Francis Gilbert argued that bad behavior, excessive aggression and a general lack of morality were evident at every level of society and ultimately responsible for a culture of fear. In a new edition published in 2007, he concludes with a series of statements which paint a depressing picture of the state of the nation:

> If ASBOs [anti-social behaviour orders] are going to be enforced, more jails need to be built and the antiquated court system needs to deliver swifter, more effective justice; if alcohol-fuelled violence is to be curtailed then the alcohol industry needs to be reined in; if parents are to be encouraged to care more for their children then incentives need to be given for couples to stay together;… At the moment, the UK is crying out for a government that can implement some clear-thinking policies to stop the rising yobbery that threatens to engulf our land. (Gilbert 294-5)

While Gilbert takes on a wide spectrum of society, his work is infused with a suspicion that it is among the working class that this anti-social behaviour really takes its toll and creates unease for the more wealthy and successful in society; it is the lower strata who are in need of a "firm" approach. This attitude towards the working-class has been challenged by Owen Jones in *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (2011), in which he turns the spotlight on those who are responsible for this cultural imagery, highlighting, for example, how few television or newspaper journalists originate from the working class. He suggests that a lack of basic understanding for the people they condemn leads to stereotyped and hackneyed representations. He continues:

> How has hatred of working-class people become so socially acceptable? Privately educated, multi-millionaire comedians dress up as chavs for our amusement in popular sitcoms such as *Little Britain*.[2] Our newspapers eagerly hunt down

> horror stories about "life among the chavs" and pass them off as representative of working-class communities. Internet sites such as "ChavScum" brim with venom directed at the chav caricature. It seems as though working-class people are the one group in society that you can say practically anything about. (Jones 2)

Jones goes on to suggest that the dysfunctional behavior of a few in society has become representative of the condition of the working class as a whole in the portrayal by mainstream media where the perception of drug and alcohol fuelled communities, creating no-go areas for decent people, has become the image of choice.

In the Blade narratives, Bowler certainly draws attention to a whole world of trouble, dysfunctional, violent individuals and others who are simply trying to survive by any means available. Yet Bowler does not suggest that the landscape which Blade inhabits is irretrievably corrupt. Alongside the villains who search for Blade are others who try to help. Becky's mother Ruby, a former prostitute, calls on other working girls to aid Blade's escape from the thugs chasing him. Nor does Bowler suggest that the trouble relates only to the working class: the man who abused Blade and used him to carry out murders is known in the underworld as Hawk, but is actually Lord Haffler-Devereaux, who runs a worldwide crime network while projecting himself as a wholesome, upstanding family man. His ability to avoid justice rests on corrupt officials including high ranking police officers. In portraying this complex panorama of characters, Bowler suggests that money and power working together can manipulate how a situation is viewed, and so how individuals are judged.

In the Blade narratives, Bowler certainly draws attention to a whole world of trouble, dysfunctional, violent individuals and others who are simply trying to survive by any means available.

In considering the reasons why some people are persistently portrayed through such negative imagery, Will Hutton (2010) highlights the need for justification in the ever increasing wealth gap; if those at "the bottom" are deemed unworthy, then they are necessarily undeserving:

> Everywhere there is pressure to control and repress the social consequences of a two-nation Britain. Ever more sophisticated CCTV policing the fortresses of the rich and the desolate housing estates of the disadvantaged has become the iconic social intervention of the age… As opportunity regresses amid a widespread sense that even hard work will not necessarily deliver results, social engagement is reduced to penal and oppressive interventions. (Hutton 10)

The commentaries on contemporary Britain by Hutton, Jones and Gilbert respectively present a complex yet depressing picture of life as

part of the working class but, as Jones suggests, this is not necessarily an accurate representation: the few – anti-social, lawless individuals – have come to represent the majority, people simply trying to manage on low incomes in a society where wealth has become the marker for happiness and success. This relentlessly negative portrayal of working-class life means that a vast number of people remain unknown and without representation in the popular media, while simultaneously having to live with the consequences of the chav image. Bowler's fictional narratives counteract this representation to a degree, not by ignoring it or suggesting that it does not exist, but by painting a more complex picture of life on the edges of contemporary urban Britain where brutality, fear and kindness exist side by side.

Although this vision of a dangerous underclass has been presented as specific to twenty-first century British life and built into a moral panic by media representation and politicians, a very similar discussion was taking place in the nineteenth century when the question of class came sharply into focus. From 1838 to 1848 the Chartist Movement, which represented the first mass working class labor movement, called for political reform in Britain in the form of universal male suffrage, sending shock waves through the establishment and creating unease due to the perceived breakdown in authority. In 1845, Benjamin Disraeli published his fictional work, *Sybil, or The Two Nations*, in which he drew attention to the plight of the working-class by highlighting the terrible conditions in which they were living. In the same year, Engels published *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, in German with an English translation by Florence Kelley to follow in 1887. The lives of the working class as well as those termed as an underclass were further documented by journalists and writers of the period, including Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) and James Greenwood (1831-1927).

This relentlessly negative portrayal of working-class life means that a vast number of people remain unknown and without representation in the popular media, while simultaneously having to live with the consequences of the chav image.

Mayhew wrote a series of articles on the lives of the poor which appeared every day in the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper from 18 October 1849 and for most of 1850. The articles were eventually published together as *London Labour and the London Poor* in 1851, a huge undertaking in which Mayhew interviewed and recorded the life stories of those at the bottom of London society. Although Mayhew's work inevitably reflects the moral and class prejudices of the period, he does succeed in presenting a fairly balanced picture, which led Peter Quennell, in his introduction to a 1950 edition of the fourth volume of *London Labour and the London Poor*, "Those that will not Work," to conclude that "[i]t is to the credit of Mayhew and Acton that they attempted, not unsuccessfully, to keep their surveys matter-of-fact, to banish contemporary phobias, and to study their subject as scientists rather than as

moralists or sentimentalists" (Quennell 25). As such, Mayhew's work represents a significant resource in documenting the lives of the poor in mid-nineteenth century London.

Greenwood, both an author of fiction and a journalist, also chronicled the lives of the poor. His articles were subsequently published in several books including *Unsentimental Journeys, or, Byways of the Modern Babylon* (1867) and *Seven Curses of London* (1869). Like Mayhew, he is largely sympathetic to the plight of the impoverished. However, his work does show a distinction between what he considers to be the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. For example, in "Unsentimental Journeys," he describes people queuing for free hospital treatment, referring to one group as "the wan army recruited specially from the squalid, loud-mouthed poverty of the city," and he goes on to suggest that they are there to take advantage of any free food which comes with medical treatment so that "lazy father's bad foot, or sister Polly's asthma be thus made a source of income rather than of impoverishment to the entire family" (Greenwood 2). While neither Greenwood nor Mayhew were particularly wealthy, they did not belong to the class of people they represented in their journalism, which again highlights the argument put forward by Jones in which he challenges the power structures at work in such representations, in turn, drawing attention to issues around control and the way individuals and groups of people are categorised and portrayed. While the Victorian period may largely have been an era of philanthropy, it still retained a rigid class system and those belonging to the lower orders could only be absorbed under strictly regulated conditions, as was made clear to children from a very early age through the street arab tales.

The "Outsider" Child

The gangs of boy pickpockets portrayed in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* serve as a reminder that anxiety existed among the wealthy about the activities of those they perceived as belonging to the dangerous and lawless underclass. As Thiel suggests, "The destitute poor of the cities, reportedly breeding unchecked in their disease-ridden rookeries, posed a danger to social stability generally, but it was their 'vermin' offspring, 'swaddled' in evil and genetically destined for crime and depravity, that were viewed as the potential contaminants of the future" (Thiel 44). Currently much of the rhetoric and imagery around so-called chav culture has similarly focused on youth, with the suggestion that communities are being terrorised by gangs of young people, roaming the streets intent on lawlessness. This picture comes graphically to life in an article by Catherine Mayer (2008) who explores the image of British youth in the wider world:

> The boys and girls who casually pick fights, have sex and keep the emergency services fully occupied are often fuelled by cheap booze. British youngsters drink their Continental European counterparts under the table… They are more likely to try drugs or start smoking young. English girls are the most sexually active in Europe… Small wonder, then, that a 2007 UNICEF study of child well-being in 21 industrialized countries placed Britain at the bottom of the table. (Mayer 38)

Mayer does acknowledge that the majority of young people "successfully navigate the dangerous waters of British childhood," but because of the indelible image of being perceived as problematic, "children from all shades of the social spectrum feel they are being demonized" (39). She suggests that the relationship between British adults and their young has long been uneasy, with parents spending less time with their children than do those of other nationalities, leaving young people to fill this void with peers and the influences of the "commercially driven, celebrity-obsessed media" (39). While Mayer is careful to emphasise that all young people in Britain are affected by the negative cultural image of youth, she highlights the added implications for those who live with the day to day effects of social deprivation:

> What's life like for poor kids in Britain? They will likely live in an area where unemployment is high and aspirations are low. There's probably nowhere to play, and home may not provide much of a refuge. Such conditions breed trouble, according to a recent report by the IPPR that identified the factors inclining a child to criminality. Children who try to stay on the right side of the law find it increasingly difficult to resist the growing influence of gangs. (Mayer 41)

Mayer does not set out to stigmatize or demonise young people living in poor environments. Instead, she highlights many of the challenges which they face using a neutral tone, emphasized by her use of reports and statistics to support her understanding of troubled and troubling British youth. It is clear, however, that the information Mayer draws on and the conclusions she reaches, can potentially be observed through a framework of "moral panic", with young people who exist in bleak cityscapes viewed with varying degrees of suspicion and hostility. This draws us back to the argument put forward by Jones in relation to the working class, only this time specifically highlighting attitudes towards young people.

At the heart of this is a fear of the unknown, a lack of recognition of the other which has been fuelled by disturbing cultural imagery.

In the Blade narratives, Bowler certainly portrays the existence of challenging youth. At the outset, Blade is attacked by a girl gang who beat him up and steal his clothes: "They sort me, five of 'em. Trix doesn't get involved. I'm glad of that. She's the worst. But it's still bad. They beat the shit out of me, then stand back, breathing hard. I lie there on the towpath, aching for 'em to go. I can feel the scratches on my face, the blood in my mouth, the bruises all over my body" (*Playing Dead* 16). The girls in this gang have few obvious redeeming characteristics: however the portrayal of the character of Becky, who has fled an abusive home, raises some questions about how and why individuals arrive at this point which immediately makes judgement less straightforward. While Bowler does not seek to justify their behavior, he does present them in such a way that they become more complex which makes it difficult to dismiss them as simply "bad"; a stereotype of urban youth in Britain today.

In the same way that the concept of the chav has come to misrepresent working-class communities, so the "hoodie" has become a form of shorthand for a negative stereotype of youth, a symbol of fear and uncertainty, although the accuracy of its interpretation is open to debate. Discussing the impact of the hoodie on the consciousness of society at large, Gareth McLean (2005) in *The Guardian* online crystallises the fear that it engenders:

> A lone figure behind us on the walk home—hood up, head down—and we quicken our steps. Someone solitary and hooded at the back of the bus, and we opt for a seat near the front. A group of hooded teenagers on the street, and we're tensing our shoulders, clenching our fists (round handbag strap or housekeys-cum-weapon), training our ears for verbal abuse in order to emphatically ignore it.

At the heart of this is a fear of the unknown, a lack of recognition of the other which has been fuelled by disturbing cultural imagery. Christine Wilkie-Stibbs (2008) draws on the analogy of the "outside child" in discussing the way that society positions young people considered to be problematic, both in real time and in fiction. She points to the way they are treated when considered to have contravened the accepted regulations set by the society in which they live:

> Whenever children are seen to have transgressed the boundaries of regulated behaviour, they provoke shock waves of

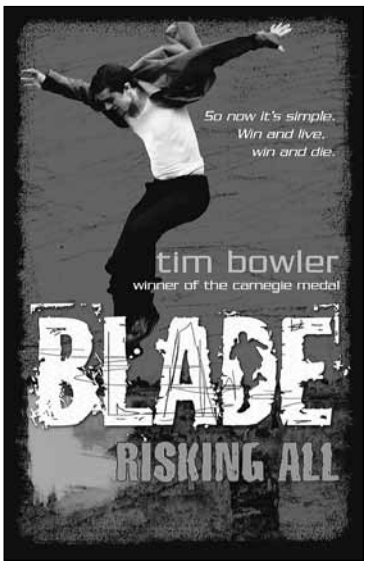
> disbelief and revulsion in the wider population—giving rise to literary censorship in the case of literary children or censure of actual children. The weight of the state then comes crashing down upon them with little or no concession to their otherwise protected status as children, or their right to innocence. (Wilkie-Stibbs 17)

To a large extent this reaction can be traced to an adult desire to preserve childhood as a time of innocence, which is threatened by the presence of transgressive children. In many ways this response is similar to the way in which the working class has been visualised and dealt with in contemporary popular culture. In both the Victorian era and today, the portrayal is intended to allow the majority to bristle with moral outrage or simply gives them licence not to care, to look away from these outside children. As Wilkie-Stibbs proposes, the setting up of this in and out dichotomy makes it easier to create distance:

> It is a commonplace that we care for others unequally, in proportion to how much we think we know about them, how easily we can imagine ourselves to be in their plight, or how likely we judge it that we should find ourselves in their situation. It is hard to empathize with people who seem Other, and it is hard to sympathize with those we cannot empathize with. It is even harder to empathize with people whose identity we do not even recognize, and to whom we do not ascribe an identity as worthy as our own. (Wilkie-Stibbs 21)

Blade is a working-class boy whose circumstances have placed him in the feral underclass and yet he remains the hero of his own story.

As Wilkie-Stibbs's argument suggests, the intention in creating this divide is to position those considered transgressive outside and therefore unlikely to receive sympathy, in much the same way that Jones suggests the term chav operates.



Bowler presents us with a young man whose situation is the outcome of living a dispossessed life, used and abused without any recourse to the law. However, he is not simply a victim: he has colluded in this situation, albeit out of necessity. Bowler portrays Blade as a very capable individual who has learnt to take care of himself and is resilient, and who eventually brings about the downfall of a very serious criminal. At the same time, Blade is a skilled and much practised killer.

Blade is a working-class boy whose circumstances have placed him in the feral underclass and yet he remains the hero of his own story. He survives and faces his demons. He develops from a seven-year-old boy who challenges the authority of the police to a fourteen-year-old version who, he concedes, has not changed a great deal. By the end of the series, he is an imprisoned

twenty-one-year-old who is finally breaking free from his past. By the end, he is not defined solely by his pseudonym "Blade."

Bowler is not necessarily writing a commentary on twenty first century life in urban Britain, but in the light of the unrelenting negative imagery which has become commonplace in relation to particular sections of society, his novels challenge and complicate the issue of what Jones refers to as "demonization." By following Blade's story through the eight novels which form the series, the reader makes a commitment and ultimately has a stake in the outcome; the dangerous landscapes and dysfunctional individuals who inhabit them become more ambivalent, more intricate and cannot simply be dismissed. At the heart of the narratives is a boy, damaged and fearful, resourceful and intelligent. His voice is heard clearly above all of the noise, insistent and strong, and demanding that the reader hears and does not look away:

At the heart of the narratives is a boy, damaged and fearful, resourceful and intelligent. His voice is heard clearly above all of the noise, insistent and strong, and demanding that the reader hears and does not look away

> So why? Eh, Bigeyes? Why didn't we meet earlier? You know what I think? I think we were meant to meet but I had to be ready. Simple as that. I had to be ready. And I was. Took me till I was fourteen, but I got there in the end.
> Maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong.
> But there's one thing I am clear about.
> We're never going to be apart, Bigeyes. No messing. You and me. We're in this together. For good. (*Risking All* 140)

Hero and villain, victim and perpetrator; in Blade, Bowler presents us with the contradictions of life in the dangerous world of the dispossessed and makes us care, effectively changing the dynamic which exists in the outsider discourse discussed by Wilkie-Stibbs. Perhaps Bowler's ultimate achievement then is in creating a series of narratives which destabilize and challenge cultural imagery around the feral underclass, especially the young people caught up in the negative representation that creates so much unease in twenty-first-century Britain.

Perhaps Bowler's ultimate achievement then is in creating a series of narratives which destabilize and challenge cultural imagery around the feral underclass, especially the young people caught up in the negative representation that creates so much unease in twenty first century Britain.

Notes

1. See Elizabeth Thiel, *The Fantasy of Family* (2008), Chapter Two for an in depth study of the "street arab" tale in the nineteenth century.
2. The origins of the word "chav" are uncertain but it has come to be recognized as an insulting term that is used to describe working-class people who are considered to be uncouth and lacking culture.

It is also often targeted at people living on council house estates and receiving benefits or working in low status jobs.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Bowler, Tim. *Playing Dead*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

—. *Closing In*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

—. *Breaking Free*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

—. *Running Scared*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

—. *Fighting Back*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

—. *Mixing It*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

—. *Cutting Loose*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

—. *Risking All*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Print.

Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. 1838. London: Oxford UP, 1949. Print.

Disraeli, Benjamin. *Sybil, or The Two Nations*. London: Henry Cloburn Publisher, 1845. Print.

Stretton, Hesba. *Jessica's First Prayer*. London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d. [1867]. Print.

Secondary Sources

Bristow, Joseph. *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1991. Print.

Butts, Dennis. *Children's Literature and Social Change: Some Case Studies from Barbara Hofland to Philip Pullman*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010. Print.

Gilbert, Francis. *Yob Nation: The Truth about Britain's Yob Culture*. London: Piatkus, 2007. Print.

Greenwood, James. *Unsentimental Journeys: Or, Byways of the Modern Babylon*. London: Ward, Lock and Tyler, 1867. Print.

Hutton, Will. *Them and Us: Politics, Greed and Inequality—Why We Need a Fair Society*. London: Little Brown, 2010. Print.

Jones, Owen. *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*. London: Verso, 2011. Print.

McLean, Gareth. "In the Hood." *Guardian Unlimited*. May 13 (2005). Web. 14 Nov. 2011.

Mayer, Catherine. "Mean Streets." *TIME* 7 April 2008: 36-42. Print.

Mills, Jean, and Richard Mills, eds. *Childhood Studies: A Reader in Perspectives of Childhood*. London, New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Quennell, Peter, ed. *London's Underworld*. London: William Kimber, 1950. [Comprised of extracts from volume four of Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), entitled "Those that Will Not Work" and published in 1861]. Print.

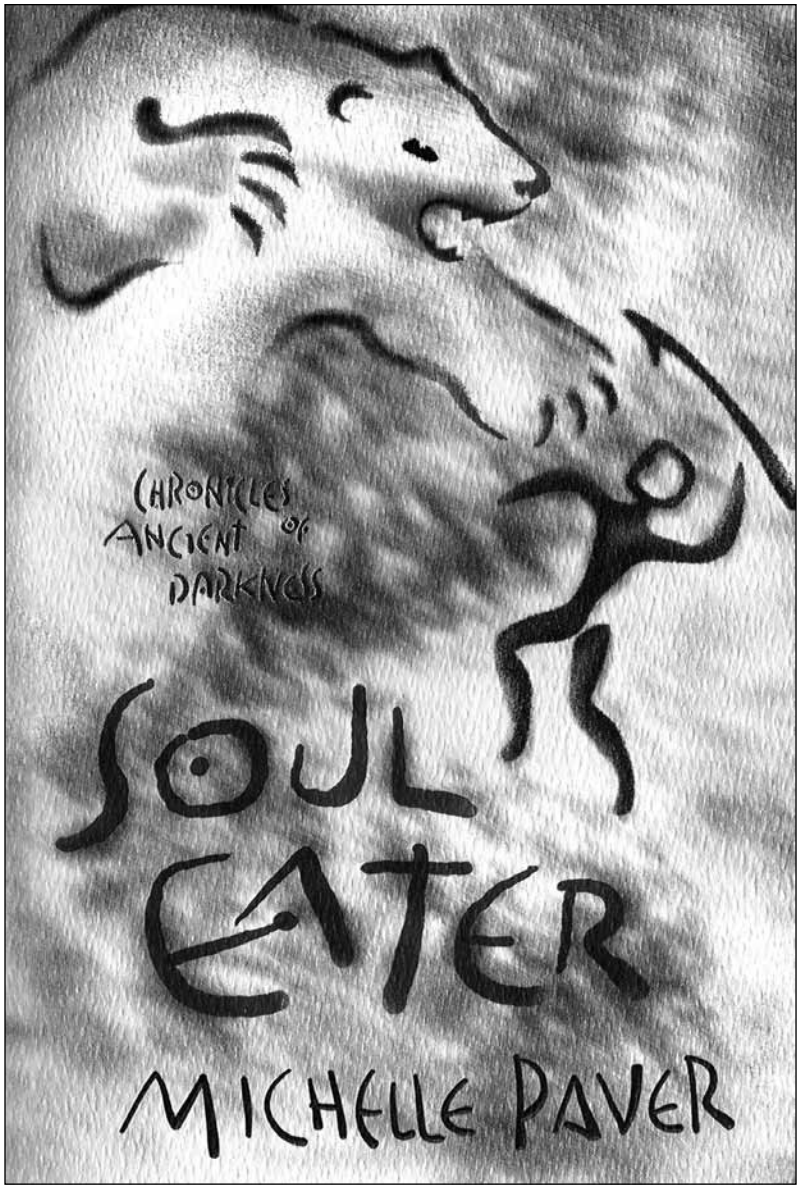
Stephens, John. *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction*. London and New York: Longman, 1992. Print.

Thiel, Elizabeth. *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal*. New York and London: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Wilkie-Stibbs, Christine. *The Outside Child In and Out of the Book*. New York and London: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Michelle Paver: Ancient Magic for a Modern, Greener World

by ANTHONY PAVLIK



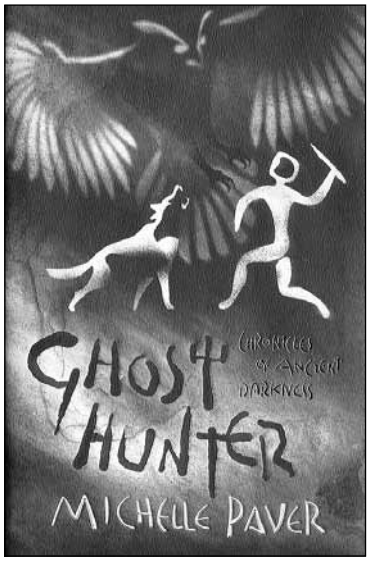
This article examines the work of Michelle Paver, a relative newcomer in the world of children's literature. The discussion specifically considers Paver's ***Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*** *series in relation to recent developments in green fiction for children, and in particular, identifies the series as part of a trend that asks readers not simply to be more aware of the natural world and its plight, but to go further and re-examine the nature of the relationship between humankind and the natural world.*

Anthony Pavlik has a PhD in children's literature and has published articles on ecocriticism and fantasy literature for children. He currently teaches in the Faculty of Education at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul.

While the Harry Potter series was continuing to take center stage at the beginning of this century, it would have been easy to forget that other British writers were also working their own kinds of magic away from the Rowling media spotlight. One such writer was Michelle Paver, whose *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* series has now been published in thirty-eight countries, with sales in the UK alone amounting to one million copies. The six books in the series, *Wolf Brother* (2004), *Spirit Walker* (2005), *Soul Eater* (2006), *Outcast* (2007), *Oath Breaker* (2008) and, finally, *Ghost Hunter* (2009)—winner of the 2010 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, a rare feat for a book that is part of a series—have garnered a very strong fan following and received considerable media acclaim. Whilst Rowling conjures a largely urban world of magical beasts and people in which her hero can play out his adventures, Paver's series offers an adventure narrative and coming of age story that speaks clearly to the current need to re-evaluate understandings of the way human beings respond to the natural world around them. I will, therefore, consider Paver's series in the light of recent ecocritical discussions regarding the relationship between humankind and the natural world.

…Paver's series offers an adventure narrative and coming of age story that speaks clearly to the current need to re-evaluate understandings of the way human beings respond to the natural world around them.

As Elizabeth Thiel and Alison Waller have observed, "Nature and the natural world have long been inherent features of children's literature" (1) but, even so, as Julia Mickenberg and Phil Nel note, "[c]hildren are growing up with recycling, organic foods, and 'green' products, but can find few books that grapple with the real changes necessary to halt or reverse current trends" (456). The green children's literature that is available has a tendency to position the child protagonist as eco-hero, "assigned the role of the agent of its own environmental redemption" (Lesnik-Oberstein 213), something that is, in the real world of global corporate expansion, far beyond the capabilities of the child. Paver's series offers a new perspective on this situation.

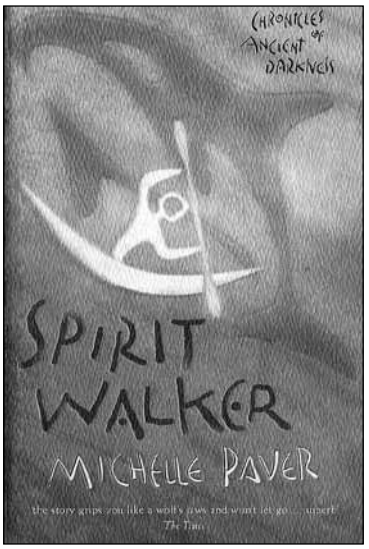


The series is set after the end of the last ice age, in the Northern Europe of six thousand years ago, and begins with *Wolf Brother*, where the reader is introduced to the world of the Forest in which almost all the events of the series take place. However, this forest is not a traditional or symbolic motif of the kind found in folk and fairy tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Hansel and Gretel," nor is it simply a passive backdrop for the playing out of events as is, for example, the Forbidden Forest outside Hogwarts. Paver animates the Forest and gives it a life of its own. She uses a capital F to foreground the subjectivity of the Forest, enhancing the sense that the Forest has an identity equal to that of the human inhabitants. Paver's positioning of the Forest, and nature in general,

in this way asks us to reconsider the position of human beings within the natural environment, a move I will consider in more detail.

In order to maintain the proper balance between humans, nature and the spirit world in the Forest, there are natural rules which, if broken, will result in ecological disaster. This is most strikingly seen in the actions of the Soul Eaters, a shadowy group of Mages (shamans), who persistently break or ignore these important rules in pursuit of their personal goals. These are not, however, the stereotypical wand-wielding magicians of standard fantasy fare; their powers operate in ways that are more attuned to the spiritual and the natural. The Soul Eaters once referred to themselves "the Healers," and their efforts had been for the good of all of the clans but, by the start of *Wolf Brother,* their purpose has changed: they "'wanted power. That's what they lived for. To rule the Forest. To force everyone to do their bidding'" (*Wolf Brother* 212-3). If the Soul Eaters succeed, the natural harmony will be broken and the Forest destroyed, along with everything and everyone that lives within it. Their desire is to stamp their authority over nature, in what is a largely Western, Judeo-Christian, anthropocentric point of view. It does not take a huge leap of imagination to see how the Soul Eaters' methods resemble the way that modern human beings have removed themselves from that idea of harmony with nature in favor of dominion over it.

Paver's positioning of the Forest, and nature in general, in this way asks us to reconsider the position of human beings within the natural environment…



To advance the idea of nature as a subject in its own right, Paver ensures that her world is not a simple backdrop for the playing out of plot. This world is not a passive place, for as Paver herself says of it, "I've used the rather eerie Sami idea that everything—including rocks, rivers and trees—is alive and has a spirit; not all of them can talk, but all can hear and think" ("Author"). Through this animism, Paver attempts to give the natural world a voice. In doing this, the series falls largely within a lesser trend in children's literature, noted by Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, where nature is depicted as "a 'character' with a consciousness of its own, with interests not necessarily coinciding with those of humans and their progress—and indeed, with interests often at odds, or imperiled, by human activity, against which it has little defense" (144). At the same time, living in Paver's animated world, particularly in the Forest, are small clan groups of hunter-gatherer peoples, human characters who both survive by finding food, shelter and various material goods from the Forest and the natural world around them, and whose very existence is an integral part of the ecosystems from which they draw that sustenance and shelter.

Through this animism, Paver attempts to give the natural world a voice.

The idea of human beings as integral parts of nature rather than masters of it is seen in the way each clan is as different as the area it

inhabits. Clan children are taught that they should not seek to master nature, but to live in harmony with it. Thus, these peoples offer an alternative approach to existing in the natural world, and they survive not in spite of nature, and not by controlling and subduing it, but through an intimate knowledge and understanding of the flora and fauna of the Forest and by paying due respect to the non-human life around them. Each clan is intimately connected to the nature and character of its specific local environment, and so the clan members, young and old, know what is best to eat and drink and where to do so, and they understand the need to treat all animals, even prey, with the utmost respect.

Paver's imagined ecosystem seems to match very closely with Lawrence Buell's primary and most eco-focused requirement for an environmentally oriented text; that "the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (168). Indeed, "true ecofiction," as Patricia Greiner argues, is literature that "demonstrates the interrelatedness of people, activities, systems of thought, indeed of every part of life" (10). Moreover, this respect for and oneness with one's surroundings is a way of life that would find favor with many conservationists who, as Suzanne Rahn points out, "do not seek ways to seal off the natural world, but ways for human societies to coexist with it—which means, first of all, ways of seeing and feeling about nature that encourage coexistence rather than exploitation and destruction" (150). In Paver's portrayal, then, there is no sense of human beings dismissing their "dependency on nature by mastering and dominating it" (Vilkka 71). Instead, the series stresses sustainable co-existence between humans and the natural world in much the same way that Fritjof Capra advocates when he suggests that maintaining sustainable human communities means existing "in continual interaction with other living systems, both human and nonhuman" (230). It is a question of harmonious co-existence or mutual destruction.

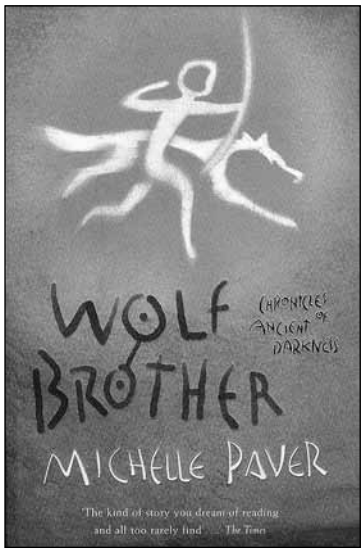
It is a question of harmonious co-existence or mutual destruction.

Thus, Paver does not depict the human inhabitants of the Forest as noble savages and, more importantly, nor does she make use of the stereotypical caveman and woman figures. These are not ignorant people dressed in animal hides, who grunt in order to communicate, and who carry oversized clubs to beat each other over the head with. Such representations, common in popular culture, would trivialize the complex prehistoric society she depicts. Although Paver's characters are prone to what modern readers might view as superstition, they are seen to be no different from modern homo-sapiens in their intellect and capacity for emotional commitment (and modern human beings are no less prone, it should be said, to superstitions themselves). In fact, rather than seeing the Forest and its inhabitants as otherworldly figures in an unearthly place, distanced from modern readers by time, Paver writes in a way that ensures that, even though the narrative is full of elements of the spirit world and magic or magecraft, the characters are seen as "real" people who have realistic relationships in much the same way as modern humans interact and respond to each other. This way of thinking is evident throughout the series, but is something that Paver presents to the reader very early in the first book, *Wolf Brother* (2004), through the protagonist, Torak, and his own response to the world in which he lives.

At the start of the series, Torak, a twelve-year-old boy from the Wolf Clan, lives alone in the Forest away from the clans with his father, Fa. Torak is orphaned in the first few pages when his father is killed by a bear believed to be possessed by a demon. Left alone to fend for himself, Torak traps a wood grouse for food but, before killing the bird, he offers "a quick thank you to the bird's spirit" (*Wolf Brother* 30). After cooking it, but before eating any himself, "he twisted one leg off the wood grouse and tucked it into the fork of a tree as an offering for his clan guardian" (31). Nothing in the Forest world can be taken from nature without acknowledging the spirits, and

nothing can be left to waste. After picking all the meat from the bones, Torak keeps them because "they'd still make needles, fish-hooks and broth" (31).

Later, too, when Torak successfully hunts and kills a young deer, he kneels down beside it: "'You did well,' Torak told it. His voice sounded awkward. 'You were brave and clever, and you kept going all day. I promise to keep the pact with the World Spirit, and treat you with respect. Now go in peace'" (40). Torak's reverence for the dead animal's spirit and the overarching influence of the "World Spirit" are evidenced here and in what Torak does with the animal next. It takes Torak two days to cut up the deer, not because he is incapable of doing so (his father has trained him), but because of the esteem in which he holds the animal: "He'd made the buck a promise, and he had to keep it by not wasting a thing. That was the age old pact between the hunters and the World Spirit. Hunters must treat prey with



respect, and in return the World Spirit would send more prey" (42). Torak's behavior is not presented as being special: all the clan members behave in the same way. During the annual salmon run, for example, both humans and animals benefit. All members of the Raven clan, everyone—young and old—help with this seasonal bounty, but nothing was wasted. The skins would be cured and fashioned into waterproof tinder pouches; the eyes and bones would make glue; the livers and roe would provide a delicacy at nightmeal, and an offering for the guardian and the spirits of the salmon (*Spirit Walker* 8–9). Whilst humans still need to hunt the animals of the forest in order to live, there is no waste or greed, and all due respect is given to the animals as partners in a balanced ecosystem, a cycle of life that includes human beings.

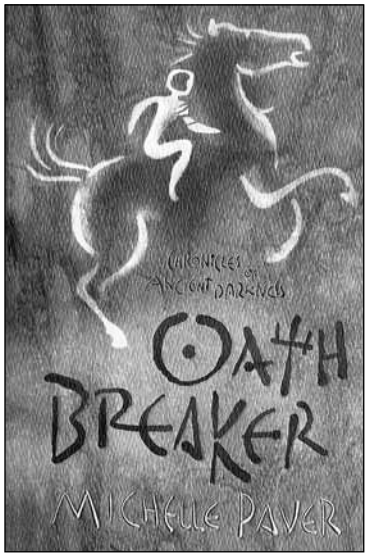
The intimate connection between human and non-human is perhaps best seen in the relationship between Torak and his wolf companion, simply called Wolf. When Torak first finds the orphaned wolf cub, his first instinct is to kill it for food. He is unable to bring himself to do this, however, for Torak's father had once told him that "*wolves are like us. They hunt in packs. They enjoy talking and playing. They have a fierce love for their mates and cubs. And each wolf works hard for the good of the pack*" (*Wolf Brother* 35, original emphasis). Torak's connection with the wolf cub also arises because, when the cub howls, "in some strange way he couldn't begin to fathom, he recognised the high wavering sounds. His mind knew their shapes. He remembered them" (*Wolf Brother* 16). It later emerges, that Torak's father had put him in a wolf's den when he was small and, as a result, it seems that Torak has acquired rudimentary knowledge of the sounds and body language that wolves use to communicate with each other; Wolf and Torak become pack brothers.

Whilst humans still need to hunt the animals of the forest in order to live, there is no waste or greed, and all due respect is given to the animals as partners in a balanced ecosystem…

It is not only with animals that Torak is able to establish a spiritual connection. When Torak chews a particular bitter root, he can merge his spirit with the spirit of any living thing, even

a tree, as happens when Torak and Renn, his female companion, are spending the night in one. His oneness with the tree is clear, for

> his voice was the groaning of bark and the roaring of branches. His twig-fingers knew the chill moonlight and the wind's screaming caress, his boughs te scratch of wasp and the weight of sleeping boy and girl. Deep in the earth, his roots knew the burrowing moles and the soft, blind worms, and all was good, for he was a tree, and he rejoiced in the wilderness of the night. (*Oath Breaker* 92)



This connection may be drug-induced, but his connection with the tree is another reminder that connections are made by living close to nature and by meticulously observing it.

The series also shows another way in which humans and the natural world are closely connected and should remain so, achieved by the narrative switches between focalizing through human eyes (through Torak, and sometimes Renn) to focalizing from Wolf's perspective. Apart from the obvious narrative ploy that enables Paver to recount events that Torak is not witness to, this narrative technique also provides another way of giving voice to the natural world. Wolf's focalization, however, is not a case of cute anthropomorphism. Paver works hard to ensure as realistic a portrayal of wolf habits as possible. For this, she draws on her time spent with wolves at the UK Wolf Conservation Trust sanctuary near Reading in Berkshire, just one part of her extensive research for the series. Wolf is a narrator on an equal footing with the human characters, and his responses to what he sees around him mean that the reader is also able to see much of the actual story from Wolf's point of view, allowing for a heightened empathy with Wolf and, consequently, a higher degree of respect for Wolf as a moral agent in his own right. Wolf's voice is verbalized through his own vocabulary for the world around him: Torak is "Tall Tailless", the sea is the "Big Wet" whereas a river is "Fast Wet", snow is "cold wet", a fire is the "Bright Beast-that-Bites-Hot", and the sun is the "Hot Bright Eye in the Up".

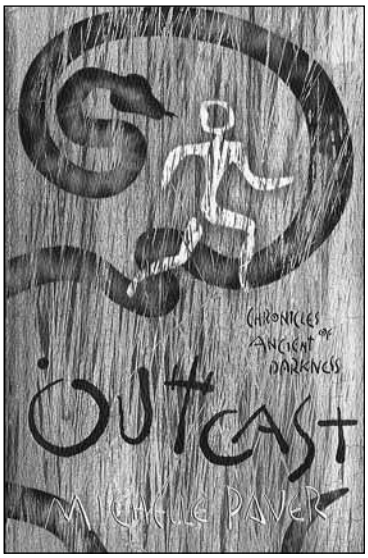
Apart from the obvious narrative ploy that enables Paver to recount events that Torak is not witness to, this narrative technique also provides another way of giving voice to the natural world.

Although talking animals might lead some to view the *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* as a variation on the fantasy mode, Paver's extensive research and attention to detail is consistent with a more realist approach to writing and, as she says, "[t]he world I'm trying to depict is strange, unfamiliar, beautiful, exciting—but above all, it's *real*" ("Author"). In fact, research is clearly a key element in Paver's writing. Her ability to craft this intricate and wholly interconnected relationship between humans and the environment draws heavily on her research, as the "Author's Notes" at the end of each book confirm. This includes delving into the

belief systems of modern hunter-gatherer peoples such as the Sami in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Greenland Inuit, the San people from southern Africa, and the Ainu people from Japan. It also relies on library research and actual travel to places such as Greenland, Northern Canada and Scandinavia in order to physically experience the kind of life the clans would have lived thousands of years ago by spending time with peoples who still live in much the same way. As Paver says,

> [t]o experience the northern forest in the raw, I went to northern Finland and Lapland, travelling on horseback, and sleeping on reindeer skins in the traditional open-fronted Finnish laavu. I ate elk heart, reindeer and lingonberries, and tried out spruce resin: the chewing gum of the Stone Age. I learnt traditional Sami (Lapp) methods for preparing reindeer hides, and picked up forest beliefs and customs from people who've lived there for generations. ("Author")

Although the series may indeed be set in ancient times, in drawing on the experience and traditions of these peoples it is very much a tale of today and redolent of the lives of peoples who still live in traditional ways and often in some of the more inhospitable places of the world and without the conveniences of modernity. In a very obvious way, this ties the world of Paver's Chronicles to the deep ecology approach to the environment, which opposes "the dominant worldview of technocratic-industrial societies which regard humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation" (Devall and Sessions 65), and which draws heavily on many spiritual traditions including Taoist and Buddhist writing (Devall and Sessions 80). Clearly, the fact that Torak, Renn and Wolf—as the main characters with whom younger readers are most likely to identify—ultimately defeat all of the Soul Eaters who wish to dominate the world of the Forest suggests that readers are indeed being prompted to favor the deep ecological position.



On one level, the defeat of the Soul Eaters locates the *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* series within a tradition of the "eco-hero" narrative identified by Lesnik-Oberstein. The fact that it is a wolf, a young boy and girl called Renn (a future Mage, or shaman, for her clan, the Ravens) who are ultimately charged with defeating this danger to the Forest's well being (and, therefore, the well-being of all the inhabitants, human, animal and plant) could be seen as following the line where future generations are tasked with resolving the problems arising from the errors of those of the older generations who seek only to manipulate and control the environment and who knowingly threaten the delicate balance that exists. However, the key to the series' message is not found through an understanding of the connection between children and the natural world in terms of the Romantic notion of innocence

that figures the pure, untouched child, a child who is separate and distinct from the world of the adult. Instead, it comes from seeing that both child and adult characters respect their world, and that they participate as a part of the environment rather than standing outside nature as masters of all they survey.

As Jean Webb has stated, the series "addresses a practical and philosophical holistic relationship with nature and asks how Homo Sapiens relates physically and spiritually to the environment" (260). At the same time, enveloping important social and, in this case, environmental messages within an engaging fictional context is not always in itself a panacea, especially as fictional texts for children that do deal with matters of the environment are more likely to be read by (or to) young readers who are already environmentally minded if not aware, or those whose parents or teachers already have ecologically minded attitudes. The question, of course, is the nature of those attitudes, and clearly one very powerful change would be in attitudes towards the natural world that look to a "future world in which generations to come can wander in awe and communion like Torak, spirits in a symbiotic relationship, walking with nature" (Webb 267). This requires movement from an anthropocentric to a more ecocentric world view, not one that eulogizes nature at the expense of humankind, but rather one that acknowledges the inherent interconnectedness of all living beings.

This requires movement from an anthropocentric to a more ecocentric world view, not one that eulogizes nature at the expense of humankind, but rather one that acknowledges the inherent interconnectedness of all living beings.

In maintaining a sense of optimism that both attitudes and actions can be changed before it is too late, Paver offers a somewhat different literary approach to the environmental situation than, for instance, a book such as Megan McDonald's *Judy Moody Saves the World* (2002) that suggests children can indeed "save the world" through their own efforts as part of human (anthropocentric) stewardship of the planet. Paver's approach does not ask largely powerless children to tend their own gardens on a local level (useful as this might be in some small way), instead she demands a more emotional and direct identification and connection with the natural world. While Paver presents readers with a world from the distant past, the series is not intended as a call to return to those times. Instead, what Paver seems to be arguing for is very much about the present, and for Webb, "[b]y removing the reader from contemporary 'normality' into a prehistoric period, Paver can obliquely critique the contemporary situation in Western culture" (260). Paver's portrayal of human beings who have an understanding of their place in a biodiverse ecosystem is very much akin to the model set out by Joseph Meeker, in his arguments regarding ways people today need to respond to the ecological problems currently being faced. Thus, for Meeker, "the way out of environmental crisis does not lead back to the supposed simplicity of the cave or the farm, but towards a more intricate form of living guided by a complex human mind seeking to find its appropriate place upon a complex earth" (xx-xi). As such, although identifying trends in publishing tastes is an uncertain business, the approach to the environment offered in Paver's series is an important direction for green children's literature.

Whether Paver continues to write the environment in this way remains to be seen, but her new series for children, *Gods and Warriors*, will also have a similarly ancient setting, the early Bronze Age, with characters befriending animals as they journey around the Mediterranean region. The first book in the series of five is due to be published by Puffin in the autumn of 2012 and, even if it does not dwell on environmental issues in the same way as the Chronicles of Ancient Darkness series, it promises to be another excellent addition to the shelves of fiction for children.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

McDonald, Megan. *Judy Moody Saves the World!* London: Walker Books, 2002. Print.

Paver, Michelle. *Ghost Hunter*. London: Orion Children's Books, 2009. Print.

—. *Oath Breaker*. 2008. London: Orion Children's Books, 2009. Print.

—. *Outcast*. 2007. London: Orion Children's Books, 2008. Print.

—. *Soul Eater*. 2006. London: Orion Children's Books, 2007. Print.

—. *Spirit Walker*. 2005. London: Orion Children's Books, 2006. Print.

—. *Wolf Brother*. 2004. London: Orion Children's Books, 2005. Print.

Secondary Sources

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.

Capra, Fritjof. *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living*. New York: Anchor Books, 2004. Print.

Devall, Bill and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology*. Layton UT: Gibbs Smith, 1985. Print.

Greiner, Patricia. "Radical Environmentalism in Recent Literature Concerning the American West." *Rendezvous* 19.1 (1983): 8–15. Print.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karín. "Children's Literature and the Environment." *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature* Eds. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells. London: Zed Books, 1998. 208–217. Print.

Meeker, Joseph W. *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. 1972. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1974. Print.

Mickenberg, Julia L. and Philip Nel. "Radical Children's Literature Now!" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36.4 (2011): 445–473. Print.

Paver, Michelle. "Author Essay." www.harpercollins.com. Web. 10 Feb 2012.

Rahn, Suzanne. "Green Worlds for Children." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 19.2 (1995): 149–170. Print.

Thiel, Elizabeth and Alison Waller. "Introduction." *Deep into Nature: Ecology, Environment and Children's Literature* (IBBY/NCRCL Papers 16). Eds. Jennifer Harding, Elizabeth Thiel and Alison Waller. Lichfield: Pied Piper, 2009. 1–4. Print.

Vilkka, Leena. *The Intrinsic Value of Nature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. Print.

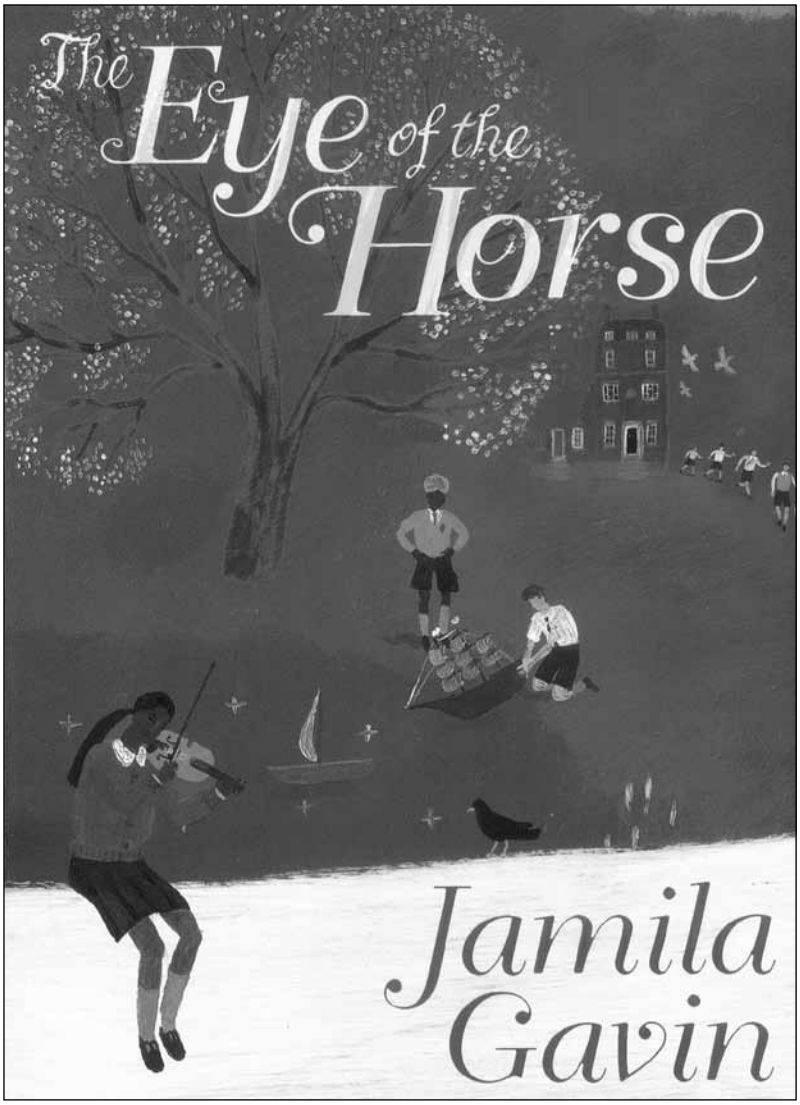
Wagner-Lawlor, Jennifer A. "Advocating Environmentalism: The Voice of Nature in Contemporary Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education* 27.3: (1996). 143–152.

Webb, Jean. "Is Our Future Set in Stone? A Discussion of Michelle Paver's *Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*." *Deep into Nature: Ecology, Environment and Children's Literature* (IBBY/NCRCL Papers 16). Eds. Jennifer Harding, Elizabeth Thiel and Alison Waller. Lichfield: Pied Piper, 2009. 258–267.

Rewriting Colonial Histories in Historical Fictions for the Young: From Below and Above

by BLANKA GRZEGORCZYK

Blanka Grzegorczyk is a Ph.D. student writing a dissertation on *Home Truths from the Centre: Discourses of Postcolonialism in Contemporary British Writing for the Young* at the University of Wrocław, Poland. She is a member of the Center for Young People's Literature and Culture at the Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław Her academic interest is in political ideologies in modern children's literature, narrative studies, and cultural theory. Currently, she is researching the ways in which contemporary British fiction for children and young adults shows complex engagements with questions of national identity, cultural hybridity, decolonization, and diaspora.



To write for the young in twenty-first-century Britain is to engage with the highly charged discourses of race, identity, and history. Accordingly, this paper examines the novels of three writers who have made the appropriation of marginalized sensibilities the central premise of their historical fictions. It considers how these writers ask what certain past events might mean for a marginalized group's understanding of its present interests and future prospects as well as asking how to reinvent Britain's past and present for those who are marginalized by a dominant ideology.

To write for the young in twenty-first-century Britain is to engage with the highly charged discourses of race, identity, and history. Recent critical attention to such concepts as exile, migration and diaspora, together with the shifting understanding of personal and national identity, has created a demand for new narrative forms which can reflect changing social attitudes to the make-up of contemporary ethnic identities. But alongside its response to contemporary experience, the British young adult novel has reinvested in the texts and discourses of the past, continuing a trend in post-war young adult literature visible especially from the 1960s onwards. This article examines the novels of three writers who have made the appropriation of marginalized sensibilities the central premise of their historical fictions for the young: Bali Rai's *City of Ghosts* describes the events leading up to the massacre in the Punjabi town of Amritsar, where British troops opened fire on a non-violent political gathering; Jamila Gavin's *The Wheel of Surya* trilogy maps personal narratives drawn from an Indian family's history onto broader political and social developments in India during the years preceding the Partition and in its immediate aftermath; and Jason Wallace's *Out of Shadows* is a semi-autobiographical account of growing up British in a post-independence Zimbabwe scorched by colonialism and the war of national liberation. The paper considers how this opening out onto history, both personal and national, from a particular social situation allowed the writers to ask what certain past events might mean for a marginalized group's understanding of its present interests and future prospects or how to reinvent Britain's past and present for those who are marginalized by a dominant ideology.

This article examines the novels of three writers who have made the appropriation of marginalized sensibilities the central premise of their historical fictions for the young…

Commenting on the conventions of history and fiction, Hayden White (1990) insisted that similar explanatory tactics and modes of emplotment are present in historical and fictional discourse. Like history, fiction is offered as a kind of discourse by which we make sense of the past and construct various possible versions of reality. But to re-write the past in history and in fiction means "to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon 89). In recent critical theory, as Nick Bentley notes, what passes for historical knowledge has been expanded to accommodate other histories, other voices, other memories which the previous telling excluded and ignored. Bentley reminds us that narrative representations of the past are crucially linked to the ideological signals which often inform the authorized versions of history imposed "from above" (129). Certainly, histories "from below" illustrate the different ways in which writers may revisit, record and engage with the experience of the colonized as historical actors who, in the words of Elleke Boehmer, "claimed and gained access to temporality" (188).

The opening up and interrogation of received knowledge together with the reworking of the very sense of history has always been available to postcolonial writers, not only as a means of ideological legitimation but also as a way of enabling the reader to gain insights into the "particular nature of the historical referent" (Hutcheon 89). But to recycle authorized versions of history and interweave them with narratives of nationalism and decolonization may be seen as a form of exoticizing, commodifying and otherwise exploiting the other (see Huggan, 2001). In the spirit of

Nevertheless, while some recent children's novels cater to the modern fascination with non-Western authenticities, it is precisely the invocation of the other that allows postcolonial writers to absorb oppositional voices into colonialist versions of the past.

British multiculturalism, mainstream publishers expose their readers to exoticized racial and cultural difference, but tend to value the least-threatening narratives of successful assimilation over other more challenging novels (see Müller, 2011). Nevertheless, while some recent children's novels cater to the modern fascination with non-Western authenticities, it is precisely the invocation of the other that allows postcolonial writers to absorb oppositional voices into colonialist versions of the past. The revisionist impulse of postcolonial historical fiction manifests itself in a decentering of colonial authority and an empowerment of the other; it also calls into question the presumed unity and authority of any Western account of history, proposing instead a very postmodern awareness of a "culture's own historical relativity" (Young 51).

This is not to suggest that there is no revisionist Western historiography outside pomo-postcolonialist criticism ("pomo" as in "postmodernist"), but rather that there is a growing demand for historical narratives which are open to a rereading of history, its interrogation and revision. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995/2005), Boehmer sees the potency of the postcolonial historical novel in the concern with "recovering an identity fragmented, displaced, or discredited under colonialism" rather than in the ethnographic function which the novel performs for the white liberal reader (116). As she observes, it is historical fiction rather than conventional history that opens up a space in which the once excluded and silent can be heard. For Boehmer, historical narrative permits access to new possibilities for "project[ing] communal wholeness, …enact[ing] nationalist wish-fulfilment in text, and…provid[ing] role models" (188), all of which function as teaching tools in historical fictions for the young.

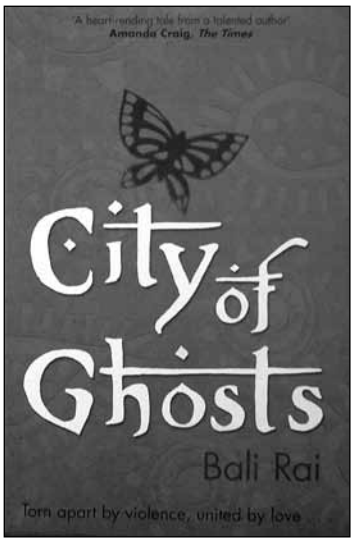
The works of Bali Rai, Jamila Gavin, and Jason Wallace will be examined here within the context of the problematized interaction between history and fiction in postmodernism. Although the novels cannot be reduced to the category of historiographic metafiction, such a description may foreground questions of authority, selection, and narrative positioning which can be easily engaged

By referring to the decentering of authority characteristic of both oppositional and postmodern thought, I hope to show that these texts represent a development of the themes and styles of revisionist historical fiction, dwelling on a colonial set of ideas and illusions, as sustained by the British Empire, from a politically engaged perspective.

with at the level of fictionalized historical representations in addition to more overtly political questions of the ideological function of writing about history. By referring to the decentering of authority characteristic of both oppositional and postmodern thought, I hope to show that these texts represent a development of the themes and

styles of revisionist historical fiction, dwelling on a colonial set of ideas and illusions, as sustained by the British Empire, from a politically engaged perspective.

In a cover blurb, reviewer and author Jill Murphy praises Bali Rai's *City of Ghosts* (2009) for showing history "as it should be seen, utterly relevant to today." A recent fictional reconstruction of the events leading up to the massacre in the Punjabi town of Amritsar in April 1919 (when General Dyer's troops opened fire on a non-violent political gathering of civilians at Jallianwalla Bagh), the text addresses colonial suffering and the exploitation of native people by both the ruling elites and the British political and military structure. The narrative clarifies that the exploitation was inherent in the social system and sanctioned by the Rowlatt Act, which, as one of the characters pointed out, "was making rich people richer and everyone else poor" (76). Clearly, the problem lies not in the culture of the community in question but in the colonial relations that produced it. At the same time, Rai's overriding interest is in gender and class barriers, interracial relations and the status of the colonial subject. The novel's omniscient narration may reflect the need to claim narrative control and to wrest the authority to represent the history of the colonial era from the colonizer. This narrator tells intertwined stories about Amritsar as a city on the brink of a revolution, as seen by a cultural insider, after a series of abuses perpetrated by the British. Rai uses the stories to deal with the particular rather than the general, getting the locals (Bissen Singh, a young Sikh who fought for the British during World War I; Gurdial and Jeevan, two orphan boys who act as if they had no past and no sense of belonging) to tell their stories. The novel presents Amritsar not just as a site of exploitation, political and economic struggle, intrigue or dissention, but also as a place where the supernatural is taken for granted, its interpretative possibilities and primitive quality are as yet uncontaminated by modernity.



In *City of Ghosts*, Rai positions himself squarely within the postcolonial tradition of revisionary writing and in opposition to traditional colonial historiography's methods and assumptions, by approaching the question of history's unacknowledged fictionality. For him, it would seem, showing fiction to be historically determined and history to be culturally conditioned is the logical way in which to explain how certain historical events have gone unrecorded. If there are agents and events missing from the official history of India, asks Gurdial at perhaps one of the most poignant moments in the novel, "why have I never learned of it in school?" (235). Heera, a classic wise woman figure who emerges as the ultimate authority in the text, is the one he consults for answers:

> The woman smiled. "Education is a funny thing. Ask yourself who is teaching you, what they are schooling you in and what reason they have for doing so."
> Gurdial was still confused.
> "The British want to teach *their* history," she explained patiently, "and the Indians want to teach *theirs*. No doubt it is the same world over. But do you really learn the truth or simply another person's version of it?"
> Gurdial shrugged. "I learn what I am told to learn," he admitted.
> "Well, next time you learn something, ask yourself why you did so and in whose interest." (235)

If *City of Ghosts* reveals the omissions and distortions in different constructions of past reality provided by the British culture and

colonial education, it also suggests that historians in the past of the novel have denied validity to positive representations of the colonized in much the same way as they have excluded certain areas of knowledge. Where, we might ask, are the non-white soldiers in the traditional accounts of World War I and why is there no mention of the Indian Corps on the lists of fallen soldiers in Bissen's copies of *The Times*? Instead of stories of his fellow Indian soldiers, Bissen finds reports on a thirteen-year-old boy's attempted suicide, an African donkey advertised for sale and the death of a famous authority on rowing. The novel exposes these and other fictions of the traditional historical record, thus raising questions about the very notion of historical knowledge.

If City of Ghosts reveals the omissions and distortions in different constructions of past reality provided by the British culture and colonial education, it also suggests that historians in the past of the novel have denied validity to positive representations of the colonized in much the same way as they have excluded certain areas of knowledge.

By inserting into the text the experience of the colonized as historical agents, Rai gives voice to the previously suppressed. Moreover, he uses the romantic young soldier's perspective to test the possibility of interracial love—the prospect of which British society had come to see as repellent—as well as to expose the exoticist interest of the "steady streams of curious English people" who come to Bissen's hospital ward only to "have a look at the darkies" (272). In fact, as another Sikh soldier observes, the English hospital looks more like a prison than a refuge from the horrors of the Great War:

> "This place is like a convict station," he said.
> "A *convict* station?" repeated Bissen, unsure that he had heard correctly.
> Hurnam sighed. "I know they feed us well and make sure we are clothed. They tend to our injuries and hope to make us well but we still cannot come and go as we please."…
> Bissen had to admit he was right. Why else would there be barbed wire around the perimeter and sentries posted at every door?
> "We have fought and nearly died for these people," complained Hurnam. "What harm could there be in allowing us to walk about as free men?"…
> "We are not free men, *bhai-ji*," Bissen told him. "When we signed up we gave our freedom away."
> A fire started to burn in Hurnam's eyes. "No, *bhai*," he said. "We had no freedom to begin with. We were merely their chattels—the same dogs who ruin our country; these are the devils we fought for." (304-305)

Rai elaborates on the psychological and practical costs of "fighting the white man's war" in several other chapters, exposing the self-serving

interest of the colonizers, whose laws and codes of behavior enabled colonial subjects to join British forces in World War I, but made it particularly difficult—if not impossible—for Bissen and the nurse he has come to love to stay together in England. The chapters set in Amritsar show Bissen as an opium addict clinging to comforting memories of an idealized English past. They also allude to the growing hostility to the young soldier from fellow citizens after his return to India, resenting colonial subjects' involvement in what they saw as a part of the imperial enterprise. By the time Bissen receives a letter which could dramatically transform his life; Amritsar has become a site of rebellion. In the novel's final pages, the young man acts against Heera's warnings and follows one of the orphan boys to the gathering at Jallianwalla Bagh, but is eventually killed by the British. The story ends with fragments from Lillian's letter in which she urges Bissen to join her and their son in England now that the war is over.

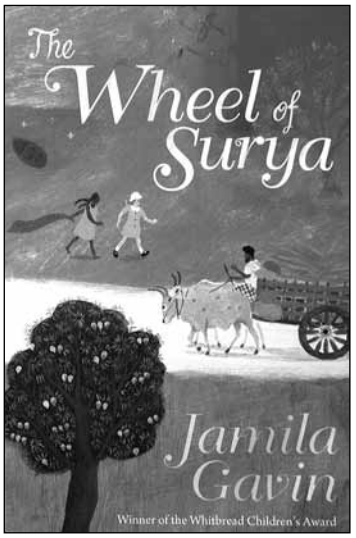
Among such literary strategies is the way fiction makes room for recollections of historical events that elude totalizing explanations as well as for representations of complex characters who do not simply conform to a set of cultural patterns.

Since historical and fictional discourse can no longer be neatly separated, truth and falsehood may indeed not be the right conceptual categories in which to analyze fiction. On the one hand, history can no longer assume legitimacy as a totalizing scheme of explanation. On the other, fiction has become an important site of reflection on the conditions of its own construction and reception. Among such literary strategies is the way fiction makes room for recollections of historical events that elude totalizing explanations as well as for representations of complex characters who do not simply conform to a set of cultural patterns. The playful liberties Rai takes with historical subject matter are not without significance: he eliminates characters and events that he feels were extraneous to the story (like senior police officers Khan Sahib Ahmed Jan and Muhammad Ashraf Khan who, according to most accounts, did little about the situation in Amritsar before the massacre) only to invent others (such as the wise woman Heera) out of elements borrowed freely from myths and legends. He offers connections where omissions occur in the historical record only to juxtapose two versions of the same event. Accordingly, young readers have to learn to identify the focal points of the story: contradictory memories, ironic juxtapositions, considerations of systemic inequality.

The protagonists of a revisionist historical novel like Rai's **City of Ghosts** *are overtly specific and socially conditioned in their responses to both personal and public histories.*

Rai's interest in individuals rather than in communities resonates with Hutcheon's realization that the "protagonists of historiographic metafiction are anything but proper types: they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" as are most of the characters in the novel (Hutcheon 113). As Hutcheon writes, the genre "espouses a postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference;

'type' has little function here, except as something to be ironically undercut" (113-114). The protagonists of a revisionist historical novel like Rai's *City of Ghosts* are overtly specific and socially conditioned in their responses to both personal and public histories. Moreover, historical figures take on rather different roles in the novel: Udham Singh's, Reginald Dyer's or Hans Raj's particularized status allows us to read *City of Ghosts* as grounded in what Michel Foucault defined as "subjugated knowledges," laying bare the partialities and distortions of recorded history and its active potential for both deliberate and unintended omissions.



Like *City of Ghosts*, Jamila Gavin's *The Wheel of Surya* (1992) maps personal narratives onto broader political and social developments. The first in a series of three novels about the lives of the Singh family, it is set in the years preceding the Partition of 1947 and during its immediate aftermath. The focal point of the novel is the complex relationship between the Chadwicks and the Singh family, one which is based on friendship, discipleship, employment and other ties. When Govind Singh, who is the schoolmaster's protégé, leaves for England to continue his studies, his young wife finds work as a servant in his mentor's house. We learn from the story that the Chadwicks are very kind to Jhoti while their children treat her daughter, Marvinder, like a favorite sister. However, after the loss of two of their children in a boating accident during which Marvinder miraculously saves her brother, Jaspal, the Chadwicks return to England with their surviving eldest daughter, as the Punjab is becoming a place of political unrest. Later in the novel, Marvinder and her brother are separated from Jhoti while escaping from their burnt-out village in the story's dramatic climax, but the children manage to travel across India, stow away on a ship and eventually reach England, where a friend of the Chadwicks helps them to find their father. Far from home, Marvinder and Jaspal try to make sense of a culture very different from their own and to come to terms with their father's betrayal. At the end of the novel, Jaspal expresses his desire to return to India, and from the sequels to *The Wheel of Surya* we learn that he does.

Harold Chadwick's reverent attitude to the culture and people of India is implicit in his almost unqualified enthusiasm for native "wisdom, the customs, the beauty, the poverty, the hardship" and in his firm conviction that the Indian people would one day have the power to contest colonial rule. "After all," he tells his wife Dora's parents, "Indians were one of the most civilised and cultured people on earth at a time when we Britons were running around in woad" (23). Although Harold's portrayal of the Indian people seems in many ways to be based on a romanticized and aestheticized view of the "noble savage," his commitment to improving the quality of life of local communities by bringing education to the villagers is far from superficial. Accordingly, he entertains high hopes for his most promising student and, after Govind receives his B.A. from the University of the Punjab, encourages him to go to England in order to "learn the ways of the Britishers, so that when they leave, people like [him] will be able to take over all the jobs and help to run the country," as Govind reports with pride (44). Harold's and Dora's views of the Indian people stand in evident contrast to what the colonizers have been saying for decades and what Miss Alcott cautions Dora about:

> You don't want your child getting too familiar with the natives. It can lead to problems later on. I've seen it happen. People must know their place in life, and if you don't mind my saying, I believe it's idealists like you, with a misguided desire to promote equality, who have

> helped to fuel these disgraceful aspirations among the Indians. Independence, my foot. How can they rule themselves, I mean look at them. The vast majority haven't progressed since the invention of the wheel. (51)

The novel attempts to break down the dichotomies of colonizer and colonized as well as observer and observed by turning its gaze on the British and satirizing their "civilized" customs and habits. When an English woman openly expresses her concerns about Marvinder's and Jaspal's table manners, the girl recalls thinking:

> It's true…that they did indeed use to squat in the kitchen and eat with their fingers, and what was wrong with that? That was their custom, and at least they knew that their fingers were clean because they always made sure their hands were washed before and after eating. How could they tell that the knives and forks were clean?" (142)

Turning the gaze onto British custom is emancipatory within the discursive frame of this novel, which is intended to empower those who cannot speak, or at least cannot speak distinctly enough to be taken seriously. However, based on the children's misadventures in England and Govind's failure to live up to his nationalist ideals in the second part of the story, we may suspect that it is the Singh family, and not the British, who are disempowered in matters beyond the cultural.

Parallels can be drawn in Gavin's novel between the development of domestic plots and the representation of certain kinds of historical phenomena. That Gavin intertwines narratives of family history with national dissolution and the growth of a new Indian self-consciousness becomes apparent when we read Jaspal's identity formation as an allegory of public events. After the Chadwicks leave India, Jhoti moves to another village to keep house for her father-in-law's brother, Uncle Pavan, while waiting for the return of her husband. There, Jaspal becomes an apprentice to his carpenter uncle since he "can't exactly follow in his father's footsteps when we don't know what they are," (85). Jaspal's displaced subjectivity is the result of processes which are beyond his control and can only be multiple, and therefore may be seen as tied to the multiplicity of his nation, which cannot remain whole and which is subsequently split to create India and Pakistan. As the narrator insists: "Jaspal and Marvinder were two infinitesimal drops… looking for a homeland, while politicians in Delhi poured over ancient grubby maps and drew lines which would decide the life and death of millions" (105-106). During their voyage across the ocean (which reverses the traditional colonial narrative of white exploration into the unknown),

Jaspal's displaced subjectivity is the result of processes which are beyond his control and can only be multiple, and therefore may be seen as tied to the multiplicity of his nation, which cannot remain whole and which is subsequently split to create India and Pakistan.

Jaspal is not allowed to carry his knife and comb, which are the attributes of a Sikh warrior. The British matron's warning that his long hair "may be all right in India, but in England, the boys will call [him] a sissy" is later echoed by his father's suggestion that Jaspal should cut his hair "like an English boy" as he "would have an easier time with the boys if [he] did" (140, 225). Govind himself conformed to British cultural practices and conventions soon after he came to England: "He was so dead keen to fit in," says one of his English friends, "almost as though he would like to have been an Englishman" (171). Jaspal, on the other hand, remains faithful to Sikh religious practices and to whatever tradition of integrity and power he saw as peculiar to India. The sense of unified and active subjectivity at which Jaspal arrives by the end of the novel is firmly tied to a community that is neither frozen in time nor

deprived of history, one that he longs to return to and that he leaves England to fight for in the novel's sequels.

The inscription of subjectivity is problematized in all three parts of the Surya trilogy, albeit in different ways. Living between two worlds and bearing the consequences of colonialism, Marvinder and Jaspal shift between subject and object positions depending on the context. Insofar as they are cut off from the communal reality of their birthplace, the young protagonists attempt to reconcile the fragmented inheritance of their Indian past with the discontinuous, heterogeneous British present. With Govind in prison after his conviction for black marketeering at the end of *The Wheel of Surya*, the children stay first with the family of his English wife, and then with the Chadwicks.

The Eye of the Horse, the second part of the trilogy, goes beyond the theme of encounters with alterity to imagine cultural exchanges which cross the boundaries between colonizer and colonized. We find out, for instance, that Jaspal conducts initiation rites for new members of his English gang in the performative realization of the practices integral to Sikh religious ceremonies. That Jaspal takes on the role of the representative Indian, with access to knowledge unavailable to white British colonizers, is also suggested by a powerful scene in which his rough wooden boat races against his friend's beautifully painted ship. "[I]f Billy's boat was as beautiful as a swan," says the narrator, "Jaspal's was certainly an ugly duckling," but it is his simple dhow that sails across the pond while Billy's delicate yacht sinks. Later, a disabled war veteran who watched the race from his wheelchair admires Govind's handiwork, to the boy's delight:

> "I used to see them things when we was round the Gulf during the war. Incredible boats. The design hasn't changed in three thousand years, and you can see why… Did you say your dad made it? He's a clever fellow then. Got it just right."
> Jaspal grinned, then set off running—and as he ran, he chanted Hanuman…Hanuman…for he felt as though he would fly like the wind. (208-209)

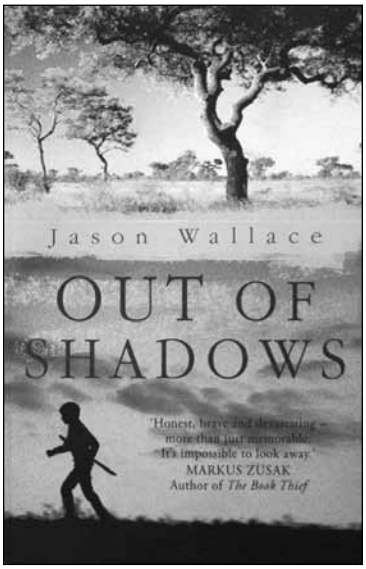
Paradoxically, what increases Jaspal's value in the eyes of the gang members and gives him an edge over the school bullies are precisely those religious and ethnic affiliations that he was advised to shed after coming to England. Unlike his father, Jaspal embraces his cultural heritage and, even though he passes the eleven-plus exam and so could stay on in Britain, he insists on returning to his homeland and later to fight for Sikh independence.

No less importantly, Gavin recognizes the need for cultural change and syncretism in communities affected by colonialism and its aftermath, and asks the young reader to do the same. We see how classical music, for example, is transported and translated into diverse cultural and historical places, including an old abandoned Indian palace and

a Holocaust survivor's basement in London. Playing the violin allows Marvinder, as it does Dora Chadwick and Doctor Silbermann, to deal with their grief and anger at the horrors of their family histories and to hope for the future. But when Marvinder is awarded the highest mark in her section at the school festival, she cannot fully understand the remarks of the adjudicator who says, "It's amazing that you seem to understand our music so well" (216). Indeed, hers is not a passable imitation of British (and Western) culture: classical music represents a part of a composite inheritance that she draws upon and identifies with.

In *The Track of the Wind*, the third part of the trilogy, we learn that Govind has difficulties in finding Marvinder a husband back in India since no family wants to make an offer for an educated girl who behaves "in the Western way" (136). However, he finally accepts an offer from Bahadur, an old schoolmaster, who convinces the girl to marry him by telling her about his plans to improve the quality of life of Indian communities by giving them access to better education:

> We would have a mission to serve our new country. It's what Gandhiji would have wanted. He wanted young women like you to have justice and fair treatment. That is what I want. Now that he is dead, it is up to us to bring his dreams alive. Not because they were useless dreams, but because they were right. Right for India… But India needs us both; your youth, because independent India is young, and my age, because India is ancient. (136-137)



After Bahadur's death, Marvinder turns the old palace into a school and is reconciled with her father, who wants to help her with teaching and the running of the college. However, the novel does not foreclose the possibility of interracial harmony, or interracial marriage, signaling the hope that Marvinder will one day be reunited with her English love.

If Rai's and Gavin's omniscient narrators can be in all places at all times and access historical knowledge unavailable to the novels' central characters, Jason Wallace's *Out of Shadows* (2010) rejects omniscient narration and adopts the voice of a knowledgeable adult, Robert Jacklin, whose account of growing up in a post-independence Zimbabwe is not unified but decentered by his contradictory memories and extensive digressions. A semi-autobiographical narrative, *Out of Shadows* is expressly based on Wallace's "insider knowledge": he attended boarding school in Zimbabwe very soon after the Rhodesian Bush War had ended and the country gained independence, only later to understand that what he barely registered as a young boy "had far louder echoes than he could ever have realised at the time, from national events down to personal opinions of people [he]'d known and met" (n.p.). In the novel, Wallace undermines the narrator's authority by drawing attention to the limitations of his adolescent self's positioning as a white boy in an almost

all-white boarding school in a no longer white minority ruled country which he knew only from his father's stories. On the one hand, the narrator claims to have privileged access to information that other characters who function as insiders simply could not obtain, such as the real identity of Nelson Ndube's murderer: "All the action of some Crazy from a neighbouring village, apparently, or at least that had been the conclusion of the lazy police. But I know. I know" (272). On the other hand, because of the unreliability of the child's perspective, the adult narrator cannot purport to speak with full authority. The narrator's inability to know the past with certainty could well point to what Hutcheon calls a "problematized inscribing of subjectivity into history" (117-118).

In the novel, Wallace undermines the narrator's authority by drawing attention to the limitations of his adolescent self's positioning as a white boy in an almost all–white boarding school in a no longer white minority ruled country which he knew only from his father's stories.

The community that Wallace imagined in *Out of Shadows* is wedged between two discourses: the residual colonial discourse and the emergent postcolonial one. Robert's father, a civil servant in the newly liberated Zimbabwe, describes the damage caused by the colonial past in the language of facing up to colonial guilt while refusing to endorse the racist words that the boy learns from his white friends like Ivan. "For generations," he says, "Europeans have treated Africa like a playground. We've carved it up amongst ourselves, stolen its riches and not given a damn about the poor people who live here… White minority rule is over, thank goodness" (4). But for some people in suburban Harare the war is not over and done with; for Ivan and his family, as for many others, "the blacks are still fighting, and they won't stop until they've kicked us whites out of our own bloody country" (50). Wallace weaves together history and fiction in such a way that *Out of Shadows* becomes a haunting story interested in exploring the fragmentation of a given community in the face of unrelenting Eurocentrism. "This didn't look like a nation still at war to me," Robert insists when African children stopped playing to wave at their passing car while an "old-timer pedalling hard on naked rims…nearly fell over yet still managed to flash a huge smile at…two white boys" (51). However, the message underlying Wallace's novel is the same message that writers of recent historical fiction for children have tried to convey: "The war doesn't *come back*… because it never goes. It's part of us. And we're reminded of it every day" (72).

Taken collectively, the images that emerge from *Out of Shadows* resonate with a profound sense of loss: the past loss of native autonomy and power, the present collapse of the old colonial structures and the loss of childhood. What lies behind these recognitions of loss, however, is a cultural and political landscape scorched by colonialism and the war of national liberation, which perpetuates the asymmetrical relations of power as Zimbabwe's native elite do not try to "put things right," as Robert's father would have it, but to stay in power by continuing the ill-treatment of the majority (86). The white community, on the other hand, is characterized by a peculiar historical amnesia, a repression not only of its colonizing practices, past or present, but also of any imaginable future that would be shared with Zimbabwe's black population. While growing disparities mock the unity of the newly independent nation, older formations continue to re-emerge and impose themselves on the once colonized territories, accompanied by acts of brutality and cruelty. At the climactic point of the novel, Robert and Ivan are tracking a lone antelope near Ivan's farm, but the hunt takes an unexpected turn:

> What met us on the other side [of a wall of grass] wasn't a dying animal struggling to make a last bid for freedom. It was one of the workers in blue overalls crouching

over an irrigation pipe, his tightly curled hair all bumpy and uneven, and with a cigarette rolled from newspaper between his lips. He jumped, spinning as we came, eyes wide and white against his chocolate skin…

"*My weh*!" he yelped. His face was so surprised it was almost funny. Then everything seemed to turn to stone when he saw the gun right in his face.

His cigarette went limp and tumbled to the ground.

A nervous laugh: mine. No one else joined in. Ivan kept holding the gun. I became hyper-aware of everything.

The chill air.

The smell of the worker's cigarette.

The bead of sweat hanging over Ivan's eye.

His finger, tightening around the trigger…

There was a crisp snap of wood. Over the worker's shoulder, the kudu gazed out from the bushes, limping. Ivan shifted his aim and fired a single shot. The worker dropped and covered his head with his arms.

The kudu's legs had buckled. Ivan walked over to it, gazed down with thin lips, then shot it again, and didn't stop until the magazine was empty. (63)

In a painful account of harassment and humiliation, Ivan boasts to his friends back in school about how he had frightened the black worker to such an extent that he "almost *kakked* himself" (64). To shock young readers into an awareness of social horrors on a much larger scale, the novel shows how independence can be reduced to its opposite by characters who are still in their teens.

The historical fictions discussed in this paper engage with the legacy of colonialism from a marginalized position by turning a penetrating gaze on white British colonizers and satirizing their "civilized" customs and manners, by exposing the fictions of the traditional historical record, which took the form of deliberate omissions and distortions, or else by raising questions about the very notion of historical knowledge. However, what these fictions do *not* do is suggest that "insider" representations of history concerned with colonial times will be any more reliable than those produced by cultural outsiders. Their concern with marginalized sensibilities testifies to a growing recognition of the colonial other in British historical fictions for the young by both minority and non-minority writers, showing that today histories "from below" can also be written "from above," that is, from within a white middle-class Western culture. The formal choices made by these writers are also influenced by the fact that the non-white children who feed on the stories of

To shock young readers into an awareness of social horrors on a much larger scale, the novel shows how independence can be reduced to its opposite by characters who are still in their teens.

R. M. Ballantyne and H. Rider Haggard cannot forever identify with the white heroes of adventure fiction; they need positive and "authentic" cultural representations. What ultimately matters is the degree to which British historical fictions for the young move away from the dominant orientalist discourse that objectified the other.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Gavin, Jamila. *The Eye of the Horse*. 2nd ed. London: Egmont, 2010. Print.

—. *The Track of the Wind*. 2nd ed. London: Egmont, 2010. Print.

—. *The Wheel of Surya*. 2nd ed. London: Egmont, 2008. Print.

Rai, Bali. *City of Ghosts*. London: Doubleday, 2009. Print.

Wallace, Jason. *Out of Shadows*. London: Andersen Press, 2010. Print.

Secondary Sources

Bentley, Nick. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008. Print.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. Trans. Colin Gordon et al. Brighton: Harvester, 1980. Print.

Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.

Müller, Sandra. "A Conservative Backlash in UK Publishing? The Case of Maggie Gee's *The White Family*." *Hard Times* 89 (2011): 12-16. Print.

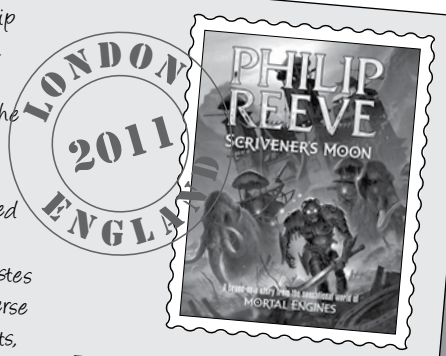
Wallace, Jason. "My Inspiration." *JasonWallace*, 2010. Web. 13 Dec. 2011.

White, Hayden. "Introduction to Metahistory." *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*. 2nd ed. Ed. Dennis Walder. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.

Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

In this, the third prequel to the magnificent **Hungry Cities** series, Philip Reeve follows the story of Fever Crumb upon her return to New London where she is reunited with her parents, the ultra-rational engineer Dr. Crumb and the beautiful Wavey Godshawk. The narrative centers on the construction of the first traction city, the star of **Mortal Engines**, and we witness its tentative but monstrously destructive first outing as it rolls north to take on the powerful nomad armies massing against it. Tempted by tales of the ancient technology to be rediscovered in the mysterious Skrevanastuut pyramid, Fever and her mother set off through the ice wastes to uncover its secrets. **Scrivener's Moon** extends Reeve's steampunk universe still further, introducing new characters like the snowmads and nightwights, but at the same time filling in more details about the wonderful-terrible Shrike, the resurrected man whose extended life shapes the narrative arc of the entire sequence of novels. As ever, Reeve creates a Dickensian cast of characters and sets them loose in a landscape that truly fires the imagination. The construction of the traction city is presented with what can only be described as reckless precision: it is wonderful and impossible, marvelous and terrifying. And yet, it is Fever's epic adventure which ultimately captures the reader's heart.

Richard Steward

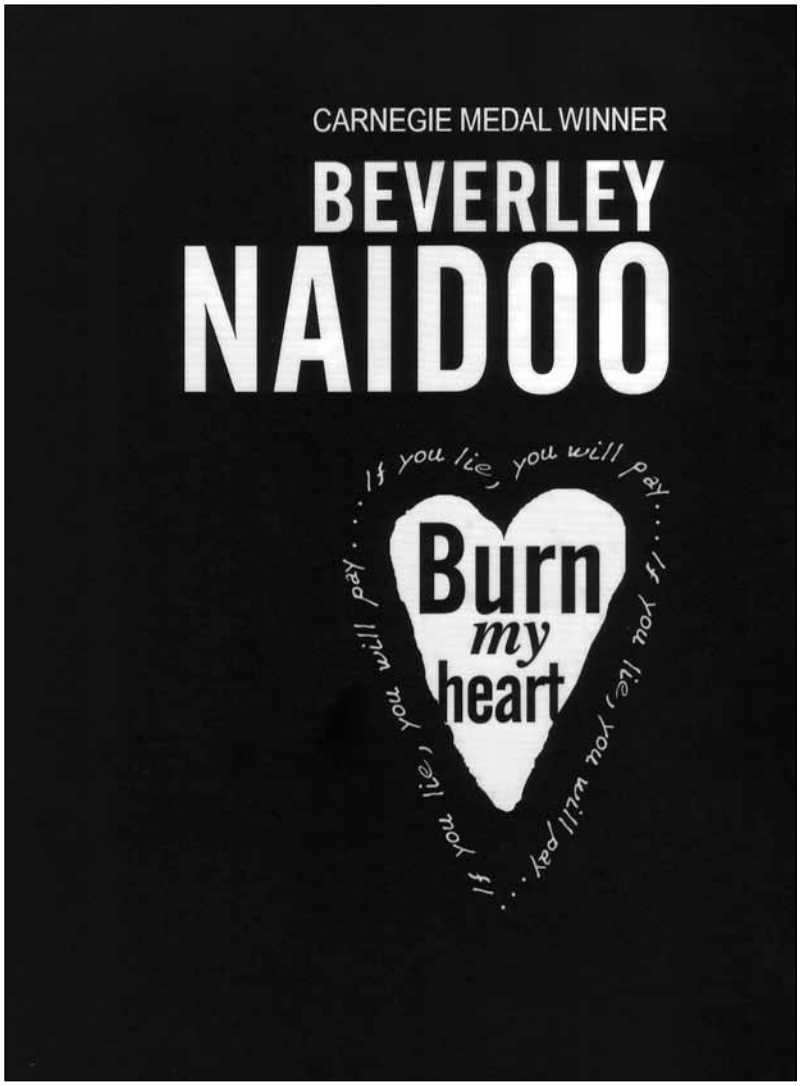


Philip Reeve

Scrivener's Moon

London, England: Scholastic Ltd., 2011
374 p.

ISBN978-1-407115-21-4
(Fiction 10+)



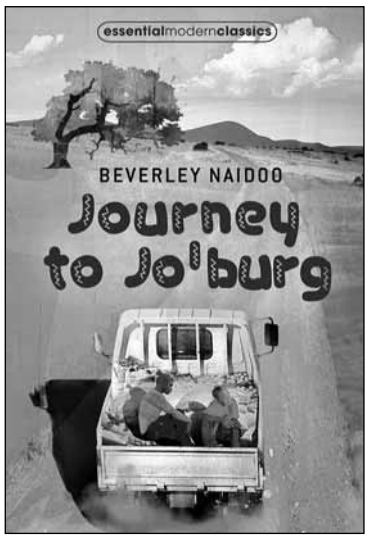
Braving the Dark in Writing for Young People

by BEVERLEY NAIDOO

In early 1980s Britain, it took over two years to find a publisher for my first children's book, *Journey to Jo'burg*. Some turned it down because they believed that the journey of two black South African children in search of their mother would not interest young British readers. Others said that I had created a mismatch by writing in too simple language about a topic that was only suitable for older readers. It eventually found a publisher thanks to the persistence of Ethel de Keyser, the remarkable director of the British Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa who had previously run the Anti-Apartheid Movement's office in London. BDAF, as we called it (South Africans love acronyms), was banned in South Africa because it raised funds for the legal defense of political prisoners as well as secretly sending money to their families. This feisty organization was concerned with conscience…and so was my little story. It invited young readers to join my characters, through their imaginations, on their courageous journey. Faced with the obstacles presented by Apartheid, how did they feel? What did they think?

Beverley Naidoo joined the resistance to apartheid as a student in South Africa, leading to detention without trial and exile to Britain in 1965. She has worked as a teacher, education adviser and writer and holds a PhD (Southampton) for research into British readers' responses to literature and racism. Since *Journey to Jo'burg*, she has written novels, short stories, poetry and plays. Her many awards include the Carnegie Medal for *The Other Side of Truth*, the Children's Africana Honor Book Award for *Burn My Heart*, and honorary doctorates. Beverley and illustrator Piet Grobler, South African nominees for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2008, recently created an *Aesop's Fables* set in South Africa. See www.beverleynaidoo.com

Joan Ward, the publisher at Longman Education had given the draft manuscript to a teacher to try out in her classroom, receiving a speedy response to "snap it up"! Joan decided to include it in a series for reluctant teenage readers. Without this lucky break, *Journey to Jo'burg* might have languished in a bottom drawer. Instead it rapidly found its way from secondary into primary schools, and then into bookshops through a Collins trade edition where the text was accompanied by evocative black and white drawings by Lisa Kopper. In contrast to the search for a UK publisher, in less than a month after sending the book to Harper & Row in New York, I received an offer to have it published under the Lippincott imprint. I now realize that Lippincott's culture had been influenced by the international outlook of Dorothy Briley, its former Editor-in-Chief during the 1970s. Dorothy would later become an energetic vice-president of IBBY, president of USBBY and of *Bookbird*.



Although banned in apartheid South Africa, my little book took off in English elsewhere and in various translations. Today it is still in print, finding new readers in its twenty-seventh year. It has been fascinating to see how over the years the universal nature of the story has overtaken its very particular origins. Young readers across the globe make their own connections. For instance, students from the American School in Karachi wrote to tell me about Bangladeshi maids in their homes who only see their own children once every two years, when they are able to afford a visit home. Palestinian children have told me, "This is our experience."

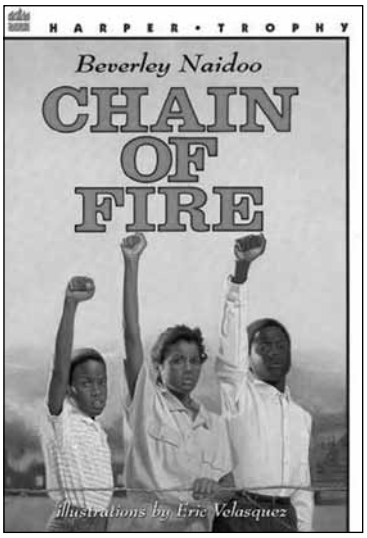
For many years after I began writing professionally, I continued working part-time in education to provide my bread and butter. I felt this gave me the freedom to write what I wanted to write, without reference to the dictates of "the market." Of course I wanted my books to be read and I was receiving very interesting responses from young people. But I knew that if I was going to spend a couple of years or more working on a novel, it had to be because there were themes that I wanted to explore, truths that I wanted to seek out and a journey that I wanted—indeed needed—to make. Fortunately, the nineteen years that I had spent with a wide range of young people struggling to read stood me in good stead. These young learners taught me about what gripped and sustained them, and what kept them wanting to turn the next page despite the obstacles they found with print. If I had to sum up what engaged them, I would say it was the power of storytelling with emotional truths to which they could relate.

I had learned this valuable lesson from my very first "remedial class," as was the designation then. This particular class of streetwise young teens in a deprived area of London in 1969 had "got through three teachers" the year before I arrived. They were fully prepared to see off their next, namely me! I like to think that I lured them away from predictable set-piece battles through storytelling, the pen being mightier than the sword. The stories that I used were not my own. I had not thought of writing my own stories yet. But in looking for literature with which to entice these disaffected 13-year-olds, I sought out writers who could take us—me as well as them—out of that dingy classroom, dismal building, dreary playground and depressing streets into another world that might, or might not, have been as physically drab but where what happened MATTERED.

At the end of every day, I read to them and they listened. Almost magically, in that daily half-an-hour, we found ourselves with a character, or characters, about whom we jointly cared. It was there that I learned the drama of voice, and pacing. I think it was there that I learned

the power of reading out loud, something that I still do with my own writing, even if it's done silently in my head, checking out the texture and rhythm of each sentence on the page. Regardless of any prior psychological battle during the day (an almost ritual opposition between "I can't do that!" versus "Yes, you can!"), that charmed half-an-hour became a regular period of truce, even of peace. It was where we discovered what we shared across the gulf between teacher and reluctant, resistant students.

There was much to make those young people feel rebellious in the late 1960s. Most of my class were the children of Caribbean immigrants. Many had spent their early years with grandmothers on their home island while mothers, with or without the children's fathers, struggled to establish themselves in London's mean streets to which they had been attracted by the promise of jobs in post-war Britain. My students' parents had come to the colonial "mother country" with high expectations, only to discover that, although their labor was required, their presence was frequently resented. Children whose early years had been spent in extended families, largely out of doors in a hot, hospitable climate, found themselves transplanted into a completely alien environment, both physically and metaphorically cold, and often into new family structures. In some cases, mothers or fathers who had become absent strangers had married or re-married and there were new brothers and sisters. The environment was London's equivalent of 1960s' Harlem so brilliantly depicted by Rosa Guy in her trilogy beginning with *The Friends*.



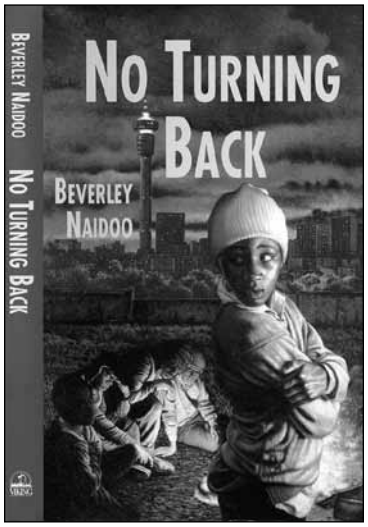
Rosa Guy's brave new novel would have been a winner with my class but in 1969 it was not yet published. In the United States, the children's book world was on the brink of being challenged, in the wake of the Civil Rights movement. In Britain, children's publishing remained a walled cottage garden with very few books that connected to the rougher, worldly experiences of the young people in my class. However, one such book was Ian Serrailler's *The Silver Sword*. It told the story of four refugee children—three siblings and the orphan Jan—scouring war-torn Europe in search of the siblings' parents at the end of the Second World War. Here were emotional truths to which my students could relate. They were hooked, just like I was.

As I reflect on my first high school class, it strikes me that, when I wrote *Journey to Jo'burg*, those young people were probably, unconsciously, among my implicit audience. They were great teachers for a writer-to-be, reminding me of the possibilities of reaching out beyond the margins. Many of my characters are themselves located outside the margins of power in their respective societies. In *Journey to Jo'burg*, my two young characters have to brave going into the bastion of "white Johannesburg" to find their mother. I, who had grown up inside the bastion, felt impelled to imagine as best I could what that would be like.

In *Chain of Fire,* the same sister and brother, who are now two years older, find that their village is about to destroyed by government bulldozers and all the villagers are to be transported to a so-called "homeland" outside "white South Africa." Once again, I needed to imagine how it would feel to be cast out. Apart from my research into accounts of this ethnic cleansing—that included reports and films smuggled out of South Africa—my experience of working daily with marginalized young people, albeit in a very different context, probably aided my understanding and imagination. Publication of these first novels also came at a time of intense global interest.

I was fortunate also to have the support of an editor who was strongly committed to opening

the walled garden of children's publishing to the wider world. Rosemary Stones, whom I had first met when she was co-editing the groundbreaking *Children's Book Bulletin*, had joined Collins where she became my editor. I followed her when she moved to Penguin. Although South Africa miraculously pulled back from the brink with the release of Nelson Mandela, the country nevertheless remained in a perilous state in the early 1990s. The first cover of the UK edition of *No Turning Back*, which I set during those turbulent years, vividly captured the exclusion of twelve-year-old Sipho and the street children who become his family after he has run away from an abusive stepfather. With the country moving fitfully towards its first democratic elections, the challenges for these young people reflect a universal condition as they try to live between the cracks of a society divided sharply between haves and have-nots. Through the character of Judy, a white girl from the suburbs who wants to be friends with Sipho, I raise the question of how possible or realistic is such a friendship across such a divide?



There is a similar question in the title story of *Out of Bounds*. I end my collection of stories covering the apartheid era with a tale set in the year 2000, after squatters have made their homes out of corrugated iron and plastic sheets on the slopes just below the well-to-do houses on the top of a Durban hill. I place a boy on each side. What chance of friendship here? The same question implicitly runs through my last novel, set in 1950s colonial Kenya, *Burn My Heart*. A Gikuyu proverb on its dedication page reads, in English: *Nobody walks with another person's gait*.

> An unidentified narrator continues this theme in a brief introduction.
> "How do I tell you this story? Do I tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Do I tell you my side or his? What if I had been born on his side and he on mine? We were both only children."

The structure of *Burn My Heart* invites the reader to keep shifting perspective. Chapters alternate between the viewpoint of the white settler boy Mathew, and Mugo, the kitchen toto, whose grandfather was dispossessed of his land, by Mathew's grandfather, 40 years before my story begins. The two boys like each other as people, but their friendship is constrained by realities of power, the threads of which tighten through the course of the novel. The injustices of the past cannot be consigned to history and tensions heighten as the Mau Mau resistance to the settlers and colonial rule gathers pace. Once again, there are universals, as picked up in Booklist's starred review which notes "parallels to contemporary questions about the differences between terrorists and freedom fighters." My favorite review, however, came from a 13-year-old Red House reader who wrote "it gave me an insight into a past that I knew

nothing about. The writing, personal and clever, made me empathize with all of the characters, for all of them had individual stories."

There are tough questions around the dynamics of power, whether between children, between adults, or between adults and children. There are questions too about innocence, choice and culpability. Towards the end of the novel, Lance, the son of an Inspector in the Kenya Police, comes to spend the weekend with Mathew on the Grayson's farm. A nonchalant bully, Lance compels Mathew in a secret ceremony to make a fire behind the stables, much too close to the fields, ignoring Mathew's fears. That night a blaze takes hold of the fields, spreading to the stables. The consequences are disastrous, in particular for Mugo and his father Kamau, the loyal worker who has looked after the bwana's horses:

Chapter Eighteen: Speechless

Mugo knelt on the concrete floor, gripping his hands over his ears. Baba's pain tore through him. Howls. Roars. Screams. Mugo had never heard any human being in such agony. He was alone in a small dusky room with stale air and no windows, next to the one in which the Inspector and his men had taken Baba. They wanted him to hear. They wanted him to know that they could do anything. However hard he clenched his sweating palms over his ears, the painful sounds kept coming…rising and falling, rising and falling.

When they came to him, Mugo could answer none of the Inspector's questions.

"Who set fire to your bwana's stables?"

"Where is your older brother?"

"When did you take the oath?"

"Did your brother give you the oath?"

"Where do you take him food?"

Each time Mugo said he didn't know—he hadn't taken any oath and, no, he didn't do these things—a red hat thrust his head into a bucket of freezing water. Each time they held him down longer. Fingers pressed on the back of his neck. A hand shoved his scalp backwards and forwards. He was suffocating, gulping, drowning.

You might ask what would drive me to write such a scene—imagined, but not a figment of imagination. My reply is that my story has led me to this dark place and that Silence has impelled me towards it. I grew up in a world of Silence about atrocious goings-on. I now know that this is part of the human condition, but that doesn't make it acceptable. In Britain, after a long legal struggle, a claim will finally be heard in our High Court that has been brought by a small group of elderly Kenyan men and women, now in their 70s and 80s. They are asking for an apology and claiming compensation from the British government for torture and sustained abuse in detention camps during the suppression of the Mau Mau in the 1950s. The human rights lawyers representing them have been tenacious, with documentation provided by well-regarded historians.

My story, however, is more concerned about the effect on my two boys of being part of these events. What does it do to them and their psyches? As in many of my novels, there are questions that remain to be answered. My hope is that my readers, like the Red House reader, will find themselves drawn into my characters' lives and be sufficiently affected to pose further questions when they close the book.

Burn My Heart was not an easy book to write. I had the good fortune to have a supremely wise and brave editor with whom I could confer. Born and educated in the United States, Jane Nissen married an Englishman and came to live in England in the mid-1950s. Her career has spanned being a bookseller, a reader, an editor and by the time of her official retirement, Associate Publisher of Penguin Children's Books. My good fortune extended to Jane being employed for a number of years thereafter as a consultant editor, during which time she was my editor on both *The Other Side of Truth* and its sequel *Web of Lies* before *Burn My Heart.*

I have always felt a responsibility to find some hope at the end of a novel, however great a challenge. Nor can this be false hope. The hope may be as slender as a growth in awareness as in *Burn My Heart*. Young readers respond to honesty. Offering that honesty, however, can sometimes leave a writer feeling vulnerable. On such occasions, the support of a trusted editor is enormously helpful. During the writing of *Truth* and *Lies*, I was especially touched by Jane's concern for my young Nigerian refugees, Sade and Femi, whom I had thrown into such challenging situations in London's streets and back alleys. Over the years, our friendship grew beyond the confines of work in hand. In due course I would learn that she had joined the London Detainee Support Group, beginning a long-term commitment to visiting migrants held in detention. In 2007, Jane received the Eleanor Farjeon Award for distinguished service to the world of children's books, a fitting tribute.

Like many writers for young people who engage with demanding themes, I am interested in conversations across generations. *Burn My Heart* has particular personal significance for me. It contains an exploration of a colonial childhood that, in some aspects, I share with the settler boy Mathew even though I grew up in a city 3000 miles to the south of Kenya. When Trestle Theatre, known for its inventive physical theater work, toured a stage version by Rina Vergano of the novel in 2010, they pulled in audiences of all ages. But my own journey was not yet complete. The layers behind the story went deeper.

In February 1982, the name Neil Aggett had travelled around the world after the body of a 28-year-old medical doctor was found hanging from the grille of a cell inside Johannesburg's security police headquarters. Dozens of black detainees in South Africa had died in suspicious circumstances but Neil was the first white detainee to die in the hands of the security police. He had been spending most of his time working as an unpaid trade unionist.

Neil's mom was my older cousin. A Johannesburg librarian, she had married a settler from Kenya (pronounced *Keenya* in those days by the British). With the advent of Independence, when Neil was ten, his parents had brought the family to apartheid South Africa, not wanting to live under a black government. As a medical student, Neil's ways of seeing were challenged. Realizing that apartheid was the sickness, he transformed himself, to the strong disapproval of his father. His death was a terrible way for his parents to learn the truth about the state they had trusted. They were to make their own difficult journey. At their son's funeral, they were surrounded by many thousands of black workers paying tribute to a comrade and son of the soil. Neil's father would subsequently fund a lengthy inquest in an attempt to reach the truth of what had happened to their son.

Neil is not Mathew in *Burn My Heart* which is set before he was born. But the novel was my way of exploring the world into which he was born. For the past four years, however, I have been working on a biography-cum-memoir, provisionally titled *Death of an Idealist: In Search of Neil Aggett*, in order to discover this younger cousin whom I never met. To provide some light relief alongside this taxing work for an adult readership, I first turned to writing a children's poetry alphabet *S is for South*

Africa, with photographs by Prodeepta Das. With each letter we focused on a different aspect of the country:

S is for South Africa where two oceans meet,
cold Atlantic from the west and warm Indian
from the east.
Our vast country stretches across Africa's
southern shores,
golden beaches to misty mountains, sandy
deserts to grassy plains
and, in our land of contrasts, we praise the
sun yet pray for rain.

F is for Faces - ancestors from many places
with stories to share of one human race.
Let all our children be laughing and peaceful,
and understand the wisest saying of our
rainbow nation,
People are people through other people!

My second "writing for pleasure" activity was a retelling of *Aesop's Fables,* accompanied by Piet Grobler's wonderfully witty illustrations in a South African setting. I grew up thinking that Aesop was a wise old Greek slave but I now believe that he could well have come from North Africa. There are interesting similarities in these fables with the Indian *Panchatantra* and the Arabic *Kalila wa Dimna.* My publisher, Janetta Otter-Barry at Frances Lincoln Children's Books, has recently also brought out *School for Princes*: *Stories from the Panchatantra,* a new version by Jamila Gavin. Jamila and I will be discussing our retellings and possible migrations of these ancient fables at the forthcoming 2012 IBBY Congress in London. Crossing boundaries has been an interweaving theme for each of us in our work and the theme of this year's congress presents a lovely opportunity to share our thoughts, speculate and indulge in storytelling!

Mediated by humor, there's a tough reality in Aesop's 2,500-year-old tales that feels very African. A constant theme is that life is hard and if you don't use your head, you had better watch out! His characters, mainly animals, reveal a range of unpleasant human traits such as arrogance, envy, greed, deceit, gullibility and laziness that vie with decent traits such as compassion, kindness, loyalty and perseverance. Aesop understood power and the instinct to manipulate. Whether you are a child or an adult, there is something to ponder in each fable and moral. Yet it is only now, through my own reworking, that I have come to realize how in these seemingly simple stories, Aesop, with experience of slavery, was undoubtedly braving the dark. Telling his stories mostly through animals was wise indeed when commenting on human folly, especially of the high and mighty. You may know the following story as 'The Lion and the Boar'. In my retelling, it is 'The Lion and the Warthog', with Piet's illustration capturing perfectly the oh-so-human antics. Aesop's moral seems equally apt for today's ravaged world:

The Lion and the Warthog

One blistering hot day in the middle of summer, Lion and Warthog had the same idea. Get down to the waterhole and drink! They arrived at the same time and at the very same spot.

"I go first!" growled Lion.

"Hayikona! Oh no you don't!" retorted Warthog.

Lion roared, striking Warthog with his claws. But the small fellow jerked backwards, then charged with his tusks. Together they grappled, this way and that. It looked as if they would tear each other to death until, panting, each stopped to take breath.

The air was heavy. Glancing up at the tall trees around the waterhole, each saw a line of vultures quietly waiting. Eh!

"It's better to be friends," grumbled Lion.

"Yebo, my friend," agreed Warthog. "Who wants to fight and become food for vultures?"

It's safer to be friends than enemies.

Jella Lepman, IBBY's founder, would have agreed.

*This article is adapted from the Dorothy Briley Lecture delivered to the USBBY conference, October 2011.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Gavin, Jamila. *School for Princes: Stories from the Panchatant*. Illus. Bee Wiley. London: Janetta Otter-Barry Books Frances Lincoln, 2011. Print.

Guy, Rosa. *The Friends*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973. Print.

Naidoo, Beverley. *Journey to Jo'burg*. Harlow: Longman, 1985; London: Collins, 1987. Print.

—. *Chain of Fire*. London: Collins, 1989. Print.

—. *No Turning Back*. London: Viking Books, 1997. Print.

—. *The Other Side of Truth*. London: Puffin, 2000. Print.

—. *Out of Bounds*. London: Puffin, 2001. Print.

—. *Web of Lies*. London: Puffin, 2004. Print.

—. *S is for South Africa*. Photographs by Prodeepta Das. London: Frances Lincoln, 2010. Print.

—. *Aesop's Fables*, illustrated by Piet Grobler. London: Janetta Otter-Barry Books Frances Lincoln, 2011. Print.

—. *Death of an Idealist: In search of Neil Aggett*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2012 *forthcoming*.

Serrailler, Ian. *The Silver Sword*. London: Heinemann, 1959. Print.

Secondary Sources

Children's Book Bulletin. London: Children's Rights Workshop, Vols 1-6, 1979-1981.

Garrett, Jeffrey. "Dorothy Briley: In Memoriam." *Bookbird* 36.4 (Winter 1998). Print.

Seven Years of Seven Stories: The Center for Children's Books Comes of Age

by SARAH LAWRANCE

Founded in 1996, Seven Stories opened to the public in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2005. The museum is now firmly established as an influential champion for children's books in the UK. How has this been achieved and what are its priorities now?

Back in the mid-1990s, when the idea of a center for children's books was conceived, the Harry Potter phenomenon had yet to take off, there was no Children's Laureate, and Jacqueline Wilson was not a household name. The world of children's books was very different then. All the more remarkable, then, that the museum's founders, Elizabeth Hammill and Mary Briggs, succeeded in gathering support for their proposal. The two women shared a compelling vision and a determination to achieve public recognition of the value of children's books by creating a wholly new cultural institution. In 1996 they opened a bank account, and started to turn their dream into a reality.

The plan was to form a Collection of artwork and manuscripts by modern and contemporary writers and illustrators and to build a visitor center, with galleries, learning and performance spaces, cafe and bookshop. Authors and illustrators were enthusiastic about the plans for a Collection and began offering material right away. The capital project, however, required support from a much wider constituency. So, from 1998, Hammill and Briggs curated a series of trailblazing exhibitions, using innovative display techniques to bring children's books to life. These generated a groundswell of interest in the plans for the center, and soon public sector stakeholders such as Newcastle City Council and Arts Council England became involved. In 2002, after an intense period of

Sarah Lawrance is Collection Director at Seven Stories, the national centre for children's books. Sarah has worked for Seven Stories since 2003 and is responsible for the development of the Collection and for ensuring its accessibility. After reading Classics at Oxford and Museum Studies at Manchester, Sarah began her career as Exhibition Officer at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, where the experience of working with a world class collection of rare books and manuscripts inspired her commitment to bringing literary collections to life for a wide audience. She has also worked freelance within the museums sector and for English Heritage, as Curator of the Hadrian's Wall Museums, before moving to Seven Stories. Sarah gained a postgraduate Certificate in Children's Literature at University of Roehampton in 2009.

development, the center bought the historic seven-storied warehouse which would become its home—and would give the organization its name. Just three (strenuous) years later, conversion of the building was complete and Seven Stories opened its doors on 19 August 2005.

Elizabeth Hammill and Mary Briggs retired in 2007, and were honored with OBEs[1] and honorary doctorates from Newcastle University. Seven Stories today, under Chief Executive Kate Edwards, remains true to the original vision, as a place where books are loved and shared with children and families. Around 70,000 people visit the museum each year, of whom on average 12,000 are school pupils. Each year Seven Stories launches two new exhibitions; these range from thematic shows such as "All Aboard, Away We Go," focused on transport and travel, to exhibitions with a single author or illustrator focus, for example Judith Kerr or Anthony Browne. Each show breaks new ground; visitor responses are rigorously evaluated to gauge which forms of interactive presentation are most successful, and whether all ages and abilities are catered for. Delegates to the IBBY Congress who travel to Newcastle in August 2012 will be able to see "Daydreams and Diaries, the Story of Jacqueline Wilson" and "A Squash and a Squeeze, Sharing Stories with Julia Donaldson."

The museum runs events and activities for all ages, from story-times for babies, to book-inspired creative activities, to author events and lectures. An extensive learning program inspires children and young people to read for pleasure. Whether through facilitated visits to Seven Stories, or sessions in school, through resource packs or training for teachers, Seven Stories works with approximately 80% of schools in Newcastle and 50% within the wider North East region. Recent initiatives include resources to support the teaching of Illustration at Further Education and Higher Education level. Each new "offer" is tested and evaluated before it is robust enough to be included in our main learning program; there is also an increasing emphasis on developing e-resources.

Behind the scenes, the Seven Stories Collection has been growing rapidly. The holdings reflect many aspects of children's publishing in Britain, from around 1930 to the present day.[2] Priority is given to original materials: manuscripts, artwork, and anything which provides material evidence of the "creative process." This includes roughs, drafts, dummy books, and correspondence between author and editor. Post-publication material provides evidence of how books are marketed, and how they are received by readers. Together, all this provides insights into children's books which are not obtainable from looking at the published work. For example, artwork by Edward Ardizzone, Pat Hutchins and Polly Dunbar provides direct evidence of the way in which the work of illustrators from the post-war period to the present day has been shaped by the shifting possibilities and limitations of the color printing process.

The amount and type of material varies from one writer or illustrator to another. The extensive Peter Dickinson archive, for example, includes two drafts of each title, plus correspondence, all meticulously kept, providing an invaluable record of the evolution of each text. The Robert Westall archive, another of the more extensive archives in the Collection, follows a less regular pattern. The manuscript first draft of *The Machine Gunners* is in three parts, reflecting the fact that Westall's writing at that time had to be fitted round his day job as an art teacher.

Visitors often comment on the sense of revelation that comes from seeing the work involved in creating a book. The notion that writing or illustrating for children is easy is dispelled by even a short acquaintance with the holdings at Seven Stories. Take for example the multiple drafts of a picture book text such as Kim Lewis's *Floss*, which show the writer whittling away extraneous words, seeking the perfect balance between text and pictures.

© Barry Pells

To date, the Seven Stories Collection includes relatively little digital material, but this is set to increase dramatically as more and more writers and illustrators produce their work mainly, or entirely, on computers. With the influx of e-books, and the speed with which technology becomes obsolete, the scale and scope of the digital collecting and preservation challenge is growing exponentially. The Collection provides the raw material from which exhibitions are curated and learning resources developed. Increasingly, the Collection is also being drawn upon for academic research. Our partnership with Newcastle University's children's literature unit[3] has already resulted in three doctoral theses based on material held in the Collection, and recent biographies of Puffin Books editor Kaye Webb and author Ursula Moray Williams have also made extensive use of the holdings.[4] There is no space to house the Collection within the visitor center, so researchers and other users of the archive must make the journey across the River Tyne to Gateshead, where Seven Stories leases storage space and working areas for its Collection team and visiting researchers.

Seven years in, Seven Stories remains as creative and innovative as ever, but is also thankful to have achieved a degree of recognition and stability. In 2010 the organization received the prestigious Eleanor Farjeon Award[5]; in 2011, Arts Council England adopted Seven Stories as one of its "national portfolio organizations," recognizing the museum's important role and guaranteeing its funding, at least until 2015. Meanwhile, our exhibitions are increasingly in demand by museums and galleries across the UK; many of our shows now tour to three or even four venues after they have finished at Seven Stories. In the coming years, our partnership with Newcastle University will become increasingly important, as we work together to create a center of excellence for the study of children's literature.

Also in 2011, we received the very welcome, and wholly unexpected, news that the Enid Blyton Trust for Children had decided to close down its operations and transfer all its remaining funds to Seven Stories, founding an endowment to support the museum's learning and participation work. Nevertheless, the next few years will be challenging. With hindsight, the late 1990s and early 2000s were years of plenty. Unprecedented levels of public sector investment in the arts, both nationally, under Tony Blair's New Labour government, and locally, with Newcastle City Council prioritizing arts and culture as key drivers in the regeneration of the City, provided fertile ground for Seven Stories to grow and develop.

With the arrival of the global economic recession, the picture now is very different. Since the change of UK government in May 2010 there have been drastic cuts in public sector spending, which have impacted directly on funding for the arts and education, including Seven Stories. The recessionary impact on family income challenges the organization to ensure that cost is not a barrier for our audiences. The North East of England has long been one of the most economically deprived areas in the UK, and the most reliant on public sector investment, so the effects of recession are particularly noticeable here.

It is said that by the age of seven, a child's character and aptitudes are formed. If the same is true of organizations, Seven Stories certainly has the imagination, determination and entrepreneurial flair to meet the challenges presented by this new age of austerity. Whatever happens, Seven Stories remains firmly committed to speaking out for children's books as an art form which can help young readers grow into imaginative, creative, responsible citizens of the world. In many ways this seems more vital than ever.

Notes:

Seven Stories is open seven days a week. For visitor information, please see www.sevenstories.org.uk. *To visit the Collection, prior booking is essential. Please contact* collections@sevenstories.org.uk *to make arrangements. Catalogue records are on line at* www.sevenstories.org.uk/collection.

1. The OBE, or Officer of the Order of the British Empire, is an award made by the Queen in recognition of distinguished services within the recipient's field of work.
2. Manuscripts of important earlier children's books are generally covered by other major collections, including the British Library.
3. See: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/elll/aboutchildrens literature/
4. Between 2005 and 2011, Seven Stories hosted three Collaborative Doctoral Awards, jointly with Newcastle University, as follows: Dr Nolan Dalrymple: *North East Childhoods: Regional Identity in children's Novels of the North East of England* (2008); Dr Lucy Pearson: *The Making of Modern Children's Literature: Quality and Ideology in British Children's Publishing of the 1960s and 1970s* (2010); Dr Kate Wright: *The Puffin Phenomenon and its Creator, Kaye Webb* (2011).
5. Awarded annually by the Children's Book Circle in memory of Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965), to honour an outstanding contribution to the world of children's books by an individual or organisation.

Works Cited:

Davidson, Colin. *Through the Magic Door: Ursula Moray Williams, Gobbolino and the Little Wooden Horse.* Newcastle: Northumbria Press, 2011. Print.

Grove, Valerie. *So Much to Tell: the Biography of Kaye Webb.* London: Viking Books, 2010. Print.

Consulting the Experts: Martha and Alex Talk about Books and Reading

by FIONA MAINE

Alex and Martha sit excited in the kitchen. They have willingly agreed to talk with me about reading and books, though they have a vague idea that I might be "doing experiments" on them and they are surprised that we have not retreated to some underground bunker. They are a little tired after a full day at school and then swimming club for Martha and a friend round for tea for Alex has taken its toll on these five-year-olds, but they are keen to take part and particularly keen that their responses should be recorded on video.

The aim of the session is to find out something about their views on reading, but also to give them a chance to explore some current literature and enjoy it. I want to listen to what they say, as I firmly believe that by listening intently to children as they describe their ideas and feelings there is much to be learnt, in this case about the process of engaging with and enjoying books. This is not a new idea; the sentiment is echoed by Margaret Meek Spencer, Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles, and Michael Benton in their work on reader response and understanding children's reading. It seems so obvious, yet in a content-packed curriculum focused on breaking down the essence of reading into the "grain size" of phonemes (Goswami); this voice could be left unheard in a study of reading. The preoccupation with phonics as the key to reading development in English schools has been evident since the controversial importance placed on the Clackmannanshire report about reading pedagogy (as cited by Dombey). Since then, national policy, even with a change of government, has consistently focused on the decoding of words as the keystone of reading. There is a solid research base to suggest otherwise (Dombey), but the concern is most eloquently summed up by Teresa Cremin in her plea for an alternative "simple view" of reading: "the early reading curriculum should focus first and foremost on enabling children to develop a range of strategies in order to become competent and enthusiastic readers who can and do choose to read for pleasure and enjoyment" (184).

That there has been a decline in British children's pursuit of reading for pleasure is well documented in The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Twist, Schagen and Hodgson) and even led to The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) publishing a report entitled "Reading for Purpose and Pleasure." Sadly, other than in the titles repeated on each page, the word "pleasure" only actually features three times in the document: once to quote the PIRLS data, then to identity that "few schools successfully engage the interest of those who, though competent readers did not read for pleasure" (4) and that "few schools identified reluctance to read for pleasure and enjoyment as a problem" (14).

I consult with my early reading experts, Alex and Martha. What is this tricky thing called reading I ask them. Martha is definite in her response: not a challenge at all it seems, she even puts up

Fiona Maine leads a part-time Professional Masters Program for teachers at Bath Spa University. She works with teachers from all phases of education as they critically reflect on their practice, engaging in action inquiry projects. Her own specialism is Literacy and her research interests involve listening to children as they talk about a variety of texts, both written and visual. Her doctoral dissertation examined closely the language of this talk and its affordance of critical and creative thinking.

her hand, recognizing this as a "school type" question:

FM: What is reading?
M: You practice to read.
FM: How do you do that?
M: By sounding out the letters and how it sounds. Like "a."
FM: Is it just about letters and words? Is there anything else?
A: No, you don't really know the words because you are a bit little, as you start to get older it's like you don't really know.
FM: So you get better at it?
M: I need to tell you something! If you get good at your reading you get a different book and you read that one!

I asked the children if they read away from school:

M: You can read at home to practice.
FM: Just to practice or because you like it?
M: Read it to practice the book.
FM: So, if you didn't have to, would you go and choose a book?
M: We do it because we have to, but we can just look at books and try to read them.

The message is clear: reading is something to practice and then a skill to attain in the future. If you cannot decode the words you are just "looking." We move swiftly onto the main event of the evening: sharing books. I showed them *Knuffle Bunny* (2005) by Mo Willems and *The Rabbit Problem* (2010) by Emily Gravett. Have they seen these books before? No, they respond, but they have books like them in the "reading corner" in their classroom. Fantastic! Do they bring those books home? At this the children look slightly confused. Alex says that no, those are the "big books" and they bring "little books" home to practice reading. Their school "book bags" reveal that each child has two books to read at home, one from a popular reading scheme (so popular in fact that when I started teaching 20 years ago, I had used the same scheme with early readers) and the other a phonics-directed story of little narrative value, designed to promote practice in recognizing medial vowels. That children are often confused by a difference between their "reading book" (from an assigned scheme) and "real" books is noted by Kathy Goouch (52) However, in this case there seems to be a third category: the phonics "practice" book which is outside both categories.

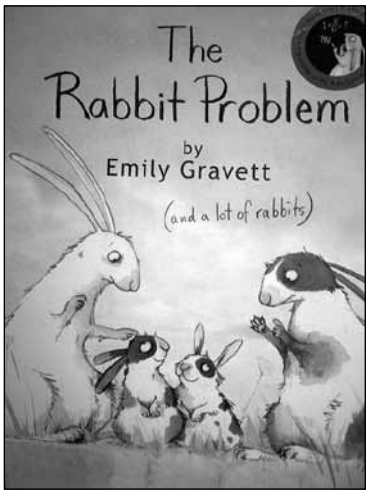
We start to share the books. I choose to show them *The Rabbit Problem* first. This is a picture book designed in the style of a calendar and it even has the obligatory holes for hanging up. Whilst there is not a clear written narrative, there is written text on each page, as the book features a multi-layered reading experience of extra texts within (reminiscent of the Ahlbergs' *The Jolly Postman*). There are invitations, knitting patterns, and recipes all contained as books within books. "I like the flaps!" exclaims Martha. The story is about the problem of overly reproductive rabbits in a small field (a joke for adults being that the field is called "Fibonacci's Field"). Each calendar month, or new page, the number of rabbits grows, from a single rabbit in need of a friend, to a full field. The book is polysemic in nature, offering gaps in meaning for the children to fill, and it has no written narrative to guide the reading pathway (Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen). Rather, each page is filled with images, both a main picture and calendar style grid. Frameworks for the reading of picture books identify the importance of these "gaps" in text. This is, after all, where the construction of meaning happens in the space between text and reader (Arizpe and Styles, Iser).

The children explore the images on each page, taking time to talk about what they see before moving on. Initially they do not seem to pick up the subtleties of meaning in the book (that the growth of rabbits is exponential and that this is a problem). My attempts to gently guide them into this line of thinking ("How many rabbits are there now?") are ignored as the children pore over the detail of the pictures and inner books. However, later on in the story when Alex explains that there are "one then two then three then four

then a trillion rabbits!" they start to predict that the rabbits will leave the field.

Their responses to the text draw on several strategies to make meaning. They make a few attempts to read some of the words using a predominance of phonic skills (this is problematic with "friend" and a prompt is given). However, even without being able to decode all the words that they see, they are able to understand the different genres of text that the book presents. Alex recognizes that the first "flap" is an invitation and works out that the invitation is for friendship: "I'll be his friend!" he declares. Martha recognizes that the format of the "book" itself is, "a thing that you count up to Christmas." "That's a calendar," explains Alex.

We reach the final page: a pop-up delight of rabbits exploding out of the book and "going to all the places in the world" (Martha). We spend several minutes recounting their pleasure as they turn to the final page and re-enact being surprised. "Did you like this book? Could it have been made any better?" I ask. Alex suggests that it would be good to have more big surprise pages, and I challenge him about this: wouldn't that ruin the special ending? "Hmmm, maybe just two pages with pop-ups then," he suggests, quickly continuing, "I like that page more because it's springy… because it's exciting when it [pops up]. There were too many rabbits in the field so they all go squashed and they popped out of the fences!" It only takes a quick glance at Alex's face to confirm his absolute delight in this story conclusion.



We turn to the second of the two picture books. *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems is a more classically organized picture book. The story of a small child losing their toy is far more obviously aligned to the experiences of a young audience, and the book has a clear written linear narrative pathway, with the illustrations serving to work with the written word to support the construction of meaning. Alex tells me that he likes the illustrations which are unusual in that they consist of black and white photographic scenes populated with colorful cartoon characters. "Tell me what you think this story is about?" I invite as we examine the front cover. Alex quickly predicts that this will be a story where the bunny gets lost:

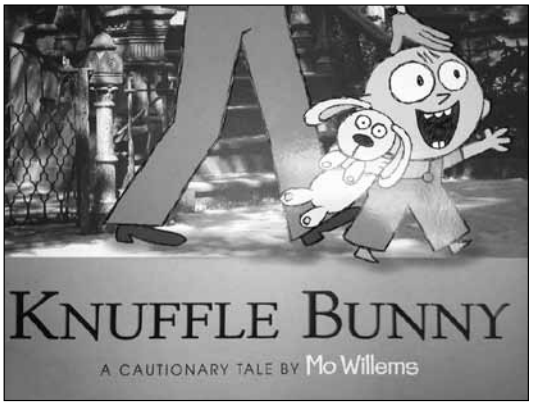
FM: Tell me why you think that?
A: Because he's opening his mouth and smiling and I think that's because he found it.

As we start to read the story, Alex takes a more dominant role, looking closely at the pictures and informing me that the photograph of a park is the same one as in the film *Elf*. He is correct; both depict a New York scene of Central Park. Alex is making connections to what he has experienced in other narratives; the photo (while black and white) leads him to link to a film. We move through the story and Martha notices that the pictures show the bunny getting left in a washing machine, clearly demonstrating her ability to draw on all sources of potential meaning whether in words or pictures. One of the jokes in the books is that Trixie cannot let her father know she has lost her bunny because she cannot speak. I try to explore this with Alex and Martha:

FM: Why doesn't Trixie just say "I've lost my bunny"?
M: I think that because she's a baby.
FM: Have you ever lost your toys? [trying to get them to empathize]
A: I left my superman in the park.
FM: [trying to explore the issue of language] What did you say?
A: [looks at me with wry amusement] I said "I've left my superman in the park."

Suitably chastened, I turn my attention to Martha who kindly informs me that when she lost her "special puppet" they retraced their steps until they found it. She uses this knowledge to predict what will happen next, and we carry on reading the story. The final page of the story has Trixie exclaiming "Knuffle Bunny!" when she finds her toy: the first "words" that she ever speaks. This story's climax is largely overlooked by Martha and Alex, who accept her finding of the toy as the story's conclusion. They have enjoyed the book in their own individual ways, constructing their own meanings and not being deterred by the mildly irritating interventions of teacher questioning, however exploratory.

Both of these short interactions with texts demonstrate the sophistication with which these young readers bring their knowledge of the world to their reading. The skills of comprehension (Keene and Zimmerman, Pressley, Pardo) are clearly evident in the reading of a clear cut narrative: they predict, question, make connections, prioritize the importance of events, and use their own schema to understand the story of *Knuffle Bunny*. They are equally not put off by the apparent lack of written narrative in *The Rabbit Problem*, but are happy to explore the pages to make their own meanings. They are aware of genre and bring this knowledge with them to the text. Maine and Waller explore the nature of reading engagement and identify three key dimensions of "reader identity" exploring reader preference and choice; "immersion" in the text through empathy and visualization and "resilience" which relates particularly to the motivation to get through a difficult read. While that research is about the conversations that older readers have about longer texts, these three dimensions are still recognizable in the reading experience of these early readers. They already have clear reader identities which are constructed from their wider experiences of narrative text, including film. They are clear in their preferences and they are able to immerse themselves in the text. Whilst their resilience is guided and managed by me, they are motivated, and knowing both children well, I do know that they would have made any dissatisfaction evident!



This is not a systematically researched study of all early readers. It is culturally specific and hears the voices of just two children talking about books and reading. It does serve though as a reminder that reading instruction is not something to be done to children but that children are the agents of their own reading development and have their own opinions, preferences and style of readership. Sainsbury and Schagen argue that central to a definition of positive attitudes in reading is "the idea of intrinsic motivation in the form of a positive self-concept as a reader, a desire and tendency to read and a reported enjoyment of or interest in reading" (374). Alex and Martha, in engaging with the act

of reading, display such positive attitudes. Worryingly, however, this is at odds with their definitions of reading which would seem to underpin more negative attitudes, that reading is not something to be owned but practiced. They also equate reading with knowing the words and letters. A "balanced approach" (Dombey) would promote not only the skills of decoding, and those of comprehension but be one that provides stimulation for immersion, resilience and ownership. It is an approach which celebrates reading for pleasure "related to the human need to make sense of the world, the desire to understand" (Cremin 174). If the big books from the reading corner do not fit into the book bag, buy a bigger bag!

Acknowledgements:
I am indebted to my experts, Alex and Martha, who so willingly took part in the conversation.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Ahlberg, Janet and Allan Alhberg. *The Jolly Postman or Other People's Letters.* London: Heinemann, 1986. Print.

Gravett, Emily. *The Rabbit Problem*. London: Macmillan Children's Books, 2010. Print.

Willems, Mo. *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale.* London: Walker Books, 2005. Print.

Secondary Sources

Arizpe, Evelyn and Morag Styles. *Children Reading Pictures: Interpreting Visual Texts.* London: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Benton, Michael. "Reader-Response Criticism." *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children"s Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. London: Routledge, 2004. 68-85. Print.

Cremin, Teresa. "Revisiting Reading for Pleasure: Diversity, Delight, and Desire." *Understanding Phonics and the Teaching of Reading: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Kathy Goouch and Andrew Lambirth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 166-190. Print.

Dombey, Henrietta. *Teaching Reading: What the Evidence Says*. London: United Kingdon Literacy Asssociation, 2010. Print.

Goswami, Usha. "Learning to Read across Languages: The Role of Phonics and Synthetic Phonics." *Understanding Phonics and the Teaching of Reading: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Kathy Goouch and Andrew Lambirth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 124-143. Print.

Goouch, Kathy. "Understanding Educational Discourse." *Understanding Phonics and the Teaching of Reading: Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Kathy Goouch and Andrew Lambirth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 41-58. Print.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. London: John Hopkins Press, 1978. Print.

Keene, Ellin, and Susan Zimmerman. *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop.* Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1997. Print.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London, Routledge, 1996. Print.

Maine, Fiona and Alison Waller. "Swallows and Amazons Forever: How Adults and Children Engage in Reading a Classic Text." *Children"s Literature in Education* 42.4 (2001): 354-371. Print.

OFSTED. *Reading for Pleasure and Purpose: An Evaluation of the Teaching of Reading in Primary Schools*. London: Ofsted, 2004. Print.

Pardo, Laura. "What Every Teacher Needs to Know about Comprehension." *The Reading Teacher* 58.3 (2004): 272-280. Print.

Pressley, Michael. "What should Comprehension Instruction be the Instruction of? In Michael Kamil, Peter Mosenthal, P.David Pearson and Rebecca Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research, Vol. III*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000:545-561. Print.

Sainsbury, Marion and Ian Schagen. "Attitudes to Reading at Ages Nine and Eleven." *Journal of Research in Reading* 27.3 (2004): 373-386. Print.

Spencer, Margaret Meek. "Afterword: Transitional Transformations." *Where Texts and Children Meet*. Ed. Eve Bearne and Victor Watson. London: Routledge, 2000. 198-212. Print.

Twist, Liz, Ian Schagen and Claire Hodgson. *Readers and Reading: The PIRLS 2006 National Report for England.* Slough: NFER, 2006. Print.

In Celia Rees' latest novel, **This is Not Forgiveness**, the author leaves behind her background in the historical novel and brings her writing up to date with a contemporary psychological thriller. Written in first-person triple viewpoint, the book has at its heart the lives of two brothers, Rob and Jamie, and their relationship with an enigmatic teenage girl named Caro. Rees opens the novel with Jamie's account of his older brother's funeral, a fact that imbues the text with a sense of tragic inevitability. As the retrospective narrative moves towards its predestined conclusion, Rees, through convincing dialogue and interior thought, reveals the complex interplay between the three characters. Invalided out of the army after suffering a severe leg injury during his time as a sniper in Afghanistan, Rob is struggling with deep psychological issues alongside his physical injuries. He is a man who is angry with his family and the world, and is portrayed by Rees as the antithesis to the sensitive and thoughtful Jamie. The dynamic between the brothers—one of anger, betrayal and ultimately, fear—is the heart of the narrative. They are both drawn to Caro for different reasons, and she, equally, is attracted to different sides of each of them. But Caro too is damaged. Rees's female character alternates between teenage melodrama and real emotional trauma. This deeply psychological narrative also allows Rees to interrogate wider issues through the actions of her protagonists. Thus complex issues such as the justness of war, the treatment of soldiers, the role of political activism, and the intense anxiety of the teenage years are interrogated through this stylish and thoughtful YA novel.

Karen Williams

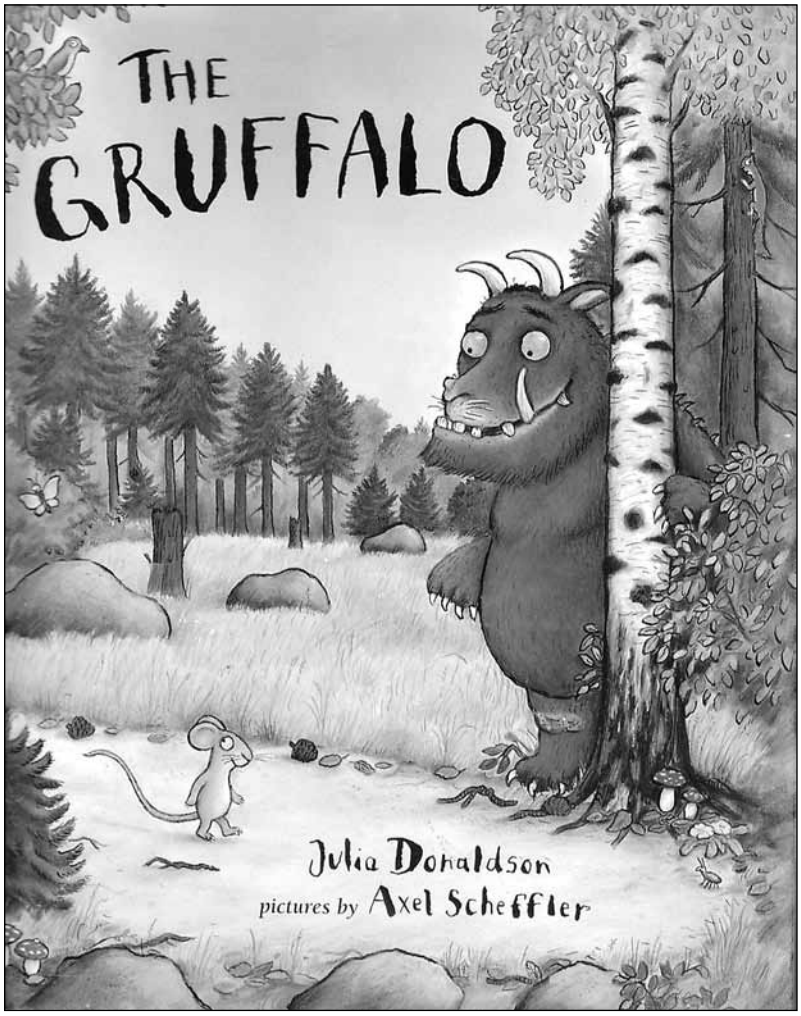
Celia Rees

This is Not Forgiveness

London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
288 p.
ISBN: 1408817691
(YA Novel, 12+)

The Children's Laureate

by JULIA DONALDSON



When I was appointed Children's Laureate in June last year I felt a great sense of honor, but not the kind of honor which is just for basking in. I knew I was in for a busy two years. A large part of my life now consists of dealing with demands and requests. The Laureate is often the first person approached by the media to comment on any story which is relevant to the children's book world. I try to oblige whenever possible, reasoning that if the Laureate post didn't exist perhaps *no one* would be asked to comment and the already small amount of media attention given to children's books and reading would shrink.

Then there are the pleas to support charities, write articles, talk to teachers, judge writing competitions, and so on. Of course it's impossible to do everything, so the answer often has to be a polite No. But even if I say Yes to a small percent, the diary fills up very quickly. It would be all too easy to spend the whole time responding and to leave no time for initiating, which is really the most important part of the job. Every Laureate is expected to launch at least one major project. When I meet groups of children I usually tell them that my job is "to help every child in the country enjoy books and

Julia Donaldson's writing career started when she was a penniless student in Paris, and went busking. Busking led to song-writing, and eventually one of her songs, "A Squash and a Squeeze", was made into a picture book. Since then, her songs *without* tunes—including *The Gruffalo and Room on the Broom*—have won many prizes and regularly top the UK picture-book bestseller charts. In 2011 Julia was appointed Children's Laureate, a role in which she is promoting reading, drama, libraries and stories for the deaf.

reading." I imagine my six predecessors would agree with this aim, but we have all gone about the task in different ways.

I have to confess that I had considered the possibility that I might one day be in this position, mainly because my husband was so keen on the idea and had spent years beating down any resistance I may have had! I had watched and admired what the previous laureates—three novelists, two illustrators and a poet—had done, and was keen that there should be a sense of continuity and that I would seek opportunities to draw public attention to their achievements, for instance, to Michael Rosen's "Poetry Friendly Classroom" website and to Anne Fine's "My Home Library" where children can download book plates designed by illustrators to stick in their second-hand books.

I knew that for me drama and music were going to be important, as my background is one of song-writing, play-writing and performing. And I was determined to champion libraries, which I regard as the greatest reading resource we have. Where else can children access such a range of books for free and participate in events such as toddler Rhyme Time sessions, or the Summer Reading Challenge? Also, I had a special interest in stories for and about deaf children. So I have been trying to keep some of the requests and demands at bay in order to find time for these special interests.

Libraries seemed to be the top priority, with all the cuts and closures being carried out or threatened. I felt that one of the best ways I could support them was by visiting as many as possible. Yes, I have also been writing articles and a poem, as well as lobbying MPs (Ed Vaizey and Ed Miliband), but above all I wanted to celebrate libraries and all the exciting things that go on in them, rather than just constantly moaning. So I decided I would embark on a Shetland to Cornwall library tour, and this is now being planned for the autumn. A tour of Northern Ireland is to follow next spring.

I've been doing quite a few "trial runs" for these tours, visiting libraries in Scotland, England and Wales, and I have devised a blueprint for the sessions, as follows: a class of seven-year-olds is invited well in advance so that they have time to prepare something to perform to me before I share my books with them. I felt that this format would be a good way of combining my library and drama themes, but I had underestimated how enchanted I would be. In Islington I have been treated to songs made up by the class with their music teacher. I have seen children in Norwich recite poems in clear, carrying voices accompanied by joyful gestures. In Newcastle a group acted *The Magic Paintbrush* with the help of Chinese hats and a hobby horse. In Monmouth the children recited a poem in Welsh. I was especially taken with a performance by a class in Essex who incorporated sign language into their rendition of *The Gruffalo*.

I make time in these library sessions to show the children my library card, and to ask them how much they think it costs to borrow a book. Usually someone starts at £5 and we go downwards till they realize the books are free and that they can borrow not just one but ten or even more. Of course, lots of the children do have library tickets already, but I have witnessed a couple of gratifying rushes to the desk for application forms. I'm keen that schools should take children to their local library regularly and issue them all with tickets.

Libraries are not the only places where I've been promoting drama. At last year's Edinburgh Festival I was the "Guest Selector", a post which involved creating five events in which I was to team myself up with other writers or illustrators. One of these events was a two-hour drama workshop for ten-year-olds. I was joined by two other Scotland-based authors, Viv French and Simon Puttock. Each of us supervised a group of children and helped them turn one of our picture books into a play. During the last twenty minutes of the session we invited parents and younger siblings to watch the finished performance. We are planning to repeat the experience, using different books, at this year's festival.

Most children love acting, and when you think about it, role play is something entirely natural, starting with their dolls, teddies and farmyard

animals, and carrying on into their playground games. I can't help feeling that British children sometimes have their love of drama squashed out of them; it tends to be regarded as a form of showing off and therefore something to be frowned on. But in my opinion acting is very good for increasing self-confidence. And for many children, especially those with few books in their homes, playing a part in a story or watching their classmates act can be a route into reading.

Right from the start I was keen to work on some projects to help teachers devise their own class performances, but I wasn't immediately sure what these would be. Now that I'm a third of the way into the job, four such projects are taking shape. One of these is a website with the working title of "Performing Picture Books." This will contain some videos showing different class performances in rehearsal and performance. Among the facilitators on board is the inspiring Pam Wardell. Pam has a background in radio and often gets children to act out stories, making their own sound effects using their voices plus whistles, shakers and a variety of home-made instruments. In this way even a book with very few characters can involve a whole class. The website will contain downloadable resources, such as masks and props, and will suggest ways of dramatizing a number of specific picture books. There will be a forum where teachers can contribute their own tips and experiences. I hope it will be possible to update it regularly with new performances by children, in a similar way to Michael Rosen's "Perform a Poem" website. And there will probably be a section designed to help children write their own plays.

The website should be up and running later this year, at any rate well before World Book Day 2013, for which I have plans! Children already dress up as their favorite fictional characters on World Book Day. I would like to take this a step further and to encourage every school in the country to perform a story. I'm currently in talks with the World Book Day organizers about this plan, and am hoping it will be possible to work in partnership with one or more drama-based organizations.

My third performance project is a poetry anthology. There are already a number of books of poems which are good to read aloud, but my idea is for something a little different. I am collecting poems which can all be recited by more than one voice. Some of them will be dialogue poems, with or without a narrator; others will have a chorus which can be spoken by a whole class and verses which can be divided between different voices; yet others will incorporate actions or perhaps sound effects.

The poetry anthology, performance website and World Book Day "Act-a-Story" plans are about encouraging children to act in an expressive and creative way. These projects aim to increase children's enjoyment of reading, but are not intended to actually *teach* reading. My fourth project is a little different, as it is a way of using drama as a reading tool.

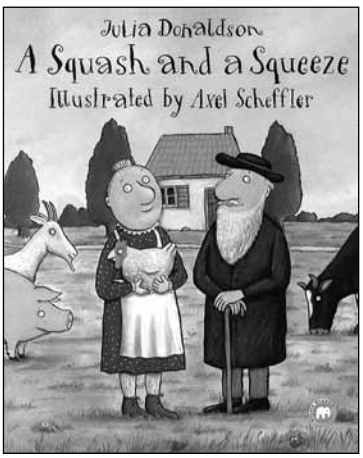
Many years before I was a published writer I volunteered to be a "reading helper" in my oldest son's primary school. I would be given a group of five or six children to take into the unused cookery room. My instructions were to hear each child read in turn, while the others read silently and independently. But that didn't work very well. The reader-aloud was often wooden or embarrassed or both, while the so-called silent readers tended to chat. I racked my brains for a solution and came up with the idea of writing a short sketch each week. The first one I wrote was about Father Christmas, his reindeer, and a monster called a Sockosaurus. I underlined each part in a different color, and for the first read-through cast the most able reader in the most demanding role (in this case Father Christmas). The children then swapped the parts around and read the play again, and we continued to swap roles until every child had read every part. In this way any new vocabulary sank in through repetition, but the role-changing prevented the repetition from becoming boring. Finally I would cast the play definitively and the group would return to the classroom and present a rehearsed reading to their friends.

The children's reading came on in leaps and bounds, and what is more they were reading with

real expression. The experience was tremendously good for their self-confidence, especially when the audience section of the class witnessed a child perhaps regarded as a weak reader giving a strong performance.

I have since written seventeen short plays for educational publishers, but I always dreamed of a whole series of playlets such as the ones I used to write for my son's primary school. And now I am delighted that my dream is to come true. For the past eight months, I have been working with Pearson Education and with several other authors—including the witty Jeanne Willis, the poetic Geraldine McCaughrean, inventive Viv French and the entertaining "two Steves" (Barlow and Skidmore)—on a series of 36 playlets. The books are due out in January of next year, along with some others based on popular picture books which are intended for whole-class performance.

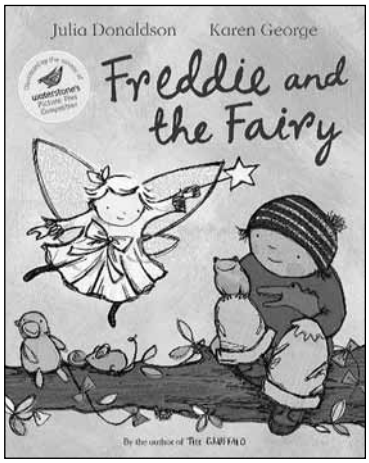
As regards stories for children with hearing problems, this has been a journey of discovery for me. I have always enjoyed watching signed stories, both on websites (such as www.signedstories.com and www.mybslbooks.com) and at live events. I am delighted at book festivals when a signer is allocated to one of my performances, even though I know I will be upstaged, as their gestures and facial expressions are so entertaining. At last year's Edinburgh Book Festival Rachel Mappin was the signer for one of my events, and afterwards she explained to me how she has influenced the way signers are used at that festival. In past years the festival organizers would decide which events should be signed, whereas now there is the option for hearing-impaired people to state which event they would like to attend, and the signers are allocated accordingly. I am now investigating how other major festivals allocate signers, with a view to making the Edinburgh system more widespread.



At the Literary Leicester festival there is always one event hosted by Action Deafness Books, a specialist book store and publisher of British Sign Language resources. Last year I was their guest, performing my stories to an audience including a large number of deaf children, with the help not just of a signer but of a deaf actor inside the Gruffalo costume. I was also approached by a charity called Sign Health to take part in the national Sign2Sing Day. Sign2Sing is an annual event where thousands of people all over the country sign and sing a song simultaneously. I joined a Glasgow school for the occasion and was impressed with how enthusiastically the children (none of whom were hearing-impaired) carried out the signing. The more hearing people understand about signing the less isolated the deaf community is going to be.

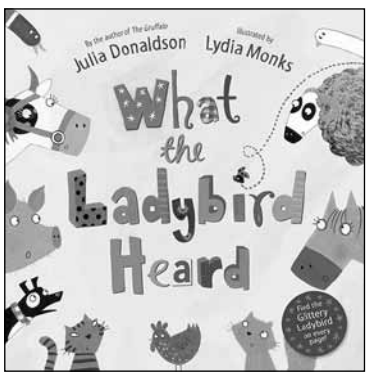
More recently, I was absolutely delighted that the *A Squash and a Squeeze* exhibition at Seven Stories (the children's book museum in Newcastle) featured signing. This wonderful hands-on exhibition is divided into different areas and nooks, one for each book, and the guide is the deaf fairy, Bessie Bell, from my book *Freddie and the Fairy*. Images of Bessie direct viewers around the exhibition, pointing out the screens

where they can either watch whole stories being signed or learn the signs for some of the most important words in a story. As at the Sign2Sing event, I was stuck by how the hearing children loved this; I watched a group get quite carried away trying out the signs for the farmyard animals in *What the Ladybird Heard*. But their enthusiasm was outdone by that of a class of deaf children who came to the exhibition and whose reactions were filmed for "See Hear" (the BBC's magazine program for the deaf community). These children went on to teach me a lot more signs during the storytelling session we shared.



Deaf children also love to encounter deaf characters in books. I have been compiling a list of books about deaf children, and am also keen to encourage illustrators to depict the occasional hearing aid. Nick Sharratt has done this most appealingly in one of our recent collaborations, *Goat Goes to Playgroup*. The monkey in that story sports a very bright and stylish hearing aid. The point is less to show hearing children what hearing aids look like (they might well assume the monkey has an earring) than for deaf children to feel included: in fact I have seen a deaf child point to a hearing aid in a picture and say, "He's like me!"

I am looking forward to taking part in a seminar about deafness in children's books, at the London Book Fair, where the co-panelists include the deaf author Joyce Dunbar, whose books featuring deafness, *Moonbird* and *Mundo and the Weather Child,* I admire. It's always good to link up with people doing similar work. I recently enjoyed meeting the Irish Children's Laureate, Siobhan Parkinson, in Dublin where I was her guest and in Derry where she was mine, and I have also shared an event with the Welsh-speaking Children's Poet Laureate Eurig Salisbury and the Young People's Laureate for Wales, Catherine Fisher. There is no Children's Laureate in Germany, but on a tour there, while performing the stories in German, I got to know several people working with children: an actress, an illustrator, a drama worker and a teacher who organizes cultural exchanges with many European countries. If my ever-enthusiastic husband gets his way we will soon be learning the stories in French and Italian and doubtless forging new links in those countries.



Meeting and listening to other people is an experience which has something in common with reading: that illuminating entry into other minds. And that brings me back to the core of the Laureate role: helping children to enter into stories and discover the pleasure of reading. I will end up with a poem which I hope expresses this pleasure better than I could do in a final prose paragraph:

I opened a book and in I strode.
Now nobody can find me.
I've left my chair, my house, my road,
My town and my world behind me.

I'm wearing the cloak, I've slipped on the ring,
I've swallowed the magic potion.
I've fought with a dragon, dined with a king
And swum in a bottomless ocean.

I opened a book and made some friends.
I shared their tears and laughter
And followed their road with its bumps and bends
To the happily ever after.

I finished my book and out I came.
The cloak can no longer hide me.
My chair and my house are just the same,
But I have a book inside me.

Since her first book, **Girl, Missing** (2006), was published, Sophie McKenzie has become one of the most popular UK writers of thrillers for young teenagers. Seventeen novels later, this book returns to the original characters of her multi-award-winning debut, in which fourteen-year-old Lauren uncovered the secrets of her past. Two years on, Lauren has to confront the abduction of her younger sister in circumstances that mirror her own kidnapping as a small child. From the revelation of a family tragedy to the tense and unexpectedly tragic ending, **Sister, Missing** provides a roller-coaster ride of suspense, told in McKenzie's readable style short sentences, filmic set-piece scenes and multiple plot twists. McKenzie grounds this extraordinary story in a very ordinary life. Irritated by her parents, resenting her sister, anxious about her boyfriend's reactions, Lauren, the somewhat unreliable narrator, is a realistically flawed teenage hero, stubborn, headstrong, and often selfish, who nevertheless begins to emerge from solipsism as a consequence of her experiences. **Sister, Missing** is characteristic of McKenzie's work in placing both a female and male protagonist at the center of events, as well as utilizing topical themes to engage a wide range of readers. The unresolved questions concealed hint at another possible sequel, but, for now, this book provides an engrossing read for teenage suspense fans.

Kay Waddilove

Sophie McKenzie

Sister, Missing.

London, England: Simon and Schuster, UK 2011.
256 p.
ISBN: 0857072889
(YA Novel, 14+)

What a Performance: The Lively Work of Julia Donaldson

by MANDY WHEATLEY

Audience participation is central to Julia Donaldson's approach to writing for children. So I make no apologies for opening this letter on her work with the viewpoint of a child in that audience. Take, for instance, Hannah Yeadon, who lives in the north of England and is very nearly three years old. Her latest library book is Julia Donaldson's picturebook *The Highway Rat*. This tale of a wicked robber rat is inspired by the classic Alfred Noyes poem *The Highwayman*. Hannah doesn't know that. But she does know the type of book that she likes. *The Highway Rat,* with its enticing cover, fits the bill. Listening to the book being read aloud is a noisy business involving dramatic gestures, expressions of disbelief and quite a few giggles. As the story unfolds, Hannah rocks to its rhyming beat. By the third reading, she is joining in with the Highway Rat's refrain:

> Give me your buns and your biscuits!
> Give me your chocolate éclairs!
> For I am the Rat of the Highway
> The Highway—The Highway—
> Yes, I am the Rat of the Highway,
> And the Rat Thief never shares.

The experience of reading *The Highway Rat* draws the reader into a lively world, where a large helping of the wonderfully ridiculous is tempered by an underlying message about sharing. All delivered in memorable rhyme with closely matched illustration. When Hannah grows older, if she reads Noyes's *The Highwayman,* it is tempting to wonder whether the rhyme in her head will be that of Donaldson's Rat Thief.

Donaldson's picturebooks invite participation and her personal history has always involved performance. As a child in London she recalls her father's fifth birthday gift of *The Book of a Thousand Poems* as the stimulus for a lifelong love of poetry. While growing up, she regularly wrote shows for herself and her younger sister to act out. Her enjoyment of acting led to a degree in Drama and French at Bristol University, where she met her husband. Donaldson wrote songs for them to play and they went busking together. She used this experience to start a career in song writing for children's television and became expert in writing on request, on subjects ranging from pet animals to awful smells through "throwing crumpled up wrapping paper into the bin" (Donaldson).

The move to writing books came when one of her television songs, *A Squash and a Squeeze,* was published in picturebook form with illustrations by Axel Scheffler. A *Squash and a Squeeze* is a variant of a Jewish folktale, in which an old lady (who complains that her house is too small) takes the advice of a wise old man. His suggestion causes increasing chaos, squashing and squeezing,

Mandy Wheatley is a librarian with Plymouth City Council's Library Service. Previously she has worked as a school librarian and for Schools' Library Services in several parts of the U.K. She is a graduate of Sheffield University and she completed the University of Roehampton's M.A. in Children's Literature in 2011.

before a happy solution is found. This book was the start of a partnership between Donaldson and Scheffler that has produced a series of distinctive rhyming stories, combining her words with his illustrations. Donaldson has also written picturebooks with a range of other prominent illustrators, including Nick Sharratt, Emily Gravett and Lydia Monks.

Traditional tales regularly provide the inspiration for Donaldson and in 1999, she reworked an idea about a tiger, inspired by Chinese folklore. The tiger evolved into another, purely imaginary, creature when Donaldson had difficulty finding effective rhymes for "tiger." This was the rather down-to-earth starting point for one of her most well-loved creations: the Gruffalo, star of *The Gruffalo* and *The Gruffalo's Child*. In *The Gruffalo,* a tiny mouse uses the excitingly scary Gruffalo to outwit its predators during a journey through the quintessential fairy tale territory of a deep dark wood. Donaldson's illustrator, Axel Scheffler, had the good sense to realize that the Gruffalo should look "frightening, but not *too* frightening" (37). So while Donaldson's description of the creature (including terrible claws, prickly back and poisonous wart) are present in his drawings, there is also a clumsy tenderness to the character to help defuse potential fears among preschool audiences.

The Gruffalo showcases Donaldson's skill in writing picturebooks that are performance art, and it has since been produced as a successful film and as a play. In the book, she uses asides to involve the reader in the action, while the central page features a dramatic pause in sound and space when the mouse hesitates mid-word. At this point, a page turn is needed to reveal the Gruffalo for the first time. That pause calls for a theatrical response from the narrator. Donaldson's picturebooks demand shared exploratory, participatory involvement from their audience. It comes as no surprise that a number of her picturebooks have won the Spoken Book Award for Best Children's Audio (*The Gruffalo* and *The Smartest Giant in Town)* and the Blue Peter Prize for the Best Book to Read Aloud (*The Snail and the Whale* and *The Gruffalo)*.

From her starting point in picturebooks, Donaldson extended her range, writing poetry collections, plays, songs and fiction for older children. Her poetry generates the same lively response as her picturebooks. *Wriggle and Roar* is ideal Donaldson territory in that it is a collection of action rhymes, where the poems provide the opportunity for nursery aged children to experiment with sounds and word play while using up some of their abundant energy.

Donaldson's enjoyment of word play extends to her fiction for older children. One early reading title, *The Wrong Kind of Bark*, features a boy who keeps bringing the wrong things to school for the nature table, culminating in bringing a puppy as an example of "bark"! More recently, Donaldson has produced her first novel for teenagers: *Running on the Cracks* . This moving thriller won the Nasen Inclusive Children's Book Award for its positive portrayal of disability issues.

Donaldson has produced over 120 titles for young people and is one of the most borrowed authors from public libraries in the U.K. Her contribution to children's literature was marked by her appointment as Britain's Children's Laureate for 2011 to 2013. She intends to bring her experience in performance to the role with projects that explore the links between books, drama and music. Her time as Laureate is likely to attract an even wider audience to her stories, but behind the publicity is a very personal appeal.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Donaldson, Julia. *Crazy Mayonnaisy Mum*, London: Macmillan, 2004. Print.
—. *The Gruffalo,* London: Macmillan, 1999. Print.
—. *The Gruffalo's Child*, London: Macmillan, 2004. Print.
—. *The Highway Rat*, London: Alison Green Books, 2011. Print.
—. *Running on the Cracks,* London: Egmont, 2009. Print.
—. *The Smartest Giant in Town*, London: Macmillan, 2002. Print.
—. *The Snail and the Whale*, London: Macmillan, 2003. Print.
—. *A Squash and a Squeeze,* London: Macmillan, 1993. Print.
—. *Wriggle and Roar,* London: Macmillan, 2004. Print.
—. *The Wrong Kind of Bark,* London: Egmont, 2004. Print.

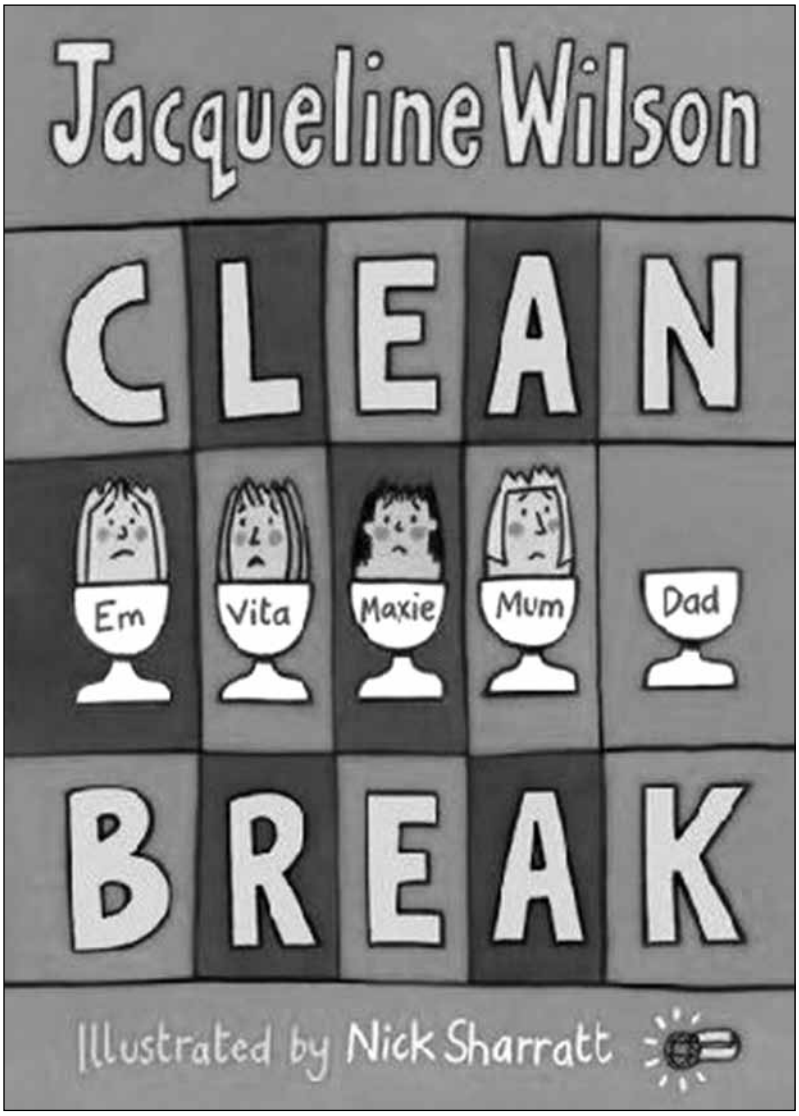
Secondary Sources

Donaldson, J. "About Me." Web. 13 April 2011.
Lovell, Rebecca. "A Gruffalo Should Look Frightening but Cute." *The Guardian* 10 June 2009. Web. 13 April 2011.
MacBain, J. Murray, ed. *The Book of a Thousand Poems.* London: Evans, 1942. Print.
Noyes, Alfred. "The Highwayman." *Blackwood's Magazine* August 1906. Print.

"So good, it's exhilarating": The Jacqueline Wilson Phenomenon

by KAY WADDILOVE

Kay Waddilove is Head of Learning Resources at a large London comprehensive school, and obtained a Master's degree in Children's Literature from the University of Roehampton in 2008. She is interested in both the practical and theoretical aspects of literature for young people and has published articles in the *Journal of Children's Literature, IBBYLink* and *Bookbird*. Her previous research has focused on gender issues in children's texts, particularly as these relate to representations of family life and the position of women in society. She is currently researching for a PhD in Children's Literature.



When I ask classes of 11-year- olds about their favourite authors, Jacqueline Wilson's name invariably tops the list. Since 1991 when *The Story of Tracy Beaker* was published, Wilson's popularity has steadily increased and in the twenty-first century she has become the most widely-read author by girls between the ages of 8 and 14 years, both in Britain and elsewhere. She has written more than 100 books, of which over 30 million copies have been sold in the UK alone, and her work is translated into 34 different languages. She was the most borrowed author from libraries in the last decade, and in the BBC's 2003 *The Big Read* poll, four of her titles were voted into the top 100 most popular books in Britain. Thirteen of her books have been adapted as plays for theatre or television since 2002 and *Tracy Beaker* is an ongoing television series. Marketing spin-offs, such as pencil cases, duvet covers, lampshades, diaries, continue to proliferate, and book-signings are a major media event; she is, in the words of the *Independent* newspaper, a "literary superstar."

Moreover Wilson's achievement is not measured merely by popularity; since 2000, she has won many independently judged awards, including the Smarties Prize, British Book Awards Book of the Year (twice), Guardian Children's Fiction Award, and Whitbread Children's Book of the Year. In 2002 she was awarded an OBE for services to literacy in schools; she was the UK's fourth Children's Laureate from 2005 to 2007; and in 2008 she became a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the first children's author to be so honoured. She holds "this handful of honorary doctorates" in recognition of her services in and on behalf of children's literature, and the quality of her work is acknowledged by peers as well as fans.[1] In the words of Philip Pullman, her writing is "So good, it's exhilarating."

Ultimately, however, it is the readers who sustain the Wilson phenomenon, ensuring that she remains second only to her friend J.K. Rowling in the book-sales stakes. The bases of Wilson's appeal are her accessibility, which is linked to her narrative voice, her use of humour, her depiction of ordinary lives, and her determination to tackle issues that children care about. All her books published since the millennium are written in the first person voice of a child narrator, usually the central character. The voice is childlike without being childish and dispenses with any adult reflection, and, in particular, a moralising stance, that would limit the impact of the stories. This subject position of "childness" (Hollindale) ensures that Wilson writes from a simple, yet subtle juvenile point of view which is largely non-judgemental and encourages reader identification. Furthermore, Wilson's narrators, whatever their problems, tend to be creative writers (*Clean Break*), storytellers (*Hetty Feather*), and artists (*Cookie*). They offer aspirational positions for the reader and, since these talents frequently contribute to an ultimate solution to their problems, empowerment for both protagonist and reader.

Wilson's use of humor, alongside the realism, is a hallmark of her writing, whether it is a character's determination to tell jokes (*The Bed and Breakfast Star*), or, more usually, finding comedy within the situation—wearing the wrong frilly dress to a party (*The Worst Thing about my Sister*), or harbouring absurd fantasies about an absent parent (*The Dare Game*). Her deliberate use of "humour as a way of coping with sad things" is an important aspect of her appeal, as the many online reviews from readers attest.

Her realistic settings and eye for the detail of children's ordinary lives enables her readers to "cognitively map" (Jameson 347) their social world, even if the circumstances depicted are outside their personal experience. In today's media-dominated society, children are well aware of the plight of others when families fracture; issues such as domestic violence, neglectful or absent parents, bereavement and serious illness (all depicted in Wilson's work), are common currency. Exploring such social conundrums through story can offer comfort, and Wilson's empathy with her readers, as well as ensuring popularity, enables her "to help to gently open their minds", to such problems, and, if they are affected

directly, to "hold out a metaphorical hand…and reflect the situations, anxieties and issues they're facing in an imaginative way."

It is, of course, the "situations" in her books that have made Wilson one of the most controversial, as well as popular, authors of the twenty-first century. In addition to the issues mentioned above, she has tackled anorexia (*Girls out Late*), pupil-teacher romance (*Love Lessons*), internet paedophilia (*Girls in Tears*), mental illness (*The Illustrated Mum*), abandonment (*Dustbin Baby*), emotional abuse (*Cookie*) and breast cancer (*Lola Rose*), amongst others. The occasionally vituperative media response to her writing tends to ignore the range of her books and their intended readership. Since the turning-point publication of her forty-first book, *The Story of Tracy Beaker*, which also marked the beginning of her successful partnership with illustrator Nick Sharratt and the creation of a distinctive Wilson "brand," she has written for three defined age groups; 7-9 years, 9-11 years and 12+ teenage readers. It is the books written for the middle age-range, usually with a ten—or eleven year-old protagonist, which have caused most of the negative comment, from a predictable *Daily Mail* diatribe, "Children's writers are hugely to blame for loss of innocence" (2008) to politician Ann Widdecombe's criticism of one of Wilson's most acclaimed works (*The Illustrated Mum*) on the basis that the sisters have two different fathers.[2] Wilson, "a girl for gritty realism," has asserted that her job is "not just to write about what I think will interest children, but to touch on tricky subjects they may have to confront in their lives."

The renowned children's literature commentator, Julia Eccleshare, believes that adult disapproval of Wilson is rooted in unwillingness to accept that childhood isn't necessarily ideal and the need to see a comforting image of childhood in children's books. Judging from Wilson's success, this is evidently not what children want; her readers undoubtedly relish her social realism, because "children do like to read lots of things that have a very strong emotional content. They like to be caught up in things as much as adults do." Moreover Wilson is extremely careful to "resolve situations in a positive way" and her stories of survival in adversity are ultimately balanced with luck, hope and an affirmation of the varied kinds of love that can sustain familial bonds in the most difficult of circumstances.

This empathetic understanding raises Wilson above the ranks of lesser 'issue' writers, and her influence has been crucial in maintaining social realism as a viable genre. Despite the colloquial simplicity of her style, the construction of the books is sophisticated, utilising modernist and post-modernist conventions such as alternative voices (*Little Darlings*, *Secrets*) and unreliable narrators (*Starring Tracy Beaker*) in ways that will habituate readers to literary complexities; Tracy's poignantly unreliable diary, for instance, is counterpointed with her actual reality in Nick Sharratt's illustrations. Wilson also employs metafictive devices to humorous effect; such as the characterisation of Nicola Sharpe, graphic children's book illustrator in *Girls in Tears*, or Em's hero-worship of popular author Jenna Williams in *Clean Break*, whose familiar-sounding plotlines offer any Wilson fan a delightful insider experience identifying the originals; familiarity with such literary techniques will tend to recruit less experienced readers into membership of the 'reading club'. The reader is also likely to become aware that the concerns expressed by Mrs Marks, Em's teacher, "You girls and your Jenna Williams books… Isn't it time you branched out and read something else" (2005:175) may well be echoed by her own parents or teachers. Yet, as Wilson has credited Enid Blyton as the childhood author who "got me reading fluently", there is no question that she herself, while a far more subtle and self-aware writer, has a similar influence on many previously less-than-committed 21st century readers: "I usally (*sic*) don't like reading but *Dustbin Baby* was awesome" is a typical online comment. This, to Wilson, is "the most worthwhile thing of all" and she encourages the further reading development of her fans with cunning product-placement of her own childhood favourites within her texts; Alcott, Nesbit and Burnett make frequent appearances.

Ultimately Wilson's work can be interpreted as modern bildungsroman; growing up through her

characters, readers are empowered by "the story's enchantment" which clearly offers them "rich personal meaning [as they] deal with different problems" (Bettelheim, 17-18). The accolade of a year-long exhibition at Seven Stories, which explores in depth her work and life, affirms her importance in 21st century British children's literature.[3] She has demonstrated par excellence that popular literature can address fundamental aspects of society while offering both entertainment and challenge to young readers in their search for identity; doing this, moreover, by means of what an *Independent* newspaper reviewer describes as "a compelling mix of gritty realism and warmth, where the chaos is largely redeemed by love."

Notes:

1. All unattributed quotations in this letter are Jacqueline Wilson's own words, sourced from newspaper articles or online interviews.
2. "These themes should not be promoted for children." (Widdecombe, 2004). It was allegedly as a response to this comment that Wilson decided to write *The Diamond Girls*, depicting a family with five siblings who have five different fathers.
3. The National UK Centre for Children's Books. *Daydreams and Diaries: The Story of Jacqueline Wilson* will run until October 2012.

Works Cited:

Children's Books

Wilson, Jacqueline. *The Bed and Breakfast Star*. London: Doubleday, 1994. Print.

—. *Clean Break*. London: Doubleday, 2005. Print.

—. *Cookie*. London: Doubleday, 2008. Print.

—. *The Dare Game*, London: Doubleday, 2000. Print.

—. *Dustbin Baby*. London: Doubleday, 2001. Print.

—. *Girls in Tears*. London: Doubleday, 2002. Print.

—. *Girls out Late*. London: Doubleday, 1999. Print.

—. *Hetty Feather*. London: Doubleday, 2009. Print.

—. *The Illustrated Mum*. London: Doubleday, 1999. Print.

—. *Little Darlings*. London: Doubleday, 2010. Print.

—. *Lola Rose*. London: Doubleday, 2003. Print.

—. *Love Lessons*. London: Doubleday, 2005.

—. *Secrets*. London: Doubleday, 2002. Print.

—. *The Story of Tracy Beaker*. London: Doubleday, 1991. Print.

—. *The Worst Thing about my Sister*. London: Doubleday, 2012. Print.

Secondary Sources

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, London: Penguin Books, 1976. Print.

Eccleshare, Julia. *The Essay: Happily Ever After*. BBC Radio 3: 9 February 2012. Radio.

Hollindale, Peter. *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*. Stroud: Thimble Press, 1997. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. "Cognitive Mapping." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Nelson and Grossberg. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988. Print.

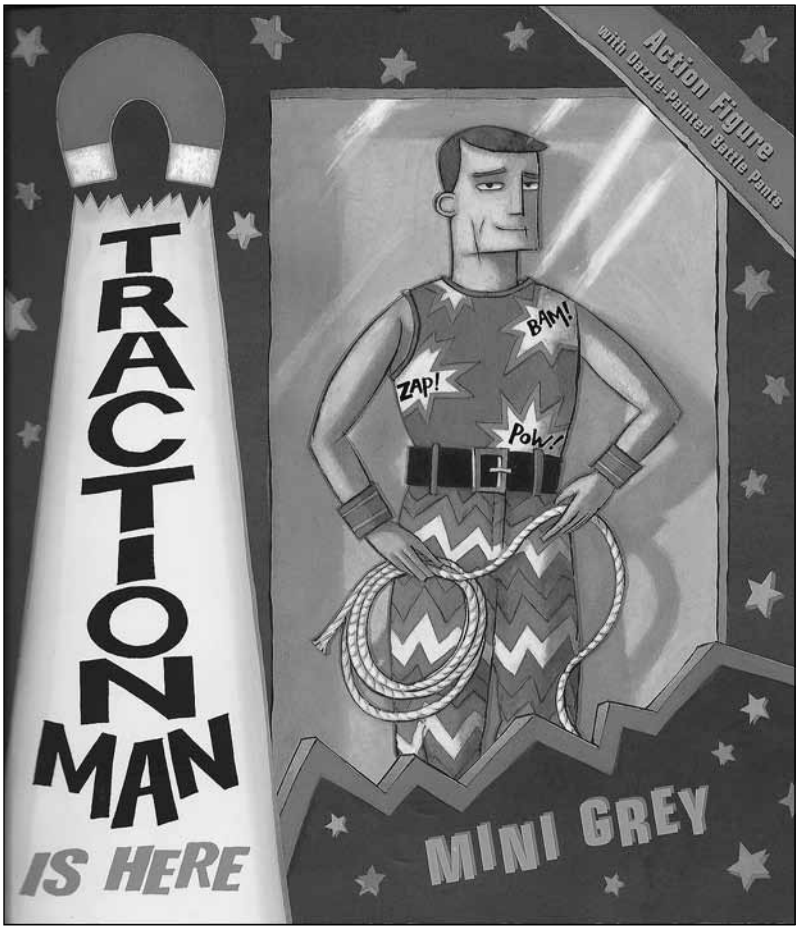
Robinson, Winnifred. "The Hypocritical Ms Wilson: Why Children's Writers Are Hugely to Blame for Loss of Innocence." *Daily Mail* 4 March 2008. Print.

Widdecombe, Ann. "Tory Slates Illustrated Mum." ACHOCKABLOG. Web. 18 March 2012.

Mini Grey is Here!

by SARAH STOKES

Sarah Stokes began her career in education 19 years ago, and has taught in a number of primary schools across London and the South East of England. She left teaching in 2004 to become a freelance Education Consultant. She has recently returned to teaching and has four young children. Sarah recently completed her MA in Children's Literature at the University of Roehampton, London. Her research interests include the narrative dynamic of children's picture books, young readers' negotiation of controversial subject matter, wordless texts, and reader response theory to metafictive texts.



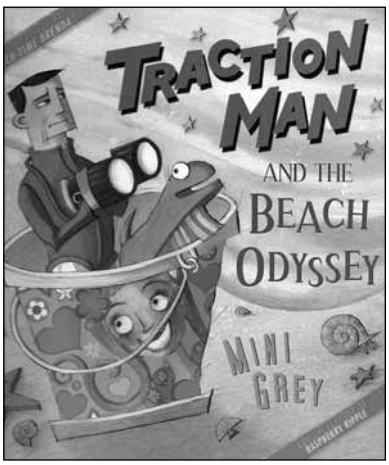
A cluster of plastic farm animals huddles nervously, trapped between two enormous pillow villains on a vast duvet-covered landscape. The pillows are menacing in their demeanour, their fluffy softness barely masking their maniacal plans for the terrified toys. Help is most decisively at hand in the pleasing form of Traction Man, hardly out of his shiny new packaging, discarded eagerly on the previous page, and now flying to the rescue of the defenceless cattle in a vivid red star-encrusted spaceship, creatively rustled up from his boy's trainer; footwear once, now a vehicle for daring rescue and intrepid adventure. So begins the first of many daring encounters to be faced by Traction Man, the eponymous superhero toy of this series of books by Mini Grey.

Grey's *Traction Man* series presents an insightful parody of the highly gendered characterisations of plastic toys such as Action Man and Barbie. The strength of Grey's satirical appraisal of such toys and their significance in a young child's narrative world lies in her affectionate portrayal of gendered fantasy play, although that portrayal sometimes re-entrenches the very gender stereotypes under attack. Through witty narrative and dynamic, comic strip style illustration, *Traction Man is Here* (2005), *Traction Man Meets Turbodog* (2008),

and *Traction Man and the Beach Odyssey* (2011) introduce the reader to a small boy's domestic world and the central role his favourite toy—Traction Man—plays in building imaginative adventures.

In *Traction Man is Here*, shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal, the boy turns mundane tasks, such as doing the washing up or having a bath, into imaginative realms for fantasy, where the only limitations placed on his play are practical ones. Traction Man has a "Sub-Aqua Suit, Fluorescent Flippers and Infra-Red Mask" as part of his accessory wardrobe, and is soon seen diving into the murky depths of the washing up bowl, surrounded by the debris and detritus from a family breakfast. Unbeknown to him, as he swims through the water, a dirty dishcloth is looming overhead. Another confrontation ensues, with Traction Man only barely escaping in time. This skirmish is resolved with the help of a "brave little scrubbing brush," depicted as a dog-like creature, only too happy to help. Scrubbing Brush now becomes Traction Man's loyal sidekick for the two storybooks which follow.

In this first book in the series, Grey establishes an interest in challenging and rewriting gendered signifiers, albeit within a fairly safe and conventional world where masculinity must be protected. On a family trip to see Granny, the boy is given an extra Christmas present for Traction Man. To both the boy's and Traction Man's dismay, when they unwrap the gift, they discover an "all-in-one knitted green romper suit and matching bonnet." This presents an interesting juxtaposition of gendered roles and signifiers. A green knitted romper suit effectively destroys the action figure's combative integrity. The boy is faced with a dilemma. While they remain at Granny's house, Traction Man needs to keep wearing his romper suit in order not to hurt her feelings. This creates enormous problems for the fantasy play, especially as he no longer looks like a superhero and now seems reluctant even to behave like one. In order to resolve this dilemma, Grey has Scrubbing Brush step in to save a drawer of spoons in mortal danger. Scrubbing Brush inherits all the attributes of a daring hero, using a loose thread from Traction Man's romper suit to abseil down the sideboard and tie the spoons to the liberated woollen strands. Traction Man regains his composure and helps by hoisting the spoons to safety. Muscles, teamwork and heroic flair triumph, but Grey ensures that the previously ridiculed and feminised knitted outfit also has an important function in the successful resolution of the adventure.



Grey plays with conventional symbols of femininity in different ways in her series. "The Dollies" appear in all three books, often in a desperate position of vulnerability. In the first two books, the same three dolls appear—a blond, a brunette and a black doll—all naked and all with the same vacuous expression in their oversized eyes. Grey draws her inspiration here from the physical differences between dolls manufactured for girls and those for boys; fascinating in their cultural perception of gender difference. Where male action figures can stand

alone, grip weapons, move their eyes, and bend their arm, leg and hip joints, female figures are far more limited in movement. The capability of female dolls is severely hampered by their allotted function as indulgent playthings.

The girl dolls reappear in Traction Man's third outing, *Traction Man and the Beach Odyssey*. However, in this book it is clear that, far from being the vacuous incapacitated females they might seem, these dolls are graced with intelligence. "Beach Time Brenda" makes her first appearance in this story, as Traction Man, his boy and the ever loyal Scrubbing Brush head off to the seaside for a family holiday. Brenda belongs to a little girl whose family are also visiting the beach and arrives, complete with her own bewildering array of dazzling accessories. Unusually, Traction Man and Scrubbing Brush find themselves in the position of captives, as their boy temporarily loses sight of them. As the sandcastle where they are prisoners crumbles around them, the dolls have to think and act fast. Wonderfully, it is the action of Brenda that saves them, with her quick thinking problem-solving skills providing them all with the means to escape. "Here, Traction Man, let's deflect the rubble using this flip flop," she suggests, while another doll grabs Scrubbing Brush and carries him to safety. The following page sees the newly formed team of dolls digging their way through the sand in search of the Centre of the Earth. The girl dolls' role is no longer subservient or static. They may have had to borrow safety accessories from Traction Man, but their hands are gripping their shovels and pickaxes firmly and there is an indisputable air of gender equality about the task in hand. In one afternoon at the beach, the boy's fantasy play has been made satisfying and enriching through engagement with a female child.

Mini Grey's other award-winning work includes original stories *Egg Drop*, *Biscuit Bear*, and *Three by the Sea*, subversive retellings, such as *The Pea and the Princess* and *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*, and illustrations of classics, such as Hilaire Belloc's *Jim*. Her *Traction Man* series provides readers with an affectionate portrayal of how repetitive fantasy play develops as a young child embarks on a process of maturation and self-realisation. The boy's fantasy world centres on his favourite action hero, but he allows it to be influenced by many external factors along the way. Everyday objects, the unknown realm of girl dolls, external impositions from the adult world and, ultimately, his own language development all shape his ability to construct a fantasy world that is at once pleasurable and challenging.

Works cited:

Children's Books

Grey, Mini. *The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon*. London: Red Fox Picture Books, 2006. Print.

—. *Biscuit Bear* London: Red Fox Picture Books, 2004. Print.

—. *Egg Drop*. London: Red Fox Picture Books, 2002. Print.

—. *The Pea and the Princess*. London: Red Fox Picture Books, 2003. Print.

—. *Three by the Sea*. London: Red Fox Picture Books, 2011. Print.

—. *Traction Man and the Beach Odyssey*, London: Jonathon Cape, 2011. Print.

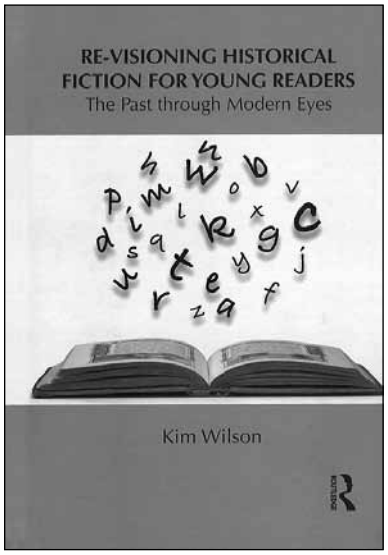
—. *Traction Man is Here*, London: Red Fox, 2005. Print.

—. *Traction Man Meets Turbodog*, London: Red Fox, 2008. Print.

Grey, Mini and Hilaire Belloc. *Jim*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2010. Print.

Re-Visioning Historical Fiction for Young Readers: The Past Through Modern Eyes. By Kim Wilson. (Series: Children's Literature and Culture). New York and London: Routledge, 2011. xv + 209 p.

This book examines the ideological implications of a range of English language children's historical fiction published within the last thirty years, particularly focusing on the way that present ideological concerns shape the past that we present to children. Largely confining her discussion to work published within the last thirty years or so, to English language texts and to work published in Australia, Kim Wilson looks at a different aspect of her subject in each of her six chapters.

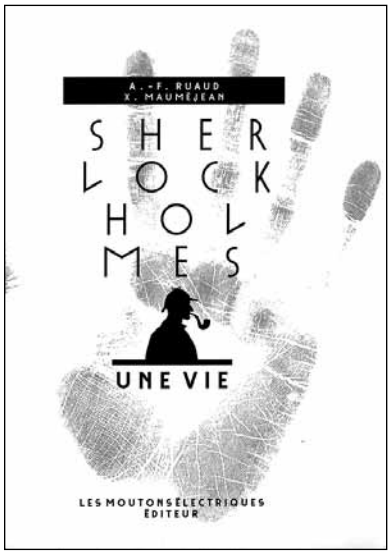


In her first chapter, Wilson proposes a new term, "Living History Fiction," to refer to books whose modern protagonists are brought into direct contact with the past, either physically or psychically. More inclusive than "Time Slip," which she places as a sub-genre of her new category, Living History Fiction also includes the appearance of ghosts and intimations of parallel lives in the past. In these works, despite their intention to immerse their protagonists and readers in the life of the past, Wilson detects a common concern with the past as an agent in the development of its young protagonists' identity in the present.

Wilson's next two chapters examine a group of novels about the life of Joan of Arc and the more general, but related, issue of the portrayal of female agency in historical fiction. In both cases, she discovers that "anachronistic ideologies" are superimposed on historical representations, and that the demands of modern feminism have distorted the perception and portrayal of women's lives in the past. Her final three chapters show how children's historical fiction reflects and shapes notions of national identity. She looks at the series of books in the form of historical journals published by Scholastic about ten years ago and finds, in titles that describe settler lives in Canada, Australia and the U.S.A., a reinforcement of notions of each nation's core values and its character. Her final two chapters focus on Australia, revealing the part that children's historical fiction has played in constructing national identity from memories of twentieth century conflicts and its role in the contemporary debate over immigration policy and the nature of multiculturalism in Australia.

This is an important book. Wilson is deeply critical of her subject, gathering support from scholars who find historical fiction inadequate as either literature or history, and she implicitly worries about the way it might shape the attitudes of young readers. Yet her consideration of children's historical fiction as a wider cultural phenomenon reveals its relationship to contemporary social and political developments in a way that no previous scholarship has. Other members of IBBY, surely a humanist organisation in origin and philosophy, may bridle, as I do, at Wilson's sporadic reductionist, and implicitly pejorative, references to misguided "humanistic" notions of "positive progression."

Clive Barnes, Chair of IBBY UK



Sherlock Holmes: une vie [Sherlock Holmes: a life]. André-François Ruaud, Xavier Mauméjean. Lyon: Les Moutons électriques, 2011. (Series: La bibliothèque rouge, n° 20). 523 pages.

"La bibliothèque rouge" [the red library] series celebrates the great figures of popular literature. Each volume is a character's biography, conceived as if the character was a real human being. Researchers draw on the authors' original texts to highlight this life. The editors have decided to renew the series to mark its sixth anniversary.

André-François and Xavier Ruaud Mauméjean had previously co-authored a biography of Sherlock Holmes, *Les nombreuses vies de Sherlock Holmes* [The many lives of Sherlock Holmes], published in 2005 as the second title in this series. In 2011, they decided to return to the character and carry out a more thorough biography, attempting to reach the man behind the legend. In order to achieve their goal, they used the established canon of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which consists of four novels and fifty-six short stories published between 1887 and 1930. But to further detail their research, they expanded their study to additional texts published by Adrian Conan Doyle[1] and Maurice Leblanc[1] as well as texts written by the original author but not included in the canon.

The chapters cover minutely the imagined life of Sherlock Holmes in chronological order. His parents, his brother (Mycroft), his childhood, his adolescence are reviewed. Then comes the meeting with Dr. Watson, followed by a description of the years they lived in Baker Street. The separation years and the consequent return to Baker Street are also mentioned. Finally, the last years of the detective's life are fully documented. This biography, illustrated by a rich iconography (posters, drawings, photographs) includes a bibliography and texts that pay tribute to the character. The authors have managed to bring out the man behind the legend, a man with his flaws and his qualities, a truly human character, depicted with such strength and power that some readers might be led to believe that Sherlock Holmes really existed.

This acclaimed and imitated emblematic detective has had an impact

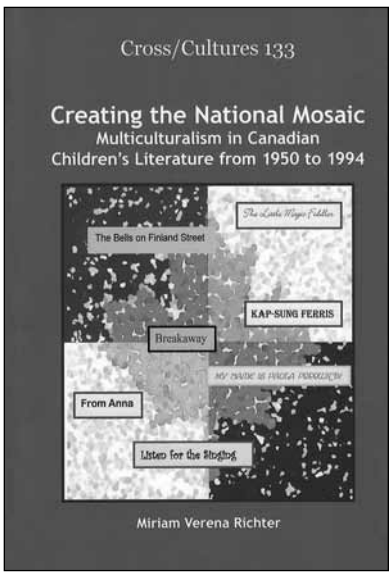
on generations of readers and is still a role model, carved in our collective memory. This biography pays tribute to him, and, through him, to the formidable writing skills of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose hero has surpassed his creator in fame.

Notes:

1. Adrian Malcolm Conan Doyle was the youngest son of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He wrote, with the assistance of John Dickson Carr, additional Sherlock Holmes stories, gathered in a volume titled *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*. Adrian Malcolm was his father's literary executor. (Translator's note).
2. Maurice Leblanc, a French writer, is the creator of Arsène Lupin, "the gentleman thief." Sherlock Holmes first appears in his work in *Sherlock Holmes arrive trop tard [Sherlock Holmes arrives too late]*, a short story published in the journal *Je sais tout [I know everything]* in 1906. After a formal protest from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes was changed to Herlock Sholmès. He reappears in *Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmès [Arsène Lupin vs. Herlock Sholmes]* featuring two adventures in which the characters are engaged in a match of wits. (Translator's note).

Nadia Boucheta, translated by Hasmig Chahinian,
Bibliothèque nationale de France, CNLJ-JPL

Creating the National Mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Literature from 1950 to 1994. By Miriam Verena Richter. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011. 376 p.



In *Creating the National Mosaic*, Miriam Verena Richter offers a comprehensive exploration of multiculturalism as it relates to Canadian national identity formation in children's literature, and her approachable writing style, in depth critical thought, and detailed footnotes make the book both informative and enjoyable to read. She both recognizes and appreciates the fact that "multiculturalism is a—if not the—core component of Canadian national identity," and explores how the national mosaic permeates everyday Canadian life (xiii). She understands the crucial role that literature plays in education and childhood development, and recognizes its inextricable link to multiculturalism as an implicit aspect of Canadian identity. Richter also demonstrates a compelling awareness of the political forces acting on multiculturalism in twentieth-century Canada, and uses Prime Minister Trudeau's white paper of 1971 and the Canadian Multicultural Act (CMA) of 1988 throughout the book to support her conclusions. Her strategic focus on children's literature from 1950-1994 allows her to cover time periods before, during, and after multiculturalism had become politically enshrined in Canadian policy, and her insight into the historical aspects of Canadian multiculturalism offers a constructive background

that supports her connections between children's literature and the Canadian national mosaic.

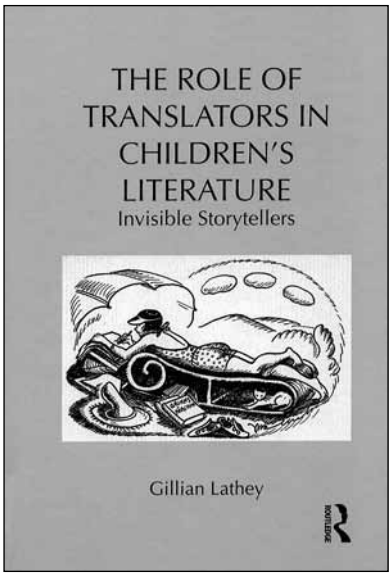
The first three chapters offer theoretical approaches to Canadian multiculturalism, while providing a historical and political backdrop to support Richter's multicultural ideology. The first chapter, entitled "National Identity Formation," emphasizes the enormous role that literature plays in the development of cultural identity, and Richter understands literature as a sort of "cultural medium" that connects readers in the same cultural context. She suggests that, because of childhood vulnerability and the fact that "the child reader has not yet acquired sufficient knowledge to exercise 'mature' judgment," literature plays an especially significant role in the development of children's national and cultural identities. By identifying with a novel's protagonist, children are able to connect with the character on a personal level while shaping their cultural views. Richter's discourse on national identity formation leads well into the second chapter, "The Canadian Situation," which discusses the integral role of multiculturalism in a specifically *Canadian* national identity. She uses Pierre Trudeau's legislation and the CMA to develop a political understanding of cultural diversity, and argues that Canadian children's literature propagates a social unity that is crucial to Canadian cultural identity. Citizens of differing ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to preserve their heritage while still immersing themselves in Canadian culture, which appreciates both cultures rather than instating a separation.

Richter establishes a convincing link between multicultural Canadian policy and children's literature dealing with issues of ethnic diversity, and she further strengthens this link in the third chapter, "Cultural Policy," where she explores the influence of library and literacy promotion programs. Interestingly, she mentions the fact that in first half of the twentieth-century, multicultural literature promoted assimilation rather than cultural diversity, and overlooked instances of racism and sexual stereotyping. However, in the last half of the century, with the influence of multicultural policy and legislation, books that did not embrace ethnic diversity have been removed from children's library programs, and Richter presents a firm understanding of the effects of this shift on the development of childhood national identity. She also engages in discussions of print culture and the influence of the increase in the numbers of Canadian publishing companies in the second half of the twentieth-century, and acknowledges the work of other researchers in the field while positioning herself within their arguments.

The fourth chapter, and last section before the concluding remarks, provides close readings of a strategically selected and well-thought-out sample of Canadian children's literature. Richter is interested in authors living in Canada and writing for children between the impressionable ages of 9-15 years old, and keeping her requisites in mind she looks at Lynn Cook's *The Bells on Finland Street* (1950) and *The Little Magic Fiddler* (1951), Jean Little's *From Anna* (1972) and *Listen for the Singing* (1977), Frances Duncan's *Kap-Sung* Ferris (1977), Monica Hughes' *My Name is Monica Popowich!* (1983), and Paul Yee's *Breakaway* (1994). The authors, all of whom are Canadian citizens, range from Anglo-Canadians to third-generation immigrants, and each novel's protagonist is a first, second, or third generation immigrant living in Canada. The protagonists are also *ethnically* diverse, such as the Ukrainian Monica in *My Name is Monica Popowich!* and the Korean Kim in *Kap Sung Ferris*. Although Richter focuses more on cultural heritage, she does acknowledge racial differences, and notes that visible minorities are faced with racism and discrimination that do not typically affect Caucasian immigrants. She also looks at reviews from each novel, and analyzes critical opinions based on historical time and place, which is an interesting and effective way of understanding the changing influence of multicultural texts in Canada over time. Richter's extensive research and comprehensive exploration of multiculturalism in Canada, along with her excellent choice in multicultural texts, means that that the conclusions she draws are significant to the field and valuable for exploring the depths of multiculturalism in Canadian children's literature.

Since existing scholarship of Canadian multicultural children's texts is somewhat sparse, a brief list of further readings could have benefitted the reader in continuing analyses on this topic, and a closer look at gender differences in cultural narratives may also have proven useful. Richter uses compelling research and an approachable writing style that makes *Creating the National Mosaic* a highly valuable contribution to the fields of Canadian studies, multiculturalism and children's literature.

Samantha Christensen, Augustana Faculty, University of Alberta, Canada



The Role of Translators in Children's Literature: Invisible Storytellers. By Gillian Lathey. New York: Routledge, 2010. 241 p.

"Why does literary translation matter?" (xv). This is the central question Gillian Lathey poses in her latest contribution to translation studies, *The Role of Translators in Children's Literature: Invisible Storytellers*. Her brief answer is that "it is pivotal to international cultural exchange; the transition of a text from one language to another registers ideological differences between countries and cultures; and because to anyone interested in language—which surely anyone who is passionate about literature should be—translation involves a deep engagement with the building blocks of 'wording, meaning and sounding' that make any language unique" (xv). Here and throughout the whole book, as the title itself underlines, Lathey enables expert and non-expert readers to understand the important role of translators in children's literature.

Lathey's contribution focuses on the history of children's literature in translation into English where the main aim is "to trace in outline the chronology and impact of translators and translation on the history of children's literature written in English and, wherever possible, to give an account of the motivation and methodology of translators working for a child audience" (8). Here she takes into account the vast history of translations into English for children from ancient to modern times. In the second part of the book, Lathey also provides an overview of translators and the role of the books they translated.

The first part of Lathey's book provides an admirable, accurate starting point for further research in the field of translation of children's literature, particularly translation into the English language. Lathey expresses the hope that her contribution will "become a source book for future researchers who seek to answer some of the questions it raises" (199), and here she succeeds. She has also lists some of areas where she believes further research is necessary. One of the most interesting and noteworthy chapters in Part One is dedicated to women as translators who are rendered even more "invisible storytellers" than their male counterparts. The "invisibility" of the translator, contained in Lathey's subtitle, is a well-known concept among researchers in the field and translators themselves (Venuti, 1995). Lathey concludes the first section with a useful summary on translation practices and an overview of the child audience before the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

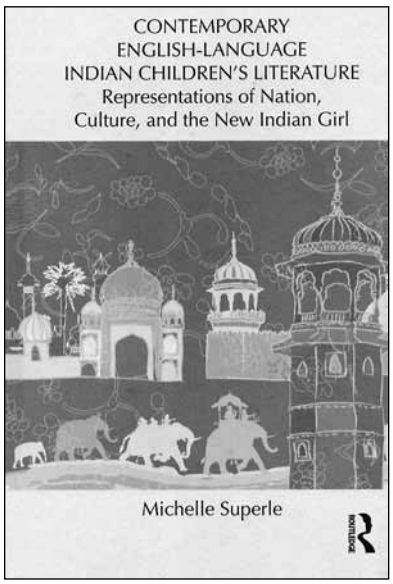
Due to the lack of space in this volume, the second part on the contribution on translation in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries to children's literature is not as developed as the first part, a point Lathey acknowledges herself. Nevertheless, the chapter "Translators Voices" is noteworthy since it is possible to become familiar

with the most famous translators of children's literature into English language and with their techniques and strategies. Furthermore, the second part also contains a chapter on the most important awards for English-language translators of children's literature in the US and in Great Britain. The fairly recent foundation dates of these awards might once again be considered as a signpost of a greater attention towards the translation of literature for children. Contributions such as Lathey's might help to raise even more the awareness towards the important role of translators in children's literature.

Works Cited:

Venuti, Lawrence. *Translator's Invisibility.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Melissa Garavini, Department of Italian, University of Turku, Finland.



Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature: Representations of Nation, Culture, and the New Indian Girl. By Michelle Superle. London and New York, 2011. 214 p.

The field of English-language Indian children's literature is one that continues to beckon study from the greatest possible array of theoretical lenses, so it was with eager anticipation that I read Michelle Superle's *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children's Literature: Representations of Nation, Culture, and the New Indian Girl*. It is worth noting at the start by "children's literature", the author means books published for children "aged eight through eighteen" (2). Furthermore, texts that received greater attention appear to be young adult titles whose characters are teenagers.

The study is divided into seven chapters. The introduction presents the researcher's approach and the employment of post-colonial theory and feminist theory to guide textual analysis. The author showcases "attitudes towards Indian childhood and socio-political aspirations" (18) by examining how transformative utopian literature objectives surface in texts of two categories: diasporic and non-diasporic.

Chapter One charts the emergence and development of contemporary English language Indian children's literature. Superle observes that the definitive mark of children's literature in India "has always been and remains today primarily didactic" with "its focus is on moral instruction" (20). Superle sees non-diasporic texts as having "evolved out of a children's literature shaped by ancient Sanskrit narrative" (36) in addition to oral traditions and national aspirations, whereas diasporic texts emerged from the didacticism of "western multicultural children's literature" (19). Chapter Two is concerned with the basic roles girl characters play in the novel. Superle's views are shaped by liberal feminist value

systems. She observes that her sample of children's literature should be understood within the wider context which includes the "frequent omission or distortion of class and caste struggles" (56) in the service of hegemonic social structures. In down-playing these sources of strife, the novels attempt to portray the "New Indian girl" as one who is able to emancipate herself, advance gender equality, and balance tradition with modernity (57).

Chapter Three further serves theoretical notions of hegemony by focusing on the engineering of unity with diversity through visions of national figures such as Gandhi and Nehru. Superle discusses the portrayal of 'intercultural friendship as a means to overcome racism" (75). A project that continues into the next chapter where the idea of imagined Indianess is discussed in service of nation-building. Paradoxically, Superle notes that while India is "politically shaped by a secular constitution, it remains in daily practice a deeply religious society… Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism" (91). Oddly, Superle does not appear to track down religious Indian children's literature; rather, she considers, "The textual absence of religion can be largely explained by the fact that India was constitutionally structured as a secular nation-state after Independence" (90) and "that publishers of Indian children's literature perpetuate…ideological views…forcing authors to comply with publication guidelines that reinforce hegemonic nationalist values" (92).

Chapter Five continues the idea of an alleged hegemonic project fuelling the production of Indian children's literature in its discussion of the use of cultural markers within texts to promote the idea of "Indianness." The author argues that the story's setting and cultural artefacts help facilitate the portrayal of an Indian identity, a role often unnoticed by westerners unfamiliar with Indian culture. Superle raises the issue of how cultural markers such as food, music and apparel have been criticised by proponents of multicultural literature for being superficial—a view she accepts is true in some texts—but she argues for a deeper understanding of these markers rather than a blanket dismissal of them. All of these chapters serve to present the last two chapters, which introduce the effects of Indian children's literature upon its readers.

Chapter Six focuses on the imagined identity created by diasporic writers and the concept of a bicultural self, which nearly all characters appear to demonstrate. The procurement of an Indian identity melded with an American, British or Canadian one is further analysed in light of the concept of social coercion. The concluding chapter discusses gender and how it relates to bicultural identity and indigenous identity development against the idea of the newly-constructed "Indian Girl." The author argues that the "New Indian Girl" is portrayed as one who is empowered, but is "restricted to girls who embody mainstream middle-class-attractiveness and function to benefit their nation or communities" (175).

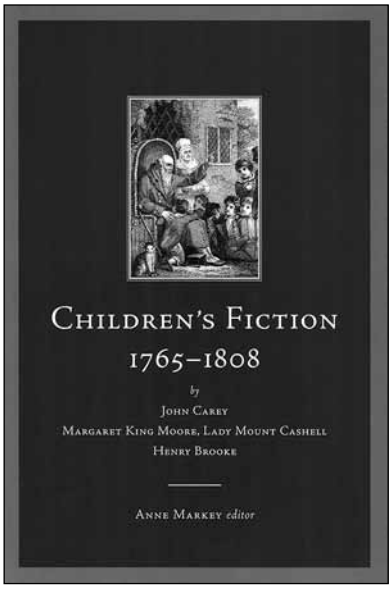
The power of Superle's argument is weakened by its failure to provide a representative sample of texts of other groups involved in the

contemporary production of English-language Indian children's literature, both diasporic and non-diasporic. On the face of it, a sample of one hundred and one books, which seems sufficient to establish a representative sample, raises no alarms. However the native non-diasporic Indian books presented consisted of forty-four, published by Penguin, The Children's Book Trust, HarperCollins, Scholastic, and fourteen more by Tulika, Vikas, Navneet, India Ink, Neve, Ratna Sagar, Chandamama, Khas Kitaab, Rupa, and Tara. The authors of these native non-diasporic texts are all Hindu writers. Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian Indian authors appear to have been excluded from the list. In fact, these publishers all ignore religious didactics. In short, the selection offers a distorted sample. From the diasporic Indian books analysed, eight came from Corgi, a UK publisher, authored by the Sikh writers Bali Rai and Narinder Dhami. Nine others were also published in the UK with three from a Canadian publisher and twenty-one from American publishers. No book was selected that was written by a Muslim Indian female author. In fact, the only Muslim writer cited throughout the study was Salman Rushdie. Limiting the study so severely raises serious concerns about bias in Superle's findings.

Most of the analysis seems to focus upon just nine books. From the diasporic literature these were *Born Confused, Indie Girl, Keeping Corner, Maya Running, The Roller Bird of Rampur,* and the *Not So Star Spangled Life of Sunita Sen*. Of the native non-diasporic texts these were *Jaldi's Friends,* published by Penguin, *Chandipur Jewels*, and *Kamla's Story*, published by Children's Book Trust "which is partially funded by the Indian government" (24). Based upon this breakdown, it would appear that the New Indian Girl has been shaped largely from diasporic literature produced by North American publishers who have a propensity to ignore religiosity.

As an analysis of the vast array of English-language Indian children's literature in the contemporary scene, the study projects a somewhat lopsided view. It would be useful to either revisit the field and uncover more texts or to narrow the focus to a nationalist genre, Hindu genre or secular genre of Indian children's literature. That said, Superle has made a useful contribution within the literary academic field. Her study will no doubt serve as a springboard for further research on Indian children's literature.

Fawzia Gilani-Williams,
University of Worcester, U.K



Children's Fiction 1765-1808. By John Carey; Margaret King Moore, Lady Mount Cashell; and Henry Brooke. Ed. Anne Markey. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. 189 p.

Children's Fiction 1765-1808, edited by Anne Markey, has been produced as part of the series Early Irish Fiction, c. 1680-1820. The aim of the series is, as its general editors state in the Preface to this volume, "to indicate the diversity and breadth of Irish literature" in the long eighteenth century (7). In keeping with this aim, *Children's Fiction* provides a scholarly introduction and an edition of several texts by Irish writers directed towards young people, texts that were reprinted multiple times after first publication but which have seldom been reprinted (if at all) since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Markey's introduction establishes the context for the collection as a whole and provides historical

context for each of the included texts. The introduction begins by briefly sketching the development of children's literature in the eighteenth century as well as the academic study of such literature in the late twentieth century. Recognizing that fiction for children is "a significant site of cultural production" (9), Markey points to the lack of study in both the fields of children's literature and in Irish literature studies of texts produced by Irish writers for children. This gap in the scholarship has implications for our knowledge of "broader adult anxieties and social concerns" of the period (9). Maria Edgeworth, of course, is an exception to this rule, which suggests the reason for her exclusion from this volume in favor of writers whose texts for children have been overlooked by children's literature and Irish literature scholars. Markey argues that "children's fiction displays national variations" (10), so the study of texts such as those included in her volume "not only provides insights into the early development of [children's fiction]… but also illuminates specific national concerns and anxieties" (10). These concerns include emigration and the inequalities of Ireland's relationship with England; Markey locates these texts' "Irish" character in part in their ability to "replace parental authority with authorial influence" (29), citing the way English authority in Ireland was often coded in political discourse as a parental one (28). However resistant to the political status quo these texts might be, they follow much of early children's fiction in writing in order to shape the morals and beliefs of their readers.

Much of the introduction provides historical and biographical context for the writers and their works included in the volume: John Carey's *Learning Better than House and Land* (1808); Margaret King Moore, Lady Mount Cashell's *Stories of Old Daniel* (1808); and Henry Brooke's "Three Fishes" taken from his *The Fool of Quality* (1765), which is followed by two variations of that fable: "A Curious and Instructive Tale of Three Little Fishes" (anonymous, c. 1787) and "The Three Little Fishes, A Story" (1801) by John Clowes. The introduction carefully makes connections between these lesser known works and well-known writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft (a governess to Lady Mount Cashell), or to canonical novels, such as *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson (its concern with social advancement is compared to Carey's text). Carey's and Lady Mount Cashell's texts are also linked in their use of travel, adventure, and exotic settings. Markey also pays attention to the double address of each text–that is, the ways in which each targets adult (presumably parental) as well as child readers. In each case, while there are child characters for young readers to see as models of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, there are also adult figures who model the correct way of educating and disciplining their young charges. Furthermore, Markey notes Carey's political intentions in the often explicit critique of the British class system by comparison to America's meritocracy (15). All three of the chosen texts can be read as demonstrating political commitment as well as the desire to educate young people.

The texts themselves follow. Original illustrations and title pages have been included, so today's readers can see and appreciate the presentation of these texts as they appeared in their first publication; Markey's introduction and notes to individual texts often draw attention to the ways in which illustrations and paratextual elements (such as title pages and prefaces) contribute to the lessons of each text or the ways in which they target a particular audience. The main difficulty with the edition of the texts themselves is the placement of the notes for all texts at the very end of the volume; one has to flip back and forth, sometimes only to discover that the note (none of them numbered but only marked by asterisks) is merely a definition one already knows. Having said that, the texts offer a useful variety of types of children's fiction: the first two texts exemplify that combination of action-adventure and moralizing that seems particularly characteristic of early children's fiction; old Daniel's tales model oral story-telling in written form; and the last section–with its three versions of one story–would allow discussion not just of fables but of adaptation in young people's literature.

The book aims to cross the boundaries of both Irish literature studies and children's literature

studies with the result that each is privileged in turn. The content of the notes and the approach of the introduction suggest that a course in Irish literature is more likely the target audience: I found more context provided for issues of children's literature than for Irish literature, as though more familiarity with the latter was presumed. On the other hand, the inclusion of three versions of Brooke's fable would seem more useful for children's literature than Irish literature, since its subsequent versions do not have the same national affiliations; it might have been more useful to include a larger variety of texts in order to meet the mandate of the series to demonstrate the "breadth" of Irish literature of the period. Nonetheless, the chosen texts certainly indicate diversity in both Irish and young people's literature of the period.

Ann Howey, Brock University, Canada.

***Alisa v Strane Chudes, v strane chudes Alisy. Iz istorii knigi*. [Alice in Wonderland, in the Land of Alice's Wonders. From the history of the book].** Ed. Yuliya V. Bernshteyn-Venedskaya. Moskva: Studiya "4+4", 2010. 264 p.

Few books for children have seen as many illustrations and translations as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* reason enough for Dmitry Ablin and Yuliya Bernshteyn-Venedskaya to publish a bibliophile edition of "Alice" in Russian in 2010. Alongside the story of Carroll's heroine, following the still authoritative translation by Nina Demurova, the volume offers two survey articles on the history of its illustration and translation as well as more than four hundred annotated illustrations. These images are taken from mostly English-language editions from Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, but also from Spain (Salvador Dalí), Austria (Lisbeth Zwerger), and Russia, of course. This treasure trove of drawings, sketches, and water colours spans a large time frame, ranging from Carroll's own illustrations to his manuscript of "Alice's Adventures under Ground" (1864) and John Tenniel's seminal images (1865) which, according to Olga Sinitsyna, have branded the character stereotypes of "Alice" illustrations to this date, to Peter Newell (1901/02), Arthur Rackham (1907), Ralph Steadman (1967, 1972), all the way to Barry Moser (1982), John Bradley (1992) and editions of the early years of the new millennium.

The illustrations punctuate the text, following neither a historical or generic order nor a classification by artistic technique, but highlighting specific scenes of the plot. This enables readers to make revealing comparisons and to discover the numerous pictorial solutions and ideas to individual scenes and characters from the novel. It also makes apparent which scenes or quotes from the text attracted most illustrations. While the opening scene, in which Alice encounters the White Rabbit, seems to have gained canonic status, some illustrators (such as the New Zealand artist Harry Rountree) also offer glimpses into more unusual events or moments of the plot. With a total of fifteen illustrations spread out over four double pages,

the opening scene already displays the spectrum of possible pictorial interpretations. Almost every illustration is accompanied by a brief annotation, which acquaints readers with the technique, style, and possible intention of the artist.

This rich pictorial compilation is put into historical and artistic perspective in the opening survey article of Sinitsyna. In it, she sketches the history of "Alice" illustrations and presents landmark editions of the text. She focuses on selected points, such as the pictorial interpretation of Carroll's protagonist or key events like the Mad Hatter's tea party. Apart from elucidating well-known British, United States, Australian, or Canadian "Alice" editions, Sinicyna addresses methodological and stylistic issues, including the overriding question of what makes "Alice" so attractive for illustrators. She clearly demonstrates that the wide reception of the book did not only invite ever new artistic variations but also called for pictorial translations into different cultural contexts with diverging aesthetic traditions and ideological agendas. This is especially apparent in the case of the many Russian illustrations, which, due to the official ideology of cultural hegemony, produced curiosities such as Alice as a pioneer girl (Valery Alfeevsky, 1958). Within the Russian context, Sinicyna identifies the "Alice" illustrations by Gennady Kalinovsky (1974, 1988 among others), May Miturich (1977), whose abstract and minimalist way of rendering characters is particularly striking, as well as those by Yuri Vashchenko (1982), who marries naïve art with sophisticated style as being particularly worthy of attention.

The "Alice" volume also includes a compendium of the text's translations into Russian. Apart from presenting famous translators, such as Vladimir Nabokov, who transposed Carroll's text back during his years in Berlin (1923), Nina Demurova, an "Alice" translator herself, explains the specific circumstances the Victorian children's book faced during Soviet times. As a fairy-tale narrative, "Alice" had very low currency during the 1920s because official doctrine considered fairy tales to be deviant literature and so condemned them as inadequate literature for Soviet children. This made new translations of "Alice", which only existed in rather free renditions that tended to adapt the text to Russian realities (the first one appeared in 1879), almost impossible. Surprisingly, a new translation was published in 1940, followed by Demurova's own version in 1967 (and 1978), with more recent attempts dating from 1977, 1988 and 1994. In the final section of the essay, Demurova gives detailed insight into the circumstances and technical aspects of her own translation work. She demonstrates the complexity but also playfulness involved in translating Carroll's text, which brims with puns and neologisms, parodies and allusions. This challenge becomes most apparent when she has to find Russian equivalents for Carroll's poetry parodies, for example, or new names for idiosyncratic creatures, such as the Mock Turtle. The present volume, which embeds Demurova's translation in a comprehensive, extremely vividly presented selection of images, is the ultimate proof that this effort was well worthwhile.

Katja Wiebe, International Youth Library (IYL), Munich, Germany.

Focus IBBY

Compiled and edited by
ELIZABETH PAGE

Elizabeth Page is
IBBY's Executive Director

© Patsy Aldana

New Sections in 2012

IBBY is very pleased to be able to welcome three new sections this year. Full contact details can be found on the IBBY website at www.ibby.org under IBBY Worldwide.

Afghanistan

The newest section was accepted by the Executive Committee at its meeting in Bologna in March. The newly formed Afghan IBBY is based at the *Aschiana* headquarters in Kabul. *Aschiana* ("nest" in Dari) was founded in 1995 by Engineer Mohamed Yousef to help street children in Kabul. He had witnessed the desperation and poor conditions of children he encountered on the street and established *Aschiana* to provide a refuge where they could learn educational and vocational skills. Many of you will remember that Eng Yousef gave a very moving talk about his work at the IBBY Congress in Santiago de Compostela in 2010. For more information about his work go to: www.aschiana.org.

Aschiana is working with its partners to bring children and books together through the formation of the IBBY section. The new IBBY section comprises the following organizations Aschiana, Sanayee Development organization (SDO), Noor Education Centre, Afghanistan Book House (ABH), Ministry of Higher Education, Afghan Academy of Science, Goethe institute (German Culture Room), Tarawat Publishing (Children's Book Publisher), Child Safe—Sweden, and Aina.

Contact: Eng. Mohamad Yousef: yousefaschiana@yahoo.com, or Ms Massuma Jafari at the Afghanistan Book House: jafari.massuma@gmail.com

Azerbaijan

The IBBY Executive Committee accepted the new Azerbaijani Section of IBBY in February 2012. The section is housed at the *Republic Children's Library named after Firudin bay Kocharli* in Baku. The Library has most recently been involved in studying the situation of reading and libraries for children in Azerbaijan, the results of which were presented at a conference with the title: *Reading of Children: Books and the Development of the Personality*. Over the years and with the support of the Ministry of Culture and publishing houses, they have cooperated with libraries in other countries by donating collections of children's books from Azerbaijan to sister public libraries in Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Bosnia, Slovakia and Germany. The new section's partners include the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Beshik" Children's Publishing House that has issued more than 112 titles of children's books, the newspapers "Tumurdjuk", "Zaman" and writers including Gulzar Ibrahimova, Alemdar Gulizade, Solmaz Amanova, Zahid Halil and Sevinj Nuruqizi.

Contact: Ms Qulieva Fizura Museib or Ms Dadashova Zahira Jabir: childlibbaku@yahoo.com

Tunisia

In January 2012 the Executive Committee accepted the application submitted by a group of experts in Tunisia to form a new National Section. The field of children's books publishing in Tunisia is lagging behind when compared to that in Lebanon or Palestine: both in terms of quantity and quality. However, since the *Arab Spring* there is now an emergence of specialized publishing houses that are keen to improve the quality of children's books. The new national section is made up of people who have made fruitful contributions to children's literature. Some are researchers in children's literature; others are members in associations whose objectives are to promote reading among young people and encourage high quality books for children as well as to foster research that improves children's books in terms of form and content. The Sfax Children's Book Fair Association is also playing a key role in promoting reading and encouraging high quality books. Other members include award-wining writers, many of whom have been also been jury members for well-known competitions, illustrators, publishers, librarians and the Division of Public Reading from the Ministry of Culture.

Contact: Ms Wafa Thabet Mezghani: wafa_mezghani@hotmail.com or Mr Mohamed Salah Maalej: mohamed.maalej@gnet.tn

Andersen Winners 2012

Following the 2012 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury meeting in Basel on 10/11 March 2012, Jury President María Jesús Gil announced at the IBBY press conference at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on 19 March that the 2012 winners are the Argentinean author **María Teresa Andruetto** for the quality of her writing and the Czech artist **Peter Sís** for the quality of his illustrations.

In their deliberations, the Jury appreciated **María Teresa Andruetto's** mastery in writing important and original works that are strongly focussed on aesthetics. She creates sensitive books, which are deep and poetic with a clear literary base, while relating to a great variety of topics, such as migration, inner worlds, injustice, love, poverty, violence or political affairs.

The Jury recognized **Peter Sís's** extraordinary originality and deep creative power to relate highly complex stories that can be interpreted on many different levels. The jury particularly appreciated his use of different design and artistic techniques, as well as his innovative approach using a subtle balance to depict well-documented and historical events and fantastic elements.

Andruetto was selected from 27 authors nominated for the Award. The four finalists are **Paul Fleischman** (USA**), Bart Moeyaert** (Belgium), **Jean-Claude Mourlevat** (France) and **Bianca Pitzorno** (Italy). Sís was selected from 30 illustrators nominated for the Award. The four finalists are **Mohammad Ali Baniasadi** (Iran), **John Burningham** (UK), **Roger Mello** (Brazil) and **Javier Zabala** (Spain). Issue 50.2 of *Bookbird* contains an overview of all candidates for the 2012 awards and issue 50.4 will include appreciative essays of the winners and finalists.

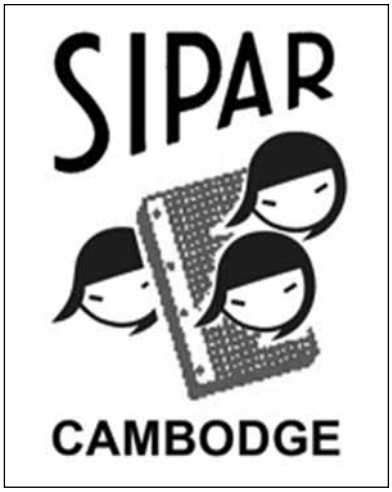
IBBY Asahi Winners 2012

***Abuelas Cuentacuentos*—The Grandmother's Storytelling Programme** in Argentina is organized by the *Mempo Giardinelli Foundation* (FMG) and engages older persons who like to read stories to children. Specialized personnel at the Foundation train volunteers and organize programmes in many schools in the metropolitan area of the city of Resistencia the capital and largest city in the province of Chaco, in north-eastern *Argentina.*

This programme promotes reading, while at the same time it takes literature to thousands of the poorest children, many of them living in marginal communities. *Abuelas Cuentacuentos* has created opportunities for exchanges across generations, thus is not only beneficial to children, but also has an important impact on the self-esteem of the grandmothers. The volunteers, mainly unemployed women between the ages of 50 and 70, have found that this programme is a new and productive way of using their time and their capacity to give affection through their new role of storyteller.

The project impressed the jury by its simple and original approach to reading promotion. The programme is easy to replicate and is sustainable over a long period. The promotion of intergeneration interaction is another aspect that gives it effective and emotional dimensions that are beneficial to both the children and the grandmothers.

SIPAR began as a Franco/Cambodian association in 1982 to help Cambodian refugees living on the Cambodian/Thai border during the Khmer Rouge



regime. When the government fell, SIPAR helped to rebuild the educational network and by 1993 was focussing its activities on reading including organizing libraries all over Cambodia and setting up rural reading centres. From 1993 to 2011 more than 1,000 librarians were trained in the SIPAR workshops. Recently the Cambodian Ministry of Education has taken over the network.

By 2000, it was very noticeable that there were no Cambodian children's books in the libraries and the SIPAR staff were translating the donated foreign books and sticking the texts in Khmer in the books. During the regime of the Khmer Rouge all books had been destroyed and the creators had been killed. There were no publishing houses left in the country. In 2000, SIPAR started running training workshops for publishing, writing and illustration, mostly for children's books. Today SIPAR has a small publishing department that is run by Cambodians. They have published 70 titles, and printed 130,000 free copies for the 200 SIPAR libraries and the students at the teacher training colleges for primary schools.

The Jury was impressed by the work done over the last twenty years as well as by the long-term training aspect of SIPAR that will build a book culture and thus answer a very big need for literacy in Cambodia. The work is sustainable and able to bring local language books to Cambodia. The 2012 jury comprised *Jury Chair* Mingzhou Zhang (China), Marilar Aleixandre (Spain), Hasmig Chahinian (France), Wally de Doncker (Belgium), Jehan Helou (Palestine), and Kiyoko Matsuoka (Japan).

Issue 50.1 of *Bookbird* includes the complete list of nominations for the 2012 IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards.

Twenty Years of the Slovenian Section of IBBY

The Twentieth-Anniversary celebration is concentrated around the International Children's Book Day, on April 2nd 2012, with the exhibition on the Section and with the symposium on translating children's literature, both organized in collaboration with *Pionirska / Center for Children's and Youth Literature and Librarianship* in the Ljubljana City Library.

Our celebration is in accord with the 2012 ICBD message by the Mexican Section of IBBY with the title, "Once upon a time, there was a story that the whole world told…" The Slovenian Section of IBBY was established in the Main Slovene Children's Library, The Pioneer Library, in 1992, shortly after the formation of the independent state of Slovenia. Tanja Pogačar was among the initiators of establishing the Slovenian Section of IBBY and its president from 1992 to 2004.

Many of the founding members were involved in the former National Section of Yugoslavia. In 1966 the Yugoslavian Section of IBBY hosted the IBBY Congress in Ljubljana, under the title of *The Birth of Children's Books*. It was at this congress that 2 April was first proclaimed as International Children's Book Day (ICBD) and Ms Zorka Peršič from Slovenia was elected President of IBBY (1966-1970).

The Slovenian Section of IBBY is based in the

Ljubljana City Library and collaborates closely with the *Pionirska / Center for Children's and Youth Literature and Librarianship*. It has 41 individual and 13 collective members, among them there are: Ljubljana City Library, Maribor Public Library, Murska Sobota Public Library, Slovene Reading Badge Society—ZPMS, Union of Associations of Slovene Librarians, Fine Artists' Association—Section of Illustrators, the journal *The Child and a Book*, Mladinska knjiga Publishing House, Publishing Houses: Franc-Franc, Rokus-Klett, Miš, RED.

As one among 77 national sections of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), the Slovenian Section of IBBY has the same mission: **to bring children and books together.** It works on becoming the focal point for each institution or individual concerned with children's literature in Slovenia. It regularly informs the public about IBBY's activities and is closely involved with reading promotion. It also fosters international links with the International Youth Library (IJB), the Biennale of Bratislava (BIB) and through *Bookbird*, as well as with IBBY National Sections worldwide.

In twenty years, the Slovenian Section of IBBY has nominated nine authors, nine illustrators and ten translators of 27 Slovene children's books for the IBBY Honour List. For the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA) and for the Hans Christian Andersen Award it has nominated the Slovene illustrators Marlenka Stupica, Marija Lucija Stupica, Lilijana Praprotnik Zupančič (Lila Prap), Ančka Gošnik Godec, Alenka Sottler and the authors Svetlana Makarovič and Tone Pavček. It has nominated for the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award two programmes: the Slovene Reading Badge Society and the programme Roma people invited to the library. It has sent several best Slovene children's books to different international exhibitions and collections, and to the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People. The members of the Slovenian Section of IBBY regularly assist at the IBBY World Congresses every two years (often with paper presentations), international symposiums and professional seminars.

A large proportion of IBBY Slovenia's activities are centred on the International Children's Book Day, on April 2nd: an exhibition and a symposium are co-organized at the MKL, Pionirska-Centre for Children's and Youth Literature and Librarianship, followed by an evening ceremony at the Slovene Writers' Association. The Slovenian Section of IBBY was the international sponsor of ICBD 1997; Matjaž Schmidt illustrated the poster and Boris A. Novak wrote the message *Childhood Is Poetry of Life. Poetry Is Childhood of the World.* The poster and the message can be seen at http://www.ibby.si/index.php/int-ibby/ibby-2-april/109-poslanica1997.

Tilka Jamnik, President of Slovene IBBY

INABBY Conference on Book Therapy 2012

The successful three-day **International Conference on Book Therapy—Reading is Healing** took place from 9 to 11 February 2012 in New Delhi, India. The event, organized by the Indian section of IBBY and the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children, created waves of concern among people towards the significance of reading literature to overcome the effect of traumas and the need for books to heal. The release of *Lighthouse in the Storm*—a collection of heart-warming stories written by AWIC members—initiated the direction of the Conference towards the role of books to heal children in distress.

As the conference advanced it plunged into the nuts and bolts of creating books that heal and the role of facilitators of Book therapy in using books to heal in the following sessions. The healing touch of book is at its best when the content of stories relates to the child's life situation. Quietly, the process inculcates values such as tolerance, respect, empathy and resilience while showing the child a possible way out of the dilemma. The first session highlighted various strategies for disaster management utilizing books to mitigate traumas, leading on in the following sessions to aspects of creating books that heal, facilitating book therapy and using books for children in crisis. Twenty-eight speakers from different corners of the world lay bare challenges for reading remedies and innovative schemes in using books to restore hope after disasters. The delegates from the field of education, literary discipline, psycho-therapy, medicine, art, and films enriched the event. Amidst prevailing stress and conflict in different parts of the world, all underlined the significance of developing and applying books that soothe and revive hope.

In the year of 150th birth anniversary of the great writer—Rabindranath Tagore—the Exhibitions galore offered a tribute to him by displaying his works. The Exhibitions from Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Outstanding Books for Children with Disabilities from Norway spun the main theme of the Conference further enhanced by the display of books that heal. A pageant of children's paintings on Bhopal Gas tragedy and Art for Therapy experiment with the differently-abled children splashed colour and dream.

The daylong deliberations centred on the literature and book therapy culminated with the healing touch of ballet performed by differently-abled children on wheelchairs, storytelling and a classical dance celebrating the festival of color and aspirations.

The delegates approved the need to organize workshops, courses to sensitize all those working with children towards the effective use of literature and poetry. All libraries, book clubs etc. can become potential book therapy centres as different agencies aiding the traumatized children could share experiences to benefit children in crisis.

Ira Saxena, Congress Convenor

Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Subscriptions consist of four issues and may begin with any issue. Rates include air freight for all subscriptions outside the USA and GST for Canadian subscribers.

Check or money order must be in US dollars and drawn on a US bank. Make check or money orders payable to ***The Johns Hopkins University Press.***

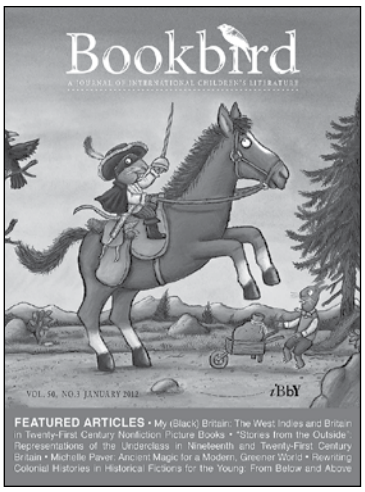
Payment may be made by VISA, Mastercard, AMEX or Discover.

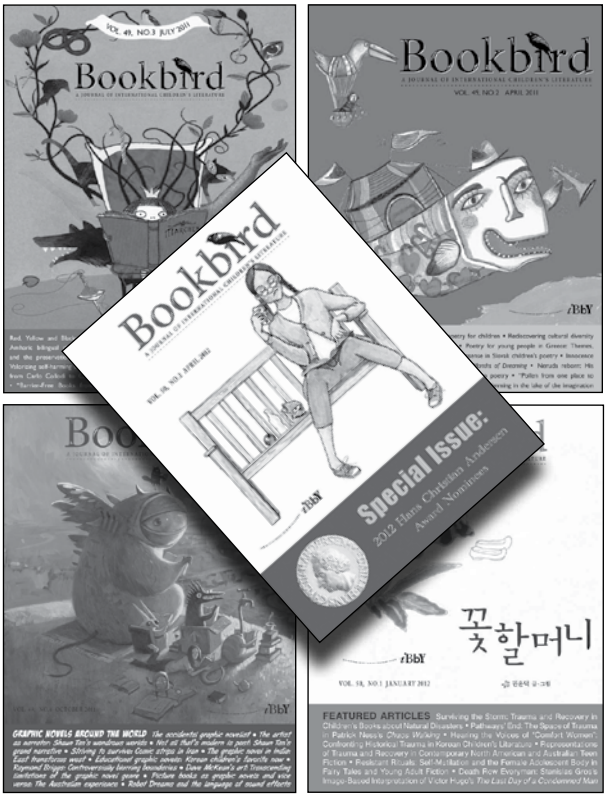
Send orders to:

The Johns Hopkins University Press,
2715 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218-4363, USA

Credit card holders may also subscribe via our website: www.press.jhu.edu/journals

Subscriptions	USA	Canada	Mexico	All others
Individual	$ 50.00	$ 62.70	$ 60.20	$ 64.60
Institutional	$100.00	$ 115.20	$ 110.20	$ 114.60





Subscription Form

Name of journal: *Bookbird*

Type of subscription: _____Individual _____ Institutional

Price $_____*(see table at left)*

Name _____

Dept/Institution _____

Address _____

_____

Postal/Zip code _____ Country_____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

check one: ___Visa ___MasterCard ___AMEX ___DISCOVER

Card No. _____

Expiration Date _____

Card holder's name _____

Signature _____

Would you like to write for IBBY's journal?

Academic Articles **ca. 4000 words**

Bookbird publishes articles on children's literature with an international perspective four times a year (in January, April, July and October). Articles that compare literatures of different countries are of interest, as are papers on translation studies and articles that discuss the reception of work from one country in another. Articles concerned with a particular national literature or a particular book or writer may also be suitable, but it is important that the article should be of interest to an international audience. Some issues are devoted to special topics. Details and deadlines of these issues are available from *Bookbird's* web pages.

Children and their Books **ca. 2500 words**

Bookbird also provides a forum where those working with children and their literature can write about their experiences. Teachers, librarians, publishers, authors and parents, short articles discussing the ways in which you have worked with children and their literatures, or have watched children respond to literature are welcomed. Articles concerned with a particular national issue are of interest, but should be written in a manner that appeals to an international audience.

Postcards and Letters **ca. 300 or 1000 words**

Bookbird publishes reviews of both primary and secondary sources. Brief 'postcards' (ca. 300 words) on individual works of children's literature, or extended 'letters' (ca. 1000 words) introducing the work of a particular author or illustrator are welcomed. In addition to the full publication details, please comment on whether the works are available in translation.

For further information, please contact:

Roxanne Harde, Email: rharde@ualberta.ca

Our forthcoming issues:

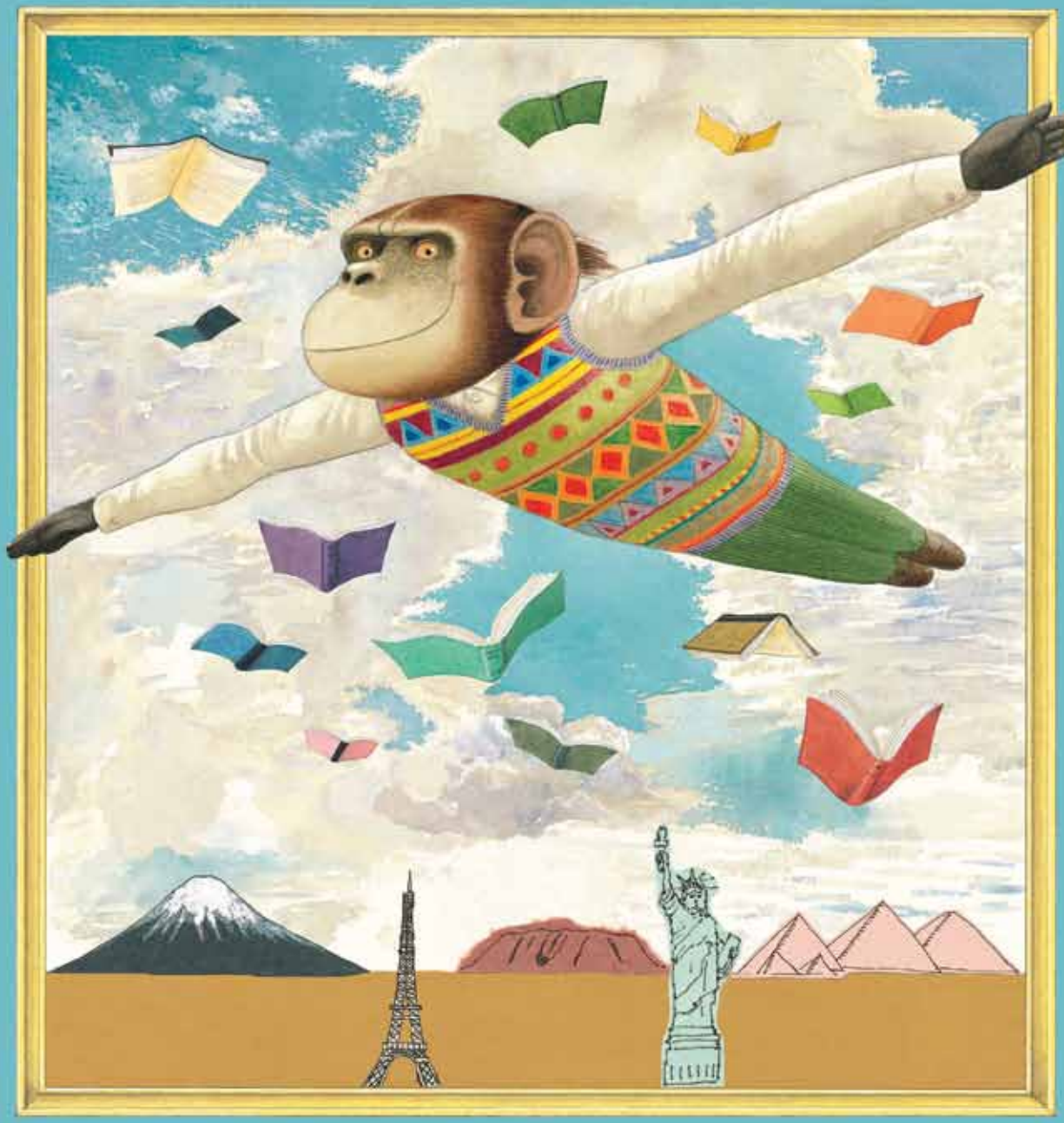
- October 2012, HCA 2012 Winners & Shortlist
- January 2013, Literature from the British Commonwealth
- April 2013, Open Themed
- July 2013, Multilingual Literature
- October 2013, Open Themed
- January 2014, GLBTQ

Hans Christian Andersen Awards

Every other year IBBY presents the Hans Christian Andersen Awards to a living author and illustrator whose complete works have made a lasting contribution to children's literature.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award is the highest international recognition given to an author and an illustrator of children's books. Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is the Patron of the Andersen Awards.

Nominations are made by the National Sections of IBBY and the recipients are selected by a distinguished international jury of children's literature specialists.



33RD IBBY INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

Crossing Boundaries: Translations and Migrations

Imperial College - London 23rd-26th August 2012

www.ibbycongress2012.org