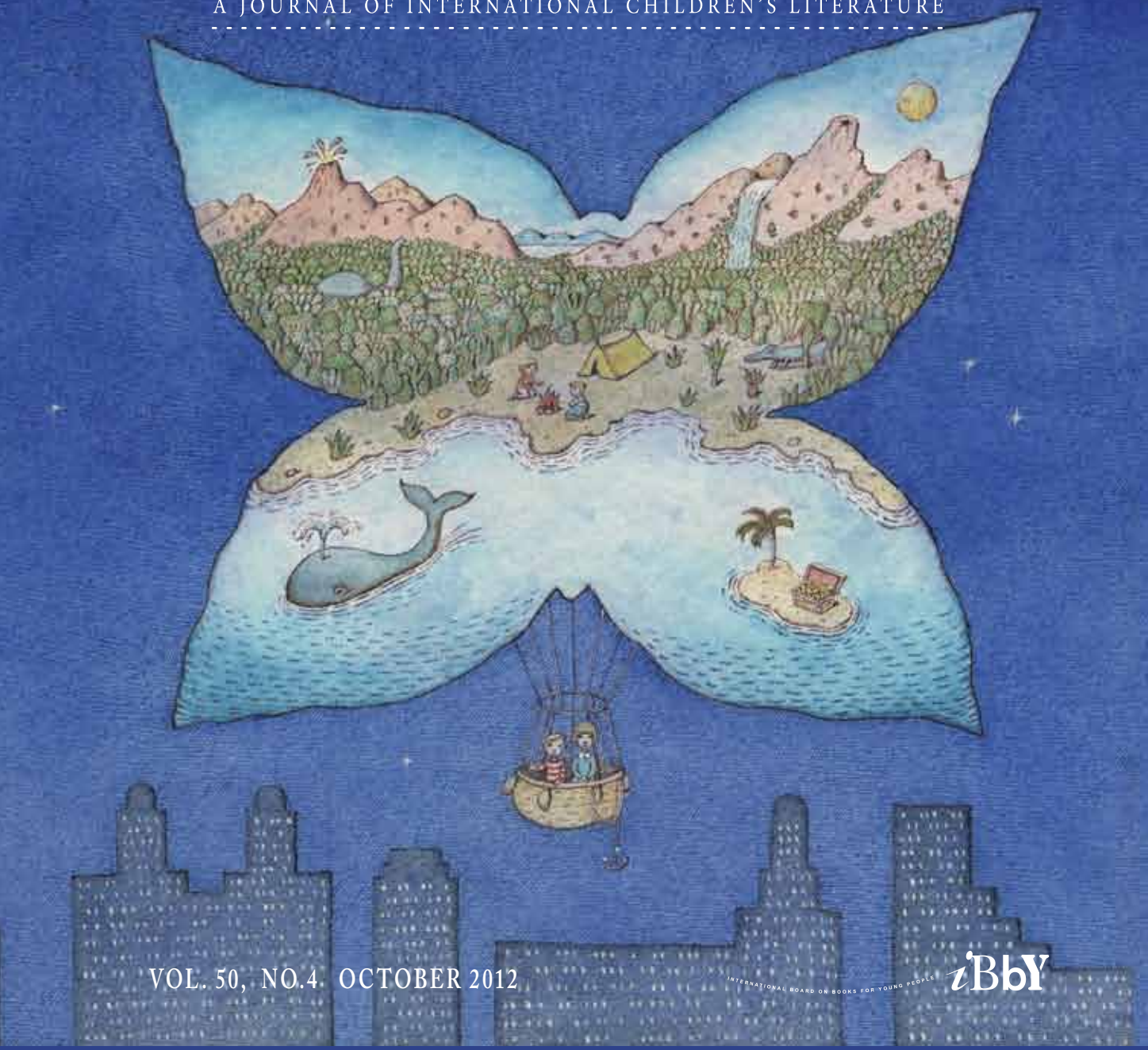
Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



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INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IBBY

Hans Christian Andersen Awards: Feature Articles on winners Peter Sís and María Theresa Andruetto; Articles on the HCA shortlisted illustrators and authors; Letters on ASAHI winners SIPAR and Abuelas Cuentacuentos. Articles on Graphic Novels and Multimodal Literacy, Games inside Books for Young Children, Children's Agency for Taking Action.

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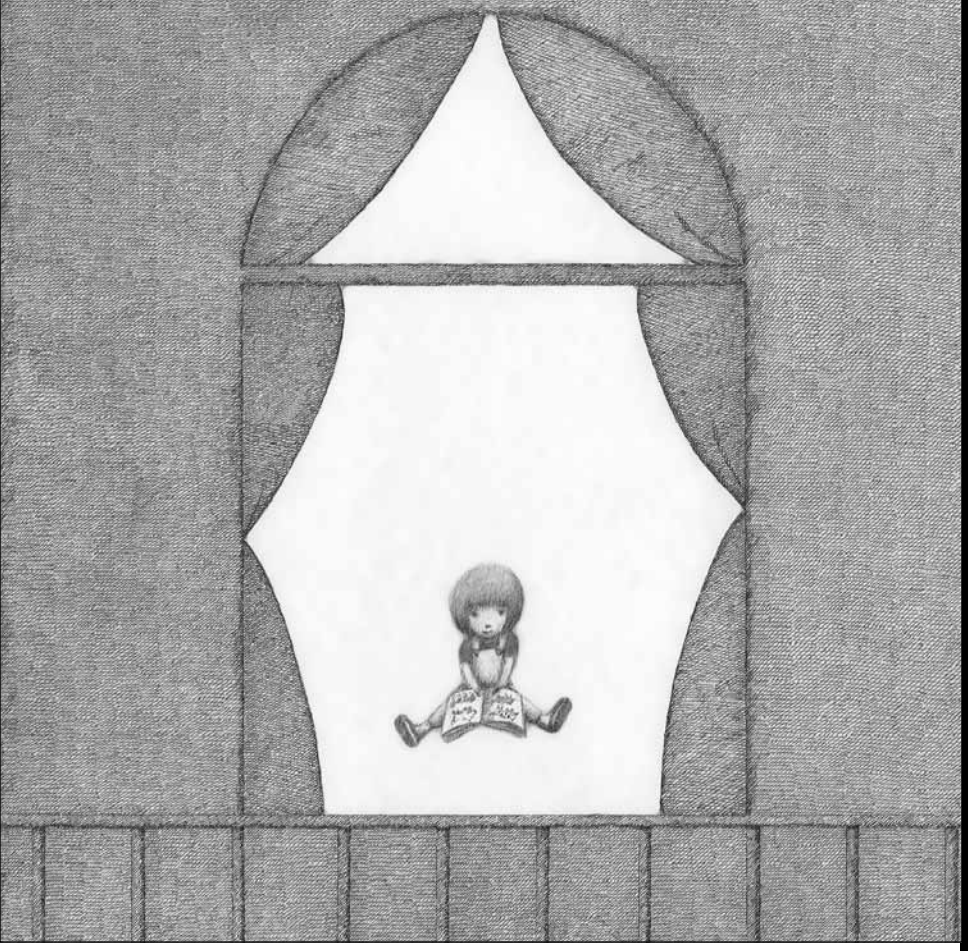

Illustration by Peter Sís.

Editorial

Bookbird Editor

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*.

Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

This issue of *Bookbird* is, in the main, devoted to celebrating IBBY's 2012 Hans Christian Andersen Award winning author, María Teresa Andruetto, and illustrator, Peter Sís (whose wonderful painting is featured on the front and back covers), along with the authors and illustrators who also, deservedly, made the shortlist. Often referred to as the Nobel Prize for children's literature, the HCA Awards were adjudicated earlier this year, with the winners announced at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. Along with its regular columns and scholarly articles, this issue contains feature articles on the HCA winners and shortlist. However, before introducing Bookbird's readers to what the issue holds, I must pay tribute to two former HCA Award winners who have recently passed away. Our world is poorer for the loss of Maurice Sendak (10 June 1928 – 8 May 2012) and Margaret Mahy (21 March 1936 - 23 July 2012).

Since *The Wonderful Farm* in 1951, Maurice Sendak's some ninety titles have sold over 50 million copies worldwide. Winner of the Hans Christian Anderson Award for illustration in 1970, United States-born Sendak was one of the most individual and successful illustrators of the last century. While much of his work

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was in illustrating other writers, he changed the face of children's literature with *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) and *In the Night Kitchen* (1970). After decades of meaningful contributions to children's literature—he also designed and wrote for the opera and theater—it seems fitting that reviewers still found his work both brilliant and somewhat disturbing; even as his final picture book, *Bumble-Ardy* (2011) became a children's favorite, it was described in Time as "mildly subversive." Sendak must have been pleased.

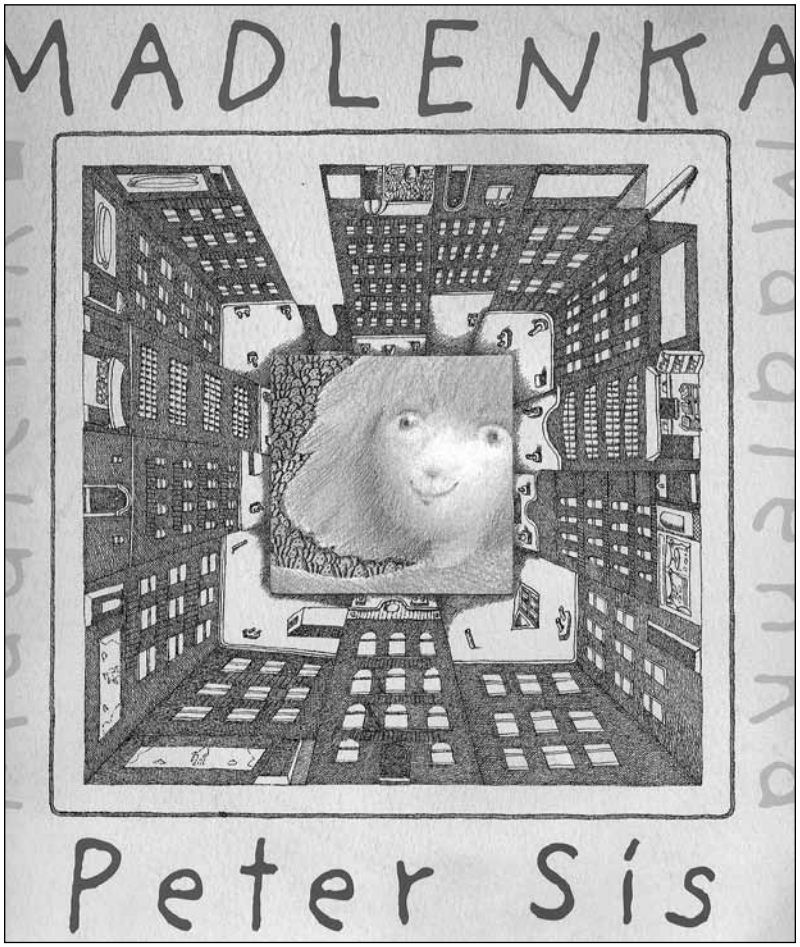
Often described as one of New Zealand's leading writers, Margaret Mahy contributed more than 100 picture books, 40 novels and 20 collections of short stories to the field of children's and young adult literature. While many of her plots and themes were rooted in fantasy and the supernatural, Mahy's writing concentrates on the themes of human relationships and growing up. Whether crafting a fantastic feminist coming-of-age in the YA novel *The Changeover* (1984) or reminding younger readers to get outside and have fun in the picture book *The Moon & Farmer McPhee* (2010, illustrated by David Elliot), Mahy kept her attention on her young readers and made a remarkable and lasting contribution to the field.

This issue of *Bookbird* opens with scholarly articles on the work of HCA Award winners: Constance Vidor discusses aspects of freedom in the illustrations of Peter Sís, and Beatriz Alcubierre Moya traces paths of flesh and memory in the novels of María Teresa Andruetto. These articles are followed by essays from other parts of the world. Heidi Hammond analyzes a study of the use of a graphic novel in teaching multimodal literacies in high schools; Meni Kanatsouli offers a close reading of games inside mainly Greek texts for children, and Kathy Short traces the connections between literatures of trauma and children's use of these texts in claiming agency. Following these longer articles, this issue has short essays on the rest of the Hans Christian Andersen Award shortlist: illustrators Mohammed Ali Baniasadi, John Burningham, Roger Mello, and Javier Zabala; and authors Paul Fleischman, Bart Moeyaert, Jean-Claude Mourlevat, and Bianca Pitzorno.

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is also the venue where the IBBY Asahi Award is presented. This year there were two winners: Abuelas Cuentacuentos—The Grandmothers Storytelling Programme, and SIPAR—Soutien à Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction des pays du sud-est asiatique. This issue features a Children & Their Books column on each of these remarkable organizations. A Letter on the many children's books by Chinese environmentalist Liu Xianping comes next, and it is followed by reviews of secondary literature. Throughout the issue, you will find a number of postcards on new books for children.

Finally, I want to express my deepest appreciation to Lydia Kokkola. We embarked on this editorial journey together, and while she was unable to continue to its end, she has my deepest gratitude for the time, effort, and talent she contributed. Her work for *Bookbird* will continue to light my way.

Peter Sís: Artist of Freedom



Peter Sís has won worldwide acclaim for his illustrated books. His techniques include use of visual metaphors, symbolism, and art historical allusions. Many of his books incorporate the imagery of primary documents such as distressed paper and diary entries. His work ranges from playful to mysterious and invites close reading and multiple interpretations. In his narrative choices and pictorial content Sís emphasizes themes of political and intellectual freedom.

by CONSTANCE VIDOR

Constance Vidor is Director of Library Services at Friends Seminary in New York, New York. She has worked in independent and public school libraries, and teaches online courses in the Youth, Literature, and Technology graduate program at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Louise Farrenc, Classical Composer* (http://free.yudu.com/item/details/390938/Louise-Farrenc–Classical-Composer).

The elegant, stylized, inventively detailed illustrations of Peter Sís are recognizable throughout the world, as both children and adults have embraced his unique use of art to tell stories that matter. In over 65 books, thousands of newspaper drawings, movie posters, and public art, Sís speaks to imaginations of all ages. Books such as *Ballerina* and the *Madlenka* series feature young children just beginning to explore the world, while complex

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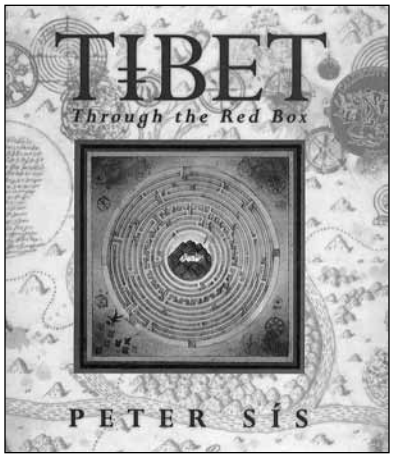
and enigmatic books such as *Tibet Through the Red Door* and his most recent publication, *The Conference of Birds,* invite the reflections of older readers. His public art, such as the iconic New York City subway car poster, have injected humanity and humor into the urban experience. Sís uses genres as varied as fairy tales, biography, poetry, and fiction to explore his artistic vision and assert a passionate, lifelong commitment to freedom, individuality, and imagination. This article will demonstrate the areas of artistic and social concern that define the work of Peter Sís. I will look at Sís's penchant for turning abstract ideas into concrete images. I will also consider some strategies that Sís uses to create pages of text and images that draw the eye into pictorial and conceptual depths, and how this strategy links to the dramatic tension between ambiguity and clarity in his work. Lastly, I will consider the role of symbols, the use of primary documents both real and imaginary in his books, and some senses in which his theme of freedom emerges through the notion of a "border disturbed."



Introduction

Born in communist Czechoslovakia in 1949, Sís grew up in a country whose enormous legacy of artistic vitality was despised and oppressed by its totalitarian rulers. Sís's parents, both artists, encouraged his artistic aspirations at home. His father's tales of his travels in China and Tibet arguably had as profound an influence on his artistic development as his studies at the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague and the Royal College of Art in London. Rock-and-roll was a major interest of Sís's, discovered in the records his father brought home from trips abroad. For two years, Sís hosted a radio program, until the Communist government banned it. An opportunity to travel to the Los Angeles in 1982 to create films for the 1984 Olympics led to his permanent defection and a new life, free from governmental oppression.

Sís has earned an Aladdin's-cave's worth of awards and accolades, including six New York Times Book Review Best Illustrated Books of the Year, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Award, a Caldecott Honor Award, A MacArthur Foundation Award, and most recently the 2012 Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration.

Sís's development as an artist is marked by prolific output and stylistic plasticity. His illustrations for Sid Fleischman's *The Whipping Boy* (1987 Newbery Award winner) established him as a new major talent and exhibited the early distinctive features of his style. The figures on the front cover float on a blanket of pointillist dots and cross-hatchings. Two trees and two villains are arranged in menacing symmetry on either side of a horse bearing the two boys, the prince and his whipping boy who are the heroes of the tale. Misty blues and greens flood the landscape. In contrast, the villains are stony

white and the heroes are an inky outline in the distance. A golden orb in the center casts an unearthly glow over this scene that seems to be both day and night. The intensive emphasis on texture, the bold, flat design, and the spirit-like rendering of people are elements that Sís has explored throughout his career, and are the most recognizable aspects of his pictorial signature. Years later, however, a second edition of the book would demonstrate Sís's control of an entirely different visual vocabulary. On this front cover, the main characters fill the space, bulging forward as if about to burst out of the book. Realistic color and fully rounded figures signify humor and action rather than mystery and menace. In these contrasting book covers, one sees the suppleness of Sís's artistic skills.

Sís has commented on the importance of the artistic freedom he has experienced since moving to the United States: "In Prague, people end up with a certain style because it is—or at least in my time was—such a closed society; you have to constantly answer questions about what you are doing. . . . In New York, I hardly meet anybody, so, this is great, because I am able to reinvent myself constantly" (qtd. in Joseph 131-41).

Artistic freedom, for Sís, is inseparable from political and intellectual freedom, and his works celebrate these intertwined values. Books such as *The Tree of Life*, *Starry Messenger*, and *Follow the Dream* dramatize the actions of non-conformists who overcome political, religious, and intellectual oppression to realize their dreams of discovery, travel, creativity, and the pursuit of truth. Sís's autobiographical book *The Wall* portrays his own pursuit of liberty while growing up under a communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia. These are books about breaking free. Sís's books for younger children, such as the *Madlenka* books, capture the pleasure of being young in a free society, where the imagination can run wild without having to push against social or political constraints.

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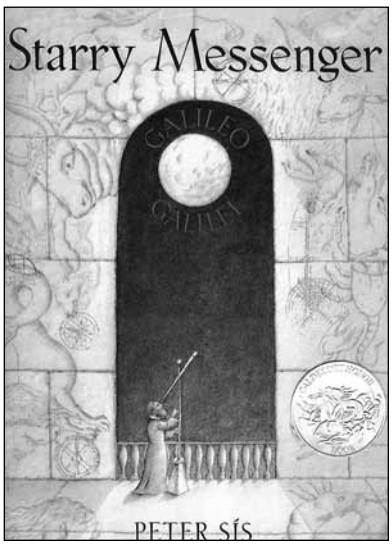
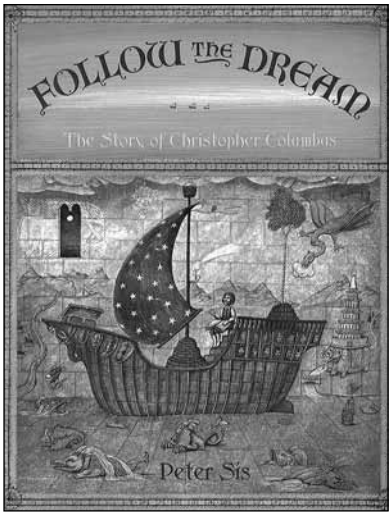
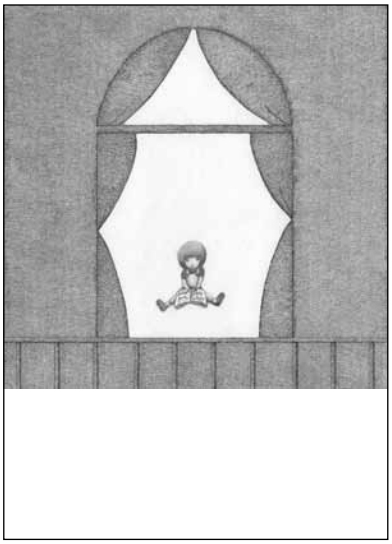


The thematic content of the stories Sís has illustrated, especially those he has himself authored, is important in considering his art because Sís is as much, if not more, an illustrator of ideas than an illustrator of events in a story. His pictures not only tell the "story" of the story, but the meaning of the story. Sís accomplishes this in large part through the sheer visual fecundity of the page. Images and techniques allude not only to the story at hand, but also to a range of visual vocabularies suggestive of historical and mythical allusions. Some ideas are presented in concrete visual metaphors, while other ideas are conveyed an intentionally allusive or mysterious manner. Sís's illustrations offer visual playgrounds that the reader is free to enjoy, ponder, and interpret in very personal ways.





Ideas into Concrete Images

The illustrations for *The Starry Messenger* show Sís's affinity for creating visual metaphors to portray both events and ideas. Accompanying the text, "Galileo was amazed by what he could see with his telescope," is Galileo's view of a planet from the instrument as it focuses on a large round planet covered with explosions of fire and smoke. The succeeding pages feature scenes of Galileo's growing fame, each one inside a planet-shaped circle, and each realized in glowing tones of salmon-pink and gold. The design changes abruptly as the narrative describes the Church's opposition. The illustration over the text "He had gone against the Church…" shows a papal eagle, its wings shaped like jaws with sharp teeth that bite into the circle and menace a tiny figure of Galileo. Medallion insets depicting a fortress and a dungeon cell decorate the eagle's black wings, and death-rays emanate from its eyes.

Sís shows the ultimate vindication of Galileo in a multi-hued illustration of the universe in the shape of a circle, a timeline marking Galileo's official pardon by the Catholic Church, and a medallion depicting a rocket in orbit around the earth—the achievement that this free thinker set in motion 350 years earlier.

The Wall features another even more dramatic visual concretization of power oppressing individuality. In this account of Sís's early life behind the Iron Curtain, a double spread is devoted to the simple and chilling text, "This was the time of brainwashing." A huge red cloud almost entirely fills the space. In the cloud, an outsize Stalin is riding a submarine-shaped object, flanked by a tower of other tyrants, including Lenin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev. Stalin's fingers are morphing into torpedoes; Lenin holds canons. On closer examination, one discovers a line of defenseless, armless silhouettes standing with their backs to the viewer inside the submarine shape underneath Stalin. Are they protestors who have been lined up on the edge of a ditch to be shot in the back? Are they slave laborers? Or are they merely people who have been reduced to the anonymity demanded by communism's demands for obedience and conformity? Under the red cloud, a little boy in a red Young Pioneer's kerchief walks with his head bowed. This illustration is the opposite of propaganda: it shows a powerful idea, but encourages the readers to think for themselves. Large figures representing authority threaten to crush tiny individuals. Dark colors and iconic military objects reinforce the portrayal of evil power. Later in the story, Sís uses a contrasting visual lexicon to show non-conformist and anti-tyrannical influences filtering into Czechoslovakia from the free world.

An exuberant illustration dramatizes the Prague spring of 1968, "when everything seemed possible." In contrast to the rest of the book's illustrations, which are restricted to black and

red, this double spread explodes with color. The straight lines and boxes of the previous pages give way to a design of flowing, rounded lines. Two rock singers dominate a landscape filled with objects of fun and creativity: a unicorn labeled "art," and a butterfly with moon-shaped wings labeled "poetry" float in the sky. The illustration is in fact a catalog of the types of ordinary things that make life worthwhile for Sís: travel, theater, film, the Harlem Globetrotters, a birthday cake, records, Allen Ginsberg, palm trees, a whale, and, of course, a child waving a paintbrush and a painting in the air. Like a renaissance emblem book, in which moral ideas are presented with images and text labels, Sís's art embodies the essential virtues in specific objects and figures ("The English Emblem Book Project"; "Glasgow University Emblem"). Noteworthy also is Sís's presentation of "high" and "low" types of art as having equal value: "The Beatles" and "Poetry" are of equal size and visual weights. With this attention to the figural weight of small details, Sís invests every element of the illustration with meaning that extends, deepens, and enhances the democratic theme.

Pages That Drawing the Eye into Pictorial Depths

This technique of illustrating ideas in dramatic concrete forms seizes the reader's attention, as do certain bold graphic shapes that organize many of Sís's illustrations; yet there is also a depth and variety of invention in his pages that draw the curious eye into deeper layers of visual and imaginative experience, decorative elaborations, historical and cultural allusions and more subtle thematic variations. Sís's art rewards the curious viewer who will take the time to linger over each page.

Tibet Through the Red Box tells about a long journey in Tibet that Sís's father took when Sís was a young child. The narrative unfolds in the voice of the father through excerpts from a diary he kept in Tibet, and in the voices of Sís both as an adult and as a child. Sís the child discovers the diary and follows its stories deep into wonder. Sís the adult remembers the painful separation from his father and tries to understand the journey from the father's point-of-view as well as his own. The illustrations clarify and enrich the complexity of the narrative. Mandalas and rows of Buddhas paying homage to Tibetan art evoke the spirituality of the father's quest. Figures of varying degrees of transparency are superimposed on one another, drawing the eye into deeper levels of seeing on each page. The diary excerpts are printed in a cursive font. In other

Sís's art rewards the curious viewer who will take the time to linger over each page.

parts of the book, tiny squiggles that look like handwriting (but are too unclear to be recognizable) tease the reader with a suggestion of secret writings. Portrayals of Himalayan landscapes are shown with rocks and trees arranged in tantalizing shapes that hint at handwriting—is it the writing of a fantasy language? Is it words spoken in a whisper whose meaning is lost? The handwritings, like stories found in an old diary, have degrees of comprehensibility and opacity that are endlessly mystifying and enchanting to the close observer.

Ambiguity and Clarity

This play along the spectrum between clarity and ambiguity is a stratagem that appears throughout Sís's books. At one end of the spectrum, objects may have labels to make their meaning sharp and unmistakable, such as in the illustration of Freedom in *The Wall,* with its butterfly labeled "poetry."

Clarity is also powerfully expressed in Sís's page designs, in which distinct geometric forms divide the space and demarcate separate narrative elements. The double spread labeled "The Voyage of the Beagle" in Sís's book about Charles Darwin, *The Tree of Life*, shows a map of the world with the Beagle's journey marked in red. Small medallions arranged at regular intervals around the border show animals Darwin observed. Larger medallions in the corners portray life on

board the ship. A text in a wavy pattern (pun intended) around the border quotes excerpts from a correspondence between Darwin and a fellow scientist. A more exact, lucid description of the voyage could not be imagined. This emphasis on visual clarity fits the narrative's subject matter: the discovery of natural facts.

Yet another strategy that Sís uses in the service of clarity is the "Archimboldo effect." Like the renaissance painter, Guiseppe Archimboldo, who painted personifications of the four seasons in which the "people" are shown as conglomerations of fruits and vegetables associated with their respective seasons, Sís portrays things as conglomerations of smaller objects that express a salient theme or meaning. In *The Tree of Life*, one of the Galapagos Islands is shown in "Archimboldo" form: its mountains, rocks, beaches, and pools are arranged to portray the head of a strange humanoid being. The text that encircles this illustration is a quotation from Darwin's diary: "Both in space and time, we seem to be brought somewhat near to the great fact-the mystery of mysteries-the first appearance of new beings on this earth." Medallion insets show penguins, seals, and lizards as examples of real animals observed by Darwin; the wonder of discovery is shown with exuberant clarity in the portrayal of the island itself as a "new being." Sís uses clarity not in the style of a textbook (to browbeat the reader with his intention), but to invite reflection and deepen the emotional engagement.

Thus, by moving back and forth between clarity and ambiguity, Sís suggests a movement between actual and imaginary worlds, as we shall see also in his use of symbols and documents.

Tibet Through the Red Box, in contrast, is a book devoted more to ambiguity and the acceptance of not knowing. Its pages, therefore, are full of mysterious visual elisions. The room in which young Peter discovers the red box is shown five times. The first illustration is a realistic "shot" of the room in natural daylight colors. Succeeding depictions show visions of the father's journey filling the room as it is flooded by waves of different colored lights. Elements of the room morph into and conflate with elements of the vision. Layers of transparent imagery are superimposed upon one another. Some objects seem to melt into shadow while others seem to catch fugitive rays of brightness. The effect is phantasmagoric, visionary, and mysterious. The curious reader will re-read the text to find narratives to match the images; some will have clear relationships to the text; others will create questions: Is the frame on the wall a picture or a mirror? Is the face on the chair the father or a holy man? Is the egg a Tibetan or a Christian symbol—a sign of what the father found in Tibet or a memory he brought with him from home? The obfuscation is inherent to the story and casts a spell of intrigue upon the reader, perhaps not unlike the spell that Tibet may have cast upon the father:

> It was all here, recorded on these walls, the past and the present.
> In that short moment, I think my father became who he is today,

> and in seeing this now, I can understand why he could never clearly write or tell about what he went through in Tibet. (45)

Thus, by moving back and forth between clarity and ambiguity, Sís suggests a movement between actual and imaginary worlds, as we shall see also in his use of symbols and documents.

Symbols, Squares, and the Border Disturbed

Through the use of symbols, Sís creates internally consistent and insistently realized alternate worlds. His symbols fit into two categories. Some derive from known vocabularies of symbolism, such as hearts and mandalas. They open outward into history and culture and convey to the reader the impression of sharing a general body of knowledge about religious and secular traditions, persons, and events. They are part of the public face of Sís's work.

Other images are strange, sometimes vaguely sinister, and original with Sís, such as floating fish with faces, floating eyes, and disembodied hands. Sís writes in *The Conference of the Birds,* "[f]or as long as I can remember, I have loved to draw pictures of flying-freedom-and birds. All kinds of birds: human-face birds, fish birds, snake birds." Another private symbol of Sís's pictorial universe is the leaf decorated with stars and perforated by a hole in the shape of a wave. It occurs mostly notably in *Tibet Through the Red Box*, and seems to convey an idea of harmony and reconciliation. The leaf image, a conflation of earth, air, and water, floats like a blessing over a drawing of an adult Sís and his aging father holding hands, casting shadows in the shapes of their younger selves.

Sís's art, in its denunciation of conformity and tyranny, and its celebration of freedom and imagination, is a great "disturber of borders."

Of supreme importance in Sís's symbolic vocabulary is the square, part of the first category of symbols, but also part of the structure of the book and thus not always immediately clear as a symbol. His illustrations almost always sit on the page in square or rectangular shapes with wide, white margins. These squares are often subdivided into more squares or rectangles. Patterns of squares within illustrations are ubiquitous, such as tiles, bricks, stamps, windows, folded paper, and grids. *Follow the Dream* includes curtains made of bricks, rooms, castles, and walls made of square stones. The story is literally "built" out of squares. When a brick wall is shown melting into ocean waves, the reader sees a concrete visualization of Columbus realizing his dream.

The most prominent type of square in Sís's artwork is the square page border. Borders are the lynchpins of his page designs and frequently incorporate writing and pictorial elements that tell the story. Perhaps a key to the meaning of these square borders is suggested in *The Wall*, where the narrative describes a communist official being lionized for a plan to catch "disturbers of the border" (citizens trying to escape to the West). Sís's art, in its denunciation of conformity and tyranny, and its

celebration of freedom and imagination, is a great "disturber of borders." If one accepts the unremittingly closed and solid shape of a square as a symbol of the totalitarian control once represented by the Berlin Wall, then Sís's use of page borders for expression and beauty can be seen as an artistic act of resistance, reinvention, and freedom.

The lighthearted book *Madlenka* displays Sís's reinvention of the border especially clearly. The story involves encounters between the young Madlenka and her neighborhood friends. Each new encounter is shown as a bird's eye view of a city block with a page border filled with colorful iconic images of the friend's ethnic and cultural heritage. The border devoted to Eduardo from Latin America, for example, brims with flowers, trees, plants, forests, rain, butterflies, parrots, jaguars, snakes, mountains, rivers, people, pyramids, fruits, vegetables, and Eduardo's own face, arranged like a colorful dance around the diagram of the city block. Just as the citizens of West Berlin protested the wall separating them from their compatriots in the East by painting it with dazzling colors, so Sís fills his page borders with colors, images, and narrative in both pictorial and text form.

This privileging of imagination, and the freedom to reach beyond physical realities, is a hallmark of Sís's artistic vision.

Symbols, whether from received bodies of symbol systems, or of Sís's private invention, endow his books with a sense of dense authentic substance, as if each one were resting on a body of mythology and historical experience to which the symbols allude.

Primary Documents: Proof of Existence

Another type of image that endows Sís's books with the notion of authenticity and depth is the primary document. These documents may be actual and thus give his work the feeling of a "true" historical document, or imitative and imaginary. Visual symbols and primary document-type images combine to create complex and authentic alter-worlds, possessing their own histories and mythologies, and their rich presence in Sís's oeuvre reflects an artist coming to terms with public and private selves.

While symbols play a role in world building by suggesting a mythological or conceptual basis, images of maps, handwritten letters, and diary excerpts evoke a sense of historicity and actuality. Sís draws on primary documents for his factual books and creates images that resemble primary documents for his fantasies. *Starry Messenger* includes both Ptolemaic and Copernican maps of the universe, a map of Italy the style of medieval cartography, a picture of the frontispiece to Galileo's book *The Starry Messenger* from 1610, and excerpts from Galileo's writings in a cursive hand. Whether copied from authentic primary documents or created in their likeness, these elements invest the book with a flavor and character of seventeenth-century Italy.

Sís's most recent book, *The Conference of the Birds*, includes a compelling example of an imaginary primary document image to assert the

truth of his imaginary construct. The story is Sís's retelling of a poem by Farid Ud-Din Attar, a Persian poet living in late 12th and early 13th centuries. It concerns a flock of birds searching for a king: "How do we know this king exists?" ask the birds. The following page informs the reader, "There's proof he exists. Look! Here's a drawing of one of his feathers." The illustration shows a rectangle that could be a piece of parchment with a realistic detailed drawing of a white feather, and several red designs that suggest Chinese official seals. This picture uses the visual semiotics of official documents and a juridical epistemology to assert not a literal truth, but an aesthetic and spiritual truth. This privileging of imagination, and the freedom to reach beyond physical realities, is a hallmark of Sís's artistic vision.

In *The Conference of the Birds*, Sís makes his pages look like the distressed pages of old historical documents. Many of the pages are colored to appear as if they have been streaked with water and discolored by exposure to light—just as if they bore the palimpsest of experience and came to Sís from an actual archive. With this technique, Sís extends the idea of authenticity to include entire books, even an entire body of work. The books themselves, as well as the artist's imagination, are primary data in the human record.

…Sís proclaims the generosity of the human spirit and its irrepressible search for truth and freedom.

The overriding impression of Sís's oeuvre is perhaps that of generosity. Sís helps himself generously to tropes of art history, myth, symbolism, and material culture, and he adds to those categories of expression with equal generosity from his own inventiveness. Sís is generous to his readers. He speaks in two different, yet equally rich registers, offering striking visual metaphors that address readers with passionate clarity, and ambiguous images that invite personal interpretation. Through visual and conceptual strategies that invite close looking, intent reflection, and pure enjoyment, Sís demonstrates the affirmative nature of children's literature. Running the gamut from simple and playful (the *Madlenka* series) to austere and magical (like *The Three Golden Keys*), Sís proclaims the generosity of the human spirit and its irrepressible search for truth and freedom.

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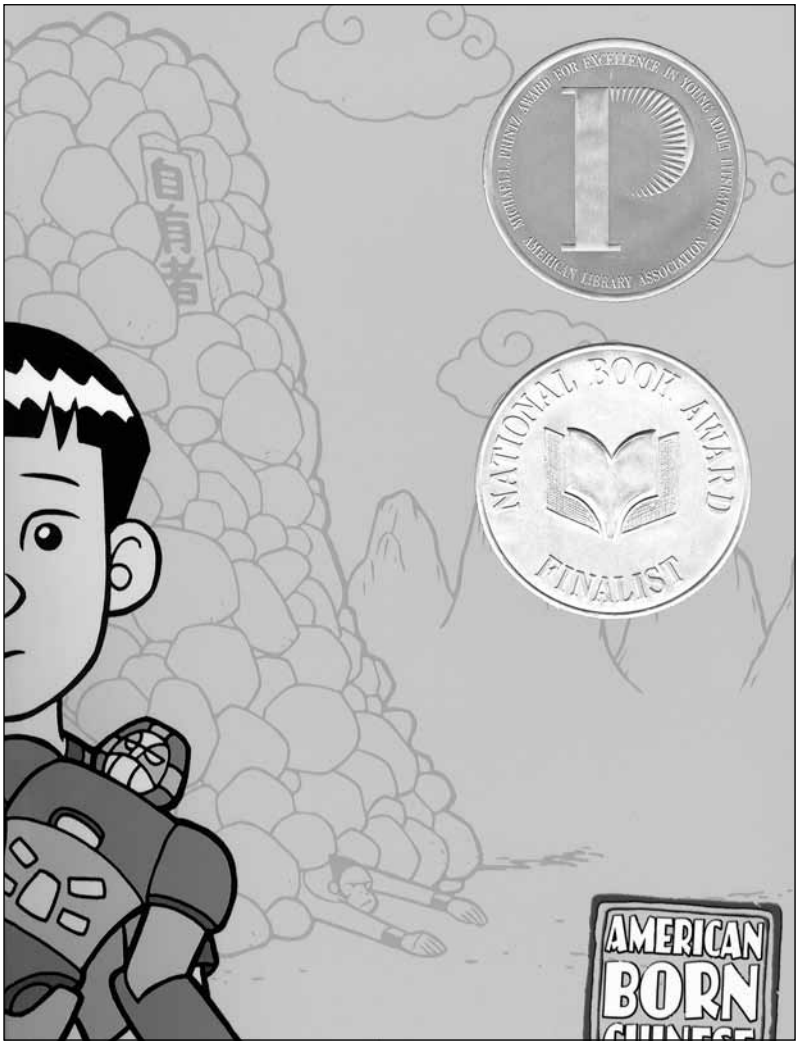
There are many narratives about war, but in 32 chapters, Abbas Jahangiryan tells the adventures of teenage boy, Hami, in the war-stricken city of Ghom, a religious city of Iran. The story begins with the love of two adolescents. The protagonist, Hami, is a refugee who has lost his parents during the bombardment of Iran-Iraq war in Dezful (Southern city of Iran). Now he lives with his grandma. The author narrates the bitterness of war alongside the story of a boy who is an artist in calligraphy and drawing. His well-meaning teacher, Afra, supports him. However, because of the war, his artistic talent does not flourish until he finds a job in the cemetery. Jahangiryan accounts war as the real catastrophe of human lives, and conveys the profound effect war has on young people in a simple, yet profound, language.

Bahra Eshraq

Abbas Jahangiryan

Wake Me up when the War is Over

Tehran: Ofogh Publishing House, 2010.
222 p.
ISBN: 9789643696573
(YA Novel)



María Teresa Andruetto:
A Literature without Adjectives

by BEATRIZ ALCUBIERRE MOYA

This article analyses the work of María Teresa Andruetto as a challenge to the notion of children's narrative as a genre as it traces how Andruetto uses a language strictly based on aesthetic purposes and beyond the traditional restrictions prescribed to children by parents and publishers. Andruetto's search along her own memory path leads to the construction of atmospheres centered in unusual issues in children's narrative, such as individuality, otherness, poverty, disability, politics, the macabre, and the grotesque: all of which are considered by her as essential to children's understanding of the world.

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Beatriz Alcubierre Moya is the author of *Ciudadanos del Futuro*, a history of the publications for children during the XIX Century in Mexico and *Los niños villistas* (in collaboration with Tania Carreño King), a history of the children in the Francisco Villa's army. Lately, she has been working in both the history of childhood and children's readings. She lives in Cuernavaca, where she is a professor of History in the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos.

Once upon a time, there was a man who built houses.
His name was Enós and was the best builder of them all: his houses were always the most beautiful, the perdurable ones.
Once two apprentices approached him, and said:

"One day you will die and no one shall do what you do. Why don't you teach us the secret of your art?"

Enós thought that their request was reasonable and he generously gave them all he knew.

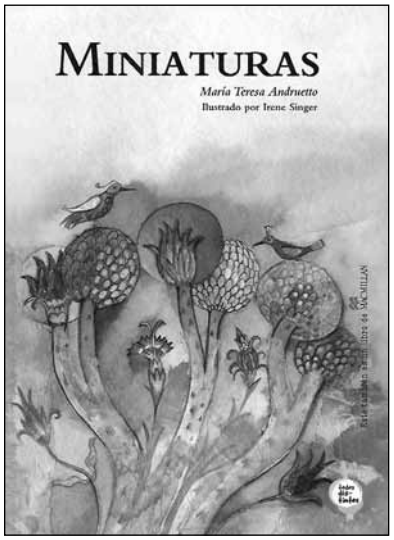
But once they had learned and thought they were already as great as the teacher, they despised him and walked away.

And when Enós charged eighty denarii, they charged seventy, saying that their houses were cheaper and equally resistant.

So people stopped appraising Enós and settled for the apprentices' houses.

Enós impoverished to be lacking the most essential, but not even in misery accepted to build houses that were not perdurable.

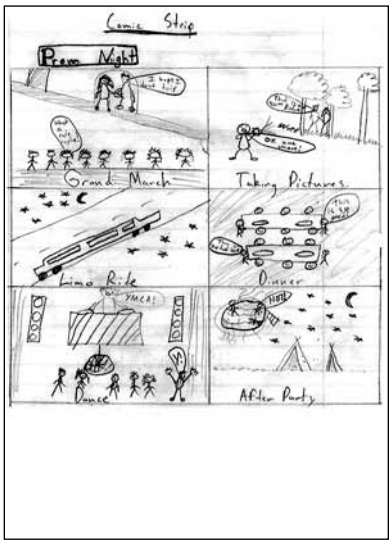
"Enós and the Apprentices,"
from *Miniatures*, María Teresa Andruetto



As a historian studying the construction of children's identity through cultural mediations (specifically through children's books), I have become somewhat skeptical about the idea of understanding children's literature as a genre *per se*. Therefore, I am not usually comfortable describing these kinds of cultural productions as examples of an aesthetic language spontaneously addressed for young readers, but rather as editorial, sometimes even mechanical, tasks. I do not mean to lessen their artistic value (when they truly have it), but instead, I mean to underline their socio-cultural, political and economic purposes. I am convinced that definitions involving genre contain serious limitations that sometimes darken more than illuminate the understanding of a particular cultural production. Therefore, I refer to children's literature as a category not determined by the specific type of readers to which it is aimed; young children are unable to purchase their own books, so their choices are often guided by their parents' agenda (taste, beliefs, preferences or a simple budget).

The first thing we have to understand when we use such an ambiguous (and sometimes arbitrary) expression as "children's literature" is that its first use came considerably later than many of the pieces that it includes: Perrault's *Mother Goose Tales*, Galland's *Arabian Nights*, Aesop's *Fables*, Swift's *Gulliver*, etc. None of these classics were originally conceived for the amusement of an audience exclusively formed by children. Accordingly, before adding any adjectives or assigning any use to these stories, we have to first remember that they are just representative of literature (without adjectives). The concept of children's literature is based on the existence of a certain kind of device, specially

designed for children's handling. Therefore, traditionally, a children's book is an object equipped with both textual and formal features aimed to attract the attention of a preconceived reader with a certain socio-cultural background, belonging to a particular age group. This means that children's literature is not just the work of authors, but of publishers who observe children as an expanding market, and create formulas that can be repeated indefinitely as long as the product being sold is profitable.



When I first read the Argentinean writer María Teresa Andruetto, I found myself in front of a whole new approach to the idea of literature "for children" that turns around most of the premises I just described. As Andruetto declares, her writing is in search of "a literature without adjectives" (*Haciaunaliteratura sin adjetivos*). Aware of the risks involved in the tendency to specify a unique kind of reader as the definitive audience of her work, she undertakes the task of creating a language guided by an aesthetic purpose, in which the children's response is pursued not as a primary intention, but as an added result. As shown in the short piece that appears as an epigraph to this article, Andruetto rejects preconceptions that determine the child or youth in a general way by ignoring the individuality of taste, which responds to personal experience. She avoids the traditional patterns and topics of children's narrative by exposing her own individuality and breaking the barriers between genres. In a free interpretation of her tale "Enós and the Apprentices," she explains that several issues are shown in this sort of parable from her early days: "creation, teaching, the quality of a job, the loyalty to oneself, opportunism, corruption, degradation of what we do, value and price, appearance and essence, the fleeting and the enduring. I did not know then, nor was my intention to give light to those truths, but I ascertain through the years that around this parable turns everything a writer writes and all that he does afterwards with his writing" ("Enós, los aprendices y la ecritura perdurable" 2).

As Andruetto declares, her writing is in search of "a literature without adjectives" (Haciaunaliteratura sin adjetivos).

Literature, as she says, is born of the writer's flesh and memory. It is a language faithful to its own search that resonates within the reader's mind, establishing a commitment between the reader and the author. She recognizes the danger that relays in the pursuit of correctness, in the development of mechanical skills, in the search for professionalism, and even in the gain of recognition, all of which often end up killing spontaneity and art itself. Therefore, Andruetto believes in a moral language that digs into the deep feelings following the desire to understand a certain aspect of the human being. That desire is not for sale, even if the writer, like Enós the house builder, is lacking the most essential. We repeatedly hear certain catch phrases—about the briefness and easiness of writing for children, the temptation to edit, the need for money—that try to justify the denigration of writing. But no

one talks about the vile, corrupted essence of so many books in circulation, or the immoral use of certain topics, texts that are written (not with one eye but the entire body) having the customer in mind. ("Enós, los aprendices y la ecritura perdurable" 7).

Andruetto's work is so much more than children's literature, and that is precisely why I consider it some of the most dignifying sort of reading that we are able to hand onto our children. Andruetto was recently awarded with the Hans Christian Andersen Award, becoming the first Hispanic-American writer to gain this distinction. The jury based its verdict on her masterful writing of important and original works "strongly centered on aesthetics," recognizing a clear literary base in her deep and poetical works. "Her books," as jurors stated, "refer to a great variety of topics, as migration, interior worlds, injustice, love, poverty, violence or even political topics" ("IBBY Announces Winners").

Andruetto was born in Arroyo Cabral, Argentina in 1954, a descendant of immigrants from Piedmont, Italy. For the last thirty years, she has been involved in the field of children's literature. Some of her works are considered "crossover literature," composed of stories that appeal as much to adults as they do to children or young adults. These books serve to provide a transition for trained readers towards a greater complexity; these books can also be read by adults. Two of Andruetto's most important publications, *The Girl, the Heart and the House* (2011) and *Stefano* (2012), are representative of specific cases of this type of "crossover literature."

The Girl, the Heart, and the House presents a journey into the deep feelings of Tina, a five-year old-conflicted by a big question: why she is not able to live with her mother, who lives in another house in a different village with Pedro (her older brother). Tina and her father live with grandma Herminia and visit mother and Pedro every Sunday without exception. In these fraternal meetings Tina feels blessed, but she always has to say goodbye at dusk: "The girl waits for a kiss from her mother, and when she gets it, she asks for another one *so I can keep it 'til next Sunday*" (*The Girl, the Heart, and the House* 15).

She loves her mom and brother, although he is small and fragile. She does not quite understand why she is not allowed to play with him every day. The boy has Down Syndrome, and it is amazing how Andruetto manages to include this feature in the book from the perspective of a five-year-old struggling to understand the situation:

Carlota [Tina's friend] asks: *Why does your mom has to stay and take care of your brother? Because he is sick. What does he have? He was born with straight eyes,* says Tina, as she pulls her eyes with her fingers to show her friend. *His eyes are like Chinese and he needs to be taken care of very very much, because he can't do everything alone, so I can't live with my mom, you know?* And Charlotte says yes, she understands.

In this story, Andruetto presents a journey through the memory path. Although she is not telling her own story, she evokes the psychological atmosphere that we all once had as children, and have left behind. She displays a deep understanding of childhood and renders it to the audience with surprising ease. In doing so, Andruetto reflects real feelings through a fictional character. In her own words, "Is in fiction, under the artistic form of lying, how you can tell a truth" ("Enós, los aprendices y la ecritura perdurable" 3).

The journey through the author's history,

using her family's memory and her own, is a more central issue in *Stefano,* a novel about an immigrant boy and his voyage from Piedmont to Rosario, Argentina.

Although *Stefano* does not narrate the life of my father, there is plenty of it in the book, scattered here and there, especially small anecdotes and familiar features like "old Moretti" playing his mandolin, or the ghost of hunger that harassed immigrants forever, or meals we ate at home, or the songs that were sang at the port,

Immigration is a central issue in our society today, both metaphorically and literally.

or the names of certain villages that I know he crossed, or the title of the book that reproduces his name (*Stefano* 102).

Immigration is a central issue in our society today, both metaphorically and literally. Immigration not only addresses the painful reality of exile, but also opens an interesting line of thought by pointing out the gap between self and others, the known and the unknown, childhood and maturity, holding on and letting go: the lifelong process of determining our own identity. This conflict becomes tangible as the narrative is divided in two overlapping voices: the first narrator is omniscient and tells the story of Stefano chronologically, from his departure in Italy to the end of his trip in Argentina, while the second narrator is a grown Stefano, telling the story to his wife "Ema," who is expecting a baby. This narrative is less about the plot, and more about the inner life of the title character. Therefore, just as in our memories, its path is not linear and orderly, but full of jumps, twists, and turns in time:

> Now that we are having a child and reviewing our life to continue it together, I understand my mother, her words.
>
> She followed me all the way here, repeating what she used to say back there, banging my memory like water. . . .
>
> I always dreamed with her, standing far away, at the door of our house, with her hand raised; but last night, Ema, can you believe it? I dreamed she was coming to us and hugged me. (*Stefano* 99)

A few years after the creation of *Stefano*, Andruetto addressed the issue of both migration and poverty from a local point of view. In *Juan's Country*, she depicts a round trip, from the countryside to the city and back again, in the indirect

context of Argentina's 20th century history.

In this poetic novel, two parallel stories are told about Juan and Anarina, who meet halfway through the narrative to comprise a love story. Each of their families has always lived in the field, mastering their respective crafts: Juan's family keeps cows, while Anarina's sell wool. However, natural disasters, corrupted governments, and thieves, make them gradually lose everything. Finding themselves impoverished and hopeless, they march to the city in search of a better future. In "Villa Carton [Cardboard Village] things were not good, but then they got worse":

> Villa Carton is located where it is since the beginning of the world. Nobody knows who gave it that name, nor when, but long ago someone put the first sheet and the first cardboards and someone else placed stones and bricks on the roofs so they did not fly away.
>
> Those who come from the north seeking for work in the city end up in Villa Carton. And to that place Juan and his parents arrived.
>
> And they became cardboard collectors, as everyone in the village, for there even the youngest children separate healthy cartons of broken, the wet ones from the dry. And sell them. (*El país de Juan* 19-20)

In *Juan's Country,* children cannot afford to be fragile, so instead, they become heroes. As in folk stories, there are difficult obstacles to overcome, but there is also a homecoming and, somehow, a happy ending. The piece intends to narrate "poverty in a fairytale tone" ("Leer y escribirparacomprender"). It is a mixture of painfully real facts and a poetic, musical language: a taste of a "magical realism" that impregnates Hispanic American narrative, and popular mentality.

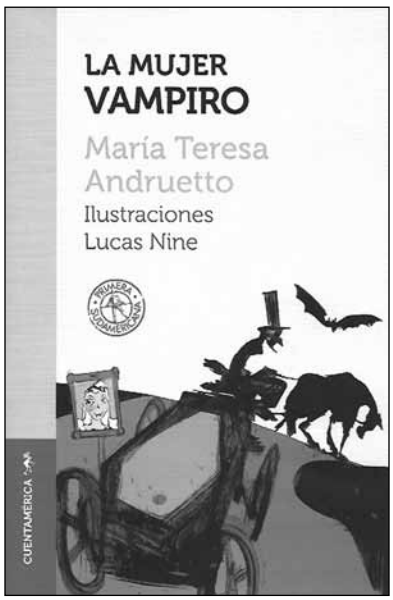
In Juan's Country, children cannot afford to be fragile, so instead, they become heroes.

One day Juan and Anarina meet each other in the street, play together, fall in love, grow old and get married. A certain kind of happiness and an unknown sense of hope filter timidly into their lives. Tired of poverty, social injustice, military government and political persecution, they eventually realize that the city is far from being the best place to start again, so they go back to the field to sell wool and keep cows, in order to re-master their crafts.

Magical as it is, Andruetto's realism is not conflicted with popular "fantasmagoria." She believes that horror stories, which are as old as the world itself, were born out of the necessity of expressing deep fears and confronting them through language, because words that frighten people can also cure them: "Men and women were more fearful in the beginning of times, when lots of things did not have any explanation (thunder that breaks through the sky, a bone florescent light over wet

soil, a wood cracking in the heart of the night…). They were more fearful and also more respectful of nature and the non-explored, because fright is a feeling that warns about danger and it often manifests before the unknown" (*Miniaturas* 7).

The Vampire Woman is a collection of horror stories Andruetto has taken from Argentina's oral tradition. Surprisingly, some of these stories are even familiar to a Mexican reader, such as myself. It seems as if these baroque ghosts have traveled through time and space along the whole continent, from Patagonia to Río Bravo, hunting travelers and young children, century after century. I specifically recognized "the lace glove," despite the local variations that place it in Cordoba's pampa. It is very close to a story that I heard from a friend one night at the road when I was nine or ten years old, a story which kept me from sleeping alone for almost a week:



> Once, a villager from La Aguadawas riding a car, with his son, through the road from Capilla de Garzón to Pampayasta. When they were crossing Zárate's field, a young woman in a party dress stopped them. Though it was deep at night they glanced at her from the distance, because the moonlight was intense and her dress was bright white.
>
> "My boyfriend got mad at me and left me alone in the middle of the field," she said when the car stopped. "Could you take me to Pampayasta's entrance? I live there."
>
> "Of course, Miss" the villager answered, as he and his son made room for her in the car.
>
> For a while they traveled in silence, until they began small talking, more because of kindness that for really having something to say. She then confessed she liked too much to dance, and that her name was Encarnación. . . . When they got to Pampayasta, close to Severo Aranda's bowling alley. The villager stopped the car. The girl skipped out and ran into a house in a corner, in front of the crossroad.
>
> Father and son continued their travel. After a few leagues, the boy discovered a white lace glove, laying in the car's floor, and showed it to his father. They decided to go back and return it. They stopped in the corner, in front of the crossroad and got down, as the father clapped his hands.
>
> "Hail, Holly Mary!" he shouted, as villagers use to.
>
> At first, his call was answered by dog barks. Then, by a voice of a man, grasped away from sleep.
>
> "What do you want?"
>
> "Does a young woman called Encarnación live here?" asked the villager.
>
> The house owner opened the door. He was pale and stared at both strangers without saying any word.
>
> "We come to give her this glove back. She left it in our car."

The man kept staring in silence.

"Don't take us wrong" the villager insisted, "she had a fight with her boyfriend and asked us to bring her here."

The boy kept extending his hand, cramping from offering the glove to the man, until he finally spoke:

"She is my daughter, but she died… Twenty years from yesterday."

"But she told us she was returning from a ball…" remembered the surprised villager.

"Twenty years ago…" told the father. "It was Santa Rosa's day, she died dancing in the patronal feast. Her heart, you know?"

The man and the boy turned around mumbling excuses. But the girl's father claimed:

"The glove… please. I have to take it to her tomb. Every year, during Santa Rosa's feast, she forgets something somewhere and it has to be returned."

The boy gave him the lace glove. Then he reached silently to his father, who was already sitting in the car, harnessing the horses. (*La mujervampiro* 39-43)

That fright, often mixed with a little sense of humor, should not be exclusive to adults, because it has therapeutic properties…

Andruetto has no shame in confessing her taste for macabre stories: "I liked them as a little girl and as a grown up, even in the times when I thought (what nonsense!) They were harmful" (*La mujervampiro* 58). It seems so ungenerous to deny our little ones the joy of experiencing that unique sort of fear that runs through our back and comes out as a cold sweat to liberate our deepest feelings. That fright, often mixed with a little sense of humor, should not be exclusive to adults, because it has therapeutic properties, which every living person can benefit from. Most of all, these stories simply provide pleasure, which takes us back to the aesthetic value of what these pieces have to offer.

In Andruetto's earlier books, inspired by fairy-tales, there is a unique sense of beauty that comes from the grotesque: a poetical distortion that arises as a tragicomic effect, reaching out to scurrilous or even monstrous images. Among the stories told in *The Enchanted Ring* (2010), I discovered the unexpected master piece "The Woman with the Bow Tie," filled with musicality, eroticism and gothic horror:

Not long after Longobardo won the battle of Silesia, the nobility of Isabela decided to organize a costume party in his honor.

The ball had place the nigh of Pentecost, on the terraces of the Purple Palace, and all women in the kingdom were invited.

Longobardo decided to disguise himself as a pirate, so he would not hide his wild and bold spirit.

He crossed the hills in green tights and a white silk shirt that showed off his victorious chest. He was riding a black filly with a beating heart, like his own.

He was among the first to arrive. As corresponds to a pirate, his left eye was covered with a patch. With the free eye, he prepared to look at the young women who came hidden behind their costumes.

Along came a nymph wrapped in gauze.

Along came a moraine gypsy.

Along came a beggar in rags.

Along came a peasant.

Along came a courtesan who had a red velvet dress tight to her waist and a lifted skirt with petticoats of starch.

As walking by Longobardo, she made a slight bow in greeting. That was enough for him to decide to invite her to dance.

The courtesan was young and beautiful. And unlike the other women wore no jewelry but just a black ribbon in the middle of the neck that ended in a bow.

Laughter.

Confidences.

Mazurkas.

She turned into the arms of Longobardo. And when the music stopped she reached out her hand for him to kiss it. Until she was carried away in the whirlwind of dance to a corner of the terrace by the steps. And gave up to that powerful embrace.

He stroked her neck, the birth of the shoulders, the pale neck, the black bow tie.

"No! She said. Do not touch it!"

"Why?"

"If you love me, you must swear to never unleash this knot."

"I swear," he said.

And he kept up stroking her.

Until the desire to know what secret was there took away his peace.

He kissed her forehead.

Cheeks.

Her fruity tasted lips.

Always haunted by the black bow tie.

And when he was sure she had fainted to love, pulled the ribbon.

He pulled the ribbon.

The knot was undone.

And the girl's head rolled down the steps. (*El anilloencantado* 2010)

As a historian studying the construction of children's identity through cultural mediations (specifically through children's books), I know about the darkness inside original fairytales, about the scatological, sexual, and bloody features that were gradually erased from them to make them "suitable for children." Paradoxically, children played a central role in the earliest recollections of these stories. As Robert Darnton explains, in modern central Europe, the strong bond between aristocratic or bourgeois children and their peasant nurses became a huge doorway for cultural transfers (Darnton 1985). They shared a similar mentality and a symbolic language, the same fears of the unexplained. Andruetto knows about this too, and she is not afraid to return those dark images back to their original owners.

She also knows that stories came first as oral speech; that the tissue of myths, legends, and folklore is knitted by mnemonic strategies, as cadence and rhyme, that allows the story teller to narrate once and again the same plot, with as many variations as he or she wants to introduce. These interwoven strategies are why traditional tales are neverending: they provide content for each other and keep changing trough time, preserving their essential plot. It is a tremendous, impossible challenge to reproduce this

feature in written language, because printed word has somehow threatened oral tradition and its profoundness. However, Andruetto is not intimidated by this challenge, as she manages to deliver in most of her works a sense of endlessness; she creates the notion of a circular timing in

stories that repeats and contains itself, as in Juan's homecoming, Stefano's memories, Encarnacion's night hunting, or little Tina's explanations of the world.

In closing, I offer one of Andruetto's never ending stories; "Footprints in the Sand" is a time paradox that repeats and contains itself trough infinity, much like Scheherazade's Arabian nights:

> At the edge of the desert a man and a woman meet for a trip.
>
> The man is called Ramadan, the woman Suraqadima, and the journey they undertake seems more like a runaway.
>
> Before it is dissolved by the wind, one can see the pattern of their feet on the sand: the footprints crossed the desert to the oasis where men and beasts drink together.
>
> They sit next to the coolness of water. She loosens the strip that girds her waist, unties her sandals and drinks. He moistens his temples, his chin and chest. Then he wets the back of her head.
>
> They have abandoned their homes, their children, her husband, his wife, and spend the afternoon making plans. After one walking day they will get across the dunes, to a town where Ramadan has friends and money. All the shadows will remain behind them.
>
> Suraqadima looks up and sees a skull and an inscription that tells about a crime. She imagines that the one who died is a woman and thinks she perhaps also abandoned her husband and children to meet a man who has friends and money in a city across the dunes. And if the wind had not blow, one could still see their footprints in the sand, the trip across the desert, the man's feet following hers to the green spot, to the side of the water, where he, she thinks, might have killed her.
>
> Ramadan asks what she is thinking. She points out the skull and tells a story:
>
> "Once a woman abandoned her house, her husband and her children to follow a man. She made a trip trough the desert after him, searching for an oasis of pure and green water. When they found it, for some unknown reason, the man killed her at the side of the water."
>
> She tells that story, born from her lips, not knowing why, and stares into the eyes of her beloved one.
>
> And then he kills her for the second time. (*Huellas en la arena* 1997)

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The text written by Luisa Mattia is strongly metaphorical and the title as well is used in a metaphorical sense. **Per filo e per segno** is an Italian idiomatic expression meaning "to tell in great detail," but at the same time the title plays on the word "filo" [thread]. The whole story is indeed based on threads which become sheets of paper and, eventually, a book. Each and every one of these threads represents the stories collected by Silva, a child who loves to listen to stories. With the threads she first collects from a tailor, Silva creates a net to hold all the stories, so she could tell them again and again. Everyone who has something to tell knows that Silva would be ready to listen to them. And she collects so many stories that the threads are not enough anymore. That is when Silva asks for a white cloth and squid ink to write the stories down. Once again this is not enough, thus she decides to cut every story as a paper and sew the pages together to create a book. The text is beautifully enriched by Vittoria Facchini's stylistically original illustrations which combine black and white drawings with colour photos.

Melissa Garavini

Luisa Mattia

Per filo e per segno

Illus. Vittoria Facchini
Roma, Italia: Donzelli editore, 2012
28 pp.
ISBN 9788860366962
(Picture Book, 5+)

Graphic Novels and Multimodal Literacy: A High School Study with *American Born Chinese*

by HEIDI HAMMOND

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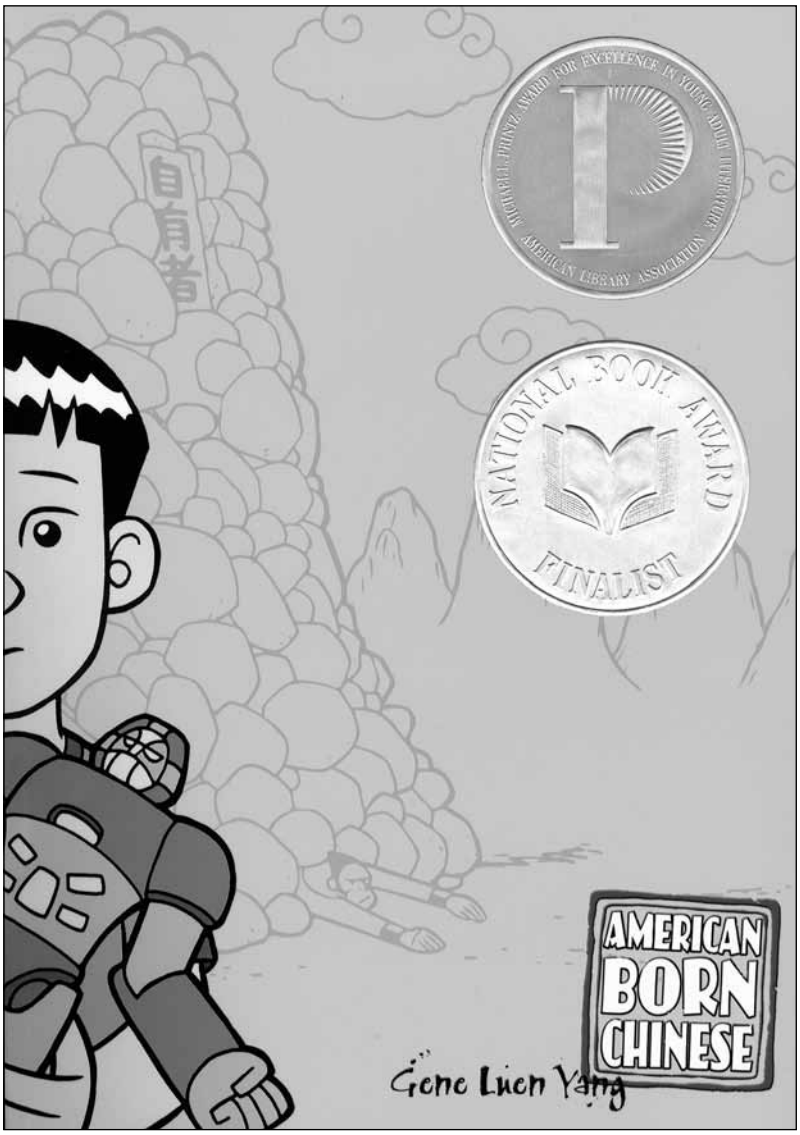

Meshing print literacy and visual literacy, graphic novels exemplify a type of multimodal text demanding multimodal literacy skills. The comics format of graphic novels requires the reader to know the conventions that constitute the unique language of the medium. These visual conventions are comparable to genre conventions of traditional print texts. This article discusses these conventions and relates literary theory to graphic novels. It also presents a reader response study conducted with American high school students using Gene Yang's American Born Chinese.

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In the past, literacy was defined as the ability to read and write printed text. What we now consider as "text" is much wider, encompassing all communication media. "Text" has come to mean "anything in the surrounding world of the literate person" (Carter 12). Texts can be different combinations of the modes of print, images, sound, gesture, and movement which include digital texts as well as film, music, television, drama, and print (Arizpe and Styles). Authentic literacy, by which I mean the ability to navigate the world of images and texts in which one lives, is acquired through multiple paths using multiple modalities and requires an expansion of our concept of literacy (McPherson). Think of the years children spend learning to read printed text. Now consider how much time people spend using multimodal forms of communication. If, as Gunther Kress believes, multimodality refers to "all the modes available and used in making meaning, in representation and in communication," we should devote as much attention to acquiring multimodal literacy as we do in mastering traditional print literacy ("Literacy" 91).

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One example of a multimodal text is the graphic novel, a fiction or nonfiction narrative in comic book format, sometimes referred to as sequential art. It fuses art and text, combining print literacy and visual literacy to present a multimodal literacy experience. The comic book format used in graphic novels demands a different literacy because the words and pictures are read as a single integrated text (Duncan & Smith). It might be assumed everyone knows how to read graphic novels since most people begin reading comics as children. However, the ability to read comics is learned, a skill that those who rarely read comics or comic books may not have acquired (Bennett). Readers who lack experience with this format, Robin Brenner believes, must make a number of adjustments, the main one being attending to the illustrated portion of the story. After progressing from picture books to chapter books that are primarily text, children may not consider illustrations necessary for comprehension. Stephen Cary found that illustrations in comics could be helpful to his students learning the English language, if they gave any attention to them. He discovered with his students and with teachers in his staff development workshops that they sometimes had difficulty reading pictures, or simply did not take the time to read them.

Reading graphic novels also requires slowing down and rereading, involving a high degree of cognitive engagement (Chute). The strategies for reading graphic novels differ from reading text alone. Hollis Rudiger developed a set of instructions for reading them because she contends that people do not read graphic novels simply because they lack the conventions for reading them. Rudiger's comments refer to the

American context, where graphic novels are read with much less frequency than in other parts of the world. In my study, I drew on her ideas and conducted a small scale study to encourage the teenagers in a school library to read more graphic novels.

Graphic novels and comics share the same textual conventions, much like genre conventions, that readers need to learn to interpret. Among others, these include ways to depict motion or differentiating volume in dialogue: the former appears in the art and the latter in the text or speech balloons. Graphic novels, using the comic format, are based on the combination of verbal and visual elements, and they have their own grammar and vocabulary (Bongco). To understand graphic novels, it is crucial for the reader to be aware of the text conventions, or the formal principles, that comprise their graphic language (Versaci). Will Eisner states, "Comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When these are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a language" (8). In this paper I will discuss conventions of comics, relate literary theory to graphic novels, and present a graphic novel reader-response study conducted with American high school students.

Learning to Read the Visual Text of Graphic Novels

As with any language, the language of comics is always evolving. Conventions such as panels, panel borders, gutters, lettering, narration and captions, balloons, sound effects, perspective, time, and motion are standard, but the creators of comics and graphic novels challenge their readers by deviating from these standards to express unique ways of communicating. In drawing a comic, all of the above conventions must be considered as they form the rules or the reader's internalized grammar of the literature. Without this knowledge of the rules, or of the literary conventions, literature would not be intelligible as literature (Culler). For the comics and graphic novel reader, knowledge of the conventions is necessary for literacy.

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A reader approaches a text already understanding the structure of certain genres or literary forms, and how they work; some of this knowledge is acquired prior to entering formal school settings. Most children know the basics of fairy tale conventions, including the traditional fairy tale, beginning with "Once upon a time" and ending with "And they lived happily ever after," which means they have a general sense of linear chronology and plot development, even though they lack the terminology to describe this knowledge. Other literacy conventions are taught in school.

Kress believes it is sensible to teach conventions for egalitarian purposes because students come to school with different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, and cultural resources, so they do not always know genre conventions (Kress, "Literacy"). Those who are more knowledgeable about a variety of text conventions may respond differently to texts than those who are less knowledgeable (Beach). One convention that needs to be learned, for example, is how to read the gutters.

Comics present visual fragments, omitting more visual information than they include (Wolk). Reading graphic novels is a process requiring attention to the interplay of the written and visual, and it also involves responding to something which has not been depicted within the encapsulated moments of the sequential panels. There are gaps between panels called gutters, and understanding what happens in the gutters is generally referred to as reading between the panels.

Wolfgang Iser presents a theory of gap-filling that explains how readers fill in the unwritten parts of a text. Iser's theory refers to traditional text, but his ideas are very apt for discussing the literal gaps between frames in a graphic novel. A reader interprets a text by constructing a gestalt shaped by the constraints of the text symbols. The

unwritten parts of the text, the gaps, are filled in by the reader who makes decisions about what to include or eliminate based on past experience, social and cultural factors, and knowledge of text conventions. Iser refers to this reader as the Implied Reader who is predisposed to interpret the text in an expected way or is shaped by the text. However, Iser also recognized the Actual Reader who, due to his or her background and experiences, may not fill in the gaps of the text or make meaning as the author intended. The Actual Reader has some freedom in the gap-filling process and this freedom accounts for variableness in text interpretation.

Graphic novels have more pronounced gaps than written text, gaps you can see in the gutters between panels. Since the panels fracture the flow of the narrative into the sequenced segments that alternate with the blank spaces of the gutters, "comics as a form requires a substantial degree of reader participation for narrative interpretation" (Chute 460). The value of understanding the meaning-making process of reading graphic novels adds to the research in multiple literacies.

The kind of literacy required for comprehending graphic novels is essential for success in our multimedia world, because the skills employed while reading in the comic format transfer to other multimodal forms including television and film, the Internet, and video games (Brenner). Dale Jacobs states:

> By examining comics as multimodal texts and reading comics as an exercise of multiliteracies or multimodal literacies, we can shed light not only on the literate practices that surround comics in particular but also on the literate practices that surround all multimodal texts and the ways in which engagement with such texts can and should affect our pedagogies. (183)

There has been much scholarly interest in the multiliteracies framework, but little classroom-based research has been grounded in multiliteracy, especially in the United States (Chandler-Olcott). The research that is available on comics or graphic novels includes articles about the history and critical analyses of the works of various authors/artists. Graphic novels around the world were the focus of *Bookbird* (49.4) which featured scholarship about the history and use of graphic novels in Iran, India, and Korea, and also included articles examining the work of Shaun Tan, Raymond Briggs, and Dave McKean.

Early studies of the use of comics in education were positive. After World War II, American comics expanded to genres other than the superhero, and public opinion of comics changed for the worse. Comic book reading declined during the 1950s when the comic book industry suffered censure from the United States Congress (Hajdu). However, comics did not go away entirely, and the graphic novel evolved in the 1970s. Recent studies about using graphic novels in the classroom support the fact that they can be used to motivate reluctant readers and aid comprehension for less skilled readers who may have had difficulty transitioning from picture books to print only text. More and more, educators at all levels are reporting their increasing use, which suggests a need to understand students' responses to graphic novels (Carter; Versaci). In an attempt to contribute to our knowledge of how students respond to graphic novels, I devised a study that examined how high school students responded to *American Born Chinese* (Yang). Scholarship in comics is an international and multidisciplinary field of study, which draws from fields of film theory, literary theory, cultural studies, art, history, psychology, as well as education (Duncan & Smith; Hatfield). Reader response theory, which combines pedagogy with literary theory, provided the framework for this study, particularly Louise Rosenblatt's theory of transactional analysis.

Rosenblatt focused attention on the reader's experience or engagement with the text. She defined reading as a transaction in a particular context between the reader and the text as a two-way process. Since each reader has a unique background that includes social, ethnic, and psychological history, she did not believe in a

generic reader or a single correct reading. In the transaction between the reader and the text, the reader constructs meaning. She described the transaction as a "to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text" (xvi). Like Rosenblatt, Charles Hatfield describes reading comics as an active interpreting, a "tug-of-war" that demands intense reader involvement with the text. Scott McCloud refers to the reader as "a willing and conscious collaborator" who has to participate or work to construct meaning from comics (65). The reader cannot simply read the text in a linear fashion and disregard the images. Images must sometimes be studied to understand the narrative, as the text does not make sense without the images.

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High School Reading Habits: An Empirical Study

As a high school librarian, I noticed circulation statistics increased as the graphic novel collection expanded. Superhero and manga titles were the most popular, but the art or independent graphic novels, fiction or nonfiction in various genres with perhaps more literary quality based on traditional print criteria, were not being checked out by students. Cynthia Lewis and Jessica Dockter state that graphic novels with more literary quality may not appeal to students as much as manga or the ones they exchange among themselves. With this knowledge, I wanted to investigate how students would respond to an art graphic novel, even though they were not as popular. I wanted to introduce students to this form of literature and possibly help them develop an appreciation for art graphic novels.

American Born Chinese by Gene Wang is an art graphic novel which won the American Library Association's 2007 Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature. The story is about Jin Wang, a Chinese-American teen who seeks acceptance from his peers. It was selected because it includes issues of American immigration, culture, racial identity, and stereotyping that integrated well with the curriculum of the political science course.

To determine whether students' knowledge of comic conventions involving multimodal literacy skills would affect their responses to a graphic novel, I conducted a study with 23 senior Political Science students in the high school where I worked as a librarian (Hammond). The school, with a student population of approximately 1500, is located in a large suburban metropolitan area in Midwestern United States. I also sought to determine whether students recognized serious issues when presented in comic book format. Even though graphic novels are considered on par with great literature in France, and their ubiquity in Japan causes readers to turn to them as a release from busy lives (much like the relationship that Americans have with television), comic books in the United States are generally thought to be humorous, inconsequential literature for children, if considered

literature at all (Brenner). Due to their comic format, graphic novels have also suffered from this stigmatization.

First the students read *American Born Chinese* and wrote responses to prompts at three designated intervals. During a book discussion, their oral responses were recorded. This was followed by a lesson about the history of comics and about their conventions. During the lesson, terminology such as "splash panel," "bleed," and various speech balloon outlines from www.teachingcomics.org were presented and discussed. Then students completed a reading survey about graphic novels and about their reading of *American Born Chinese*. Students read *American Born Chinese* a second time responding just once upon completion. Finally, a small group of students participated in a focus group interview, and a few students opted to create their own comics. The students' comments are quoted verbatim and used with permission.

"Why are we reading a comic book?"

Students responded to *American Born Chinese* in much the same way that students respond to text novels, using similar critical analysis skills. They responded to literary elements such as plot, theme, and characters, and noted foreshadowing and denouement. Paula Griffith provides criteria for evaluating the format, illustrations, and content of graphic novels and claims that "good graphic novels contain all the literary elements we expect for quality fiction and nonfiction" (184). Examples of her criteria include determining whether the gutters aid comprehension or distract the reader, examining the illustrations for clues to character emotion, mood, and personality, considering whether the characters are three-dimensional, and whether the denouement resolves the preceding narrative events.

One student recognized foreshadowing in the panel in which the herbalist's wife told Jin Wang he could be anything he wished, provided he was willing to forfeit his soul. This student explained, "I guess the fact that it became like dark and the words were bolded [i.e. in bold face], it felt like it was more important….You're like, that's going to be important because of how they present it." This student responded to the text and the images indicating that the graphic novel afforded a vehicle to demonstrate both print and visual literacy skills.

Only thirty percent of the class had ever read a graphic novel before the study. When asked what they knew about graphic novels prior to participating in the study, one girl responded, "Absolutely nothing." Initially, she thought it meant books with lots of action, sex, and violence. She later admitted that she had seen graphic novels before, but she did not know what they were called. The term "graphic novel" was new to many students. Based on circulation statistics, graphic novels were popular in my library, but they were popular with only a small percentage of students.

Another student questioned why they were being asked to read a comic book. When observed reading *American Born Chinese* by someone

outside of the classroom, the student was asked, "Reading a comic? Seriously?" This student explained that it was called a graphic novel and the response was, "Right." While the professional literature indicates that graphic novels are hugely popular, they are not popular with all students, and many students have never read one. From the reaction of the students both in and out of the study, it would seem that the comic format is a deterrent for some American students.

Comic Conventions

Given the students' lack of experience with graphic novels, one might have expected them to have difficulties comprehending *American Born Chinese*. This was not the case, however. Brenner believes teenagers can instinctively read graphic novels, even if they have never read one before because, from an early age, they are used to media that separates and integrates text and images in various ways: "Today's students…are immersed in a multimodal culture, learning about their world from more than just prose sources" (Duncan & Smith, 279). The complexity of the cognitive task of reading a graphic novel did not translate into difficulty.

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It was not determined whether students knew particular comic conventions before they began reading *American Born Chinese*, but it is safe to assume they knew many comic conventions from exposure to them in the media (Yannicopoulou). This was demonstrated in their written responses to the prompts that sought to determine their comprehension of the story during their first reading. In response to the prompt that asked them to examine pages 100-105 and explain what was happening, one student wrote that Wei-Chen and Amelia got locked in a closet: "You can tell this by the click sound effect the author adds, the dialogue, and that they're waiting awhile because the clocks had different times."

After the discussion and lesson about comic conventions, students were taught specific terminology associated with comics, and so became more aware of the conventions being used in *American Born Chinese* during their second readings, which was noted in their final written responses. One student had not realized the difference between a thought balloon with a cloud-like outline and a speech balloon with a solid outline. Another student reported that although she assumed the characters were whispering while in the movie theater, during the second reading she noticed the speech balloon had a broken outline to indicate whispering. Still another student noted how volume was depicted. He wrote, "I also noticed how text seemed to get bigger when the voice of the character was raised." It would appear that the lesson about comic conventions made students more aware of the techniques of graphic artists and increased their comprehension and visual literacy.

There are benefits to any rereading, and although some of the students were reluctant to read the book again, most admitted that they understood the story better after a second reading. Due to the lesson on comic conventions, the students claimed that they paid closer attention to the images, noticing more details, including facial expressions and characters' emotions. Many students reported that they changed their reading method the second time they read the graphic novel. One student wrote, "I really think my method of reading changed when I totally understood how these novels worked." Another student had been confused about the order of the panels during her first reading. After her second reading she wrote, "Once I found out how to go through graphic novels, it just started to flow, with occasional stops to look at the images more closely."

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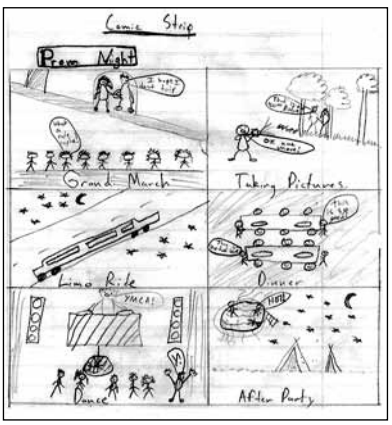
While using a variety of reading methods, all the students reported reading both text and

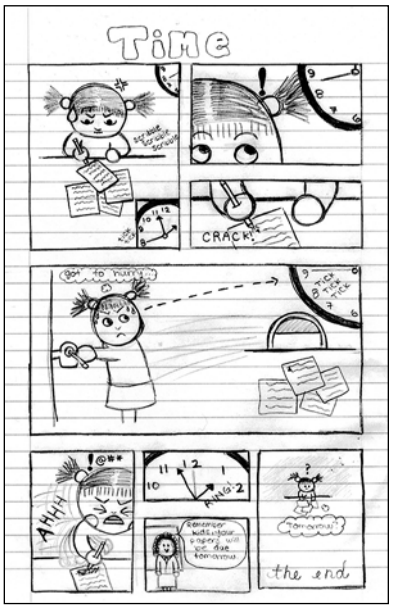
pictures. Students realized that their reading required multitasking and the use of multimodal literacy skills, and the majority of them believed that it was the combination of text and image that helped them gain the most meaning from the story. They recognized that the text and images worked in combination with each other because they both shared narrative responsibility. The integration of two modes with two separate literacies required a new literacy, a multimodal literacy, for making meaning (Kress, "Literacy"; Siegel).

Creating Comics of Their Own

Knowledge of comic conventions did appear to have an effect on the number of conventions used when creating comics. One student who created an optional comic for the study did so before the lesson on comic conventions. In the questionnaire at the start of the study, he had indicated that he had never read a graphic novel before. His comic, entitled "Prom Night," has static panels with no transitions and, although he employed dialogue balloons, he incorporated few comic conventions.



Another student who read manga occasionally, created her comic "Time" after the lesson on comic conventions. She included a variety of comic conventions such as the use of the clock to depict the passage of time, speed lines, and sound effects. When questioned about her use of comic conventions, she responded that she got her ideas from the *Comics Terminology* web page discussed in class during the lesson, and she deliberately tried to incorporate them into her comic. The comic she created was more sophisticated and complex indicating that knowledge of comic conventions aids in both understanding and communicating in multimodal texts.



Students are motivated by the possibilities multimodal communication affords (Lewis & Dockter). Those who create their own comics feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment as Michael Bitz discovered in his Comic Book Project in which urban youth wrote and drew comics about their personal lives and interests. It began in New York City and later branched out to several other U.S. cities. In the United Kingdom, students in a south Yorkshire high school with literacy levels below the national average created a 132-page graphic novel with the aid of professionals (Ritchie). The project boosted student literacy and confidence.

Overall, students in the study were pleasantly surprised at how much they liked *American Born Chinese*. They judged it "a good book" and expressed a desire to read more art graphic novels. Students in the focus group confirmed that graphic novels were not popular with the general student population, but they believed they would gain in popularity as their familiarity

grew, which would help erase the stigma attached to reading comics. The students also recognized that serious issues could be presented in comic book form. One student wrote that at first he did not take *American Born Chinese* seriously because it was a comic book. "But after I read it, I found it profound and there were topics that I could relate to…that made you choose sides."

Graphic novels are capable of presenting serious issues, and students felt that they could be included in the school curriculum. Making connections to the curriculum is not difficult with the variety and volume of graphic novels published each year. In his *Rationales for Teaching Graphic Novels,* James B. Carter presents ideas for implementing over 100 graphic novels in the secondary classroom. In Germany, a history textbook about the Holocaust written in comic format was introduced into the curriculum (Kimmelman). The intimacy and immediacy of the medium facilitates a better understanding of a serious subject and encourages adolescents to talk more openly about it.

The project boosted student literacy and confidence.

Evidence indicates that teenagers often prefer multimodal texts (Moje). The ability of students to read different modes simultaneously is a sociocultural practice not defined as standard in school literacy and offers some students more opportunities for success (Siegel). Educators need to broaden their understanding of literacy beyond print text. Some forms of multimodal texts such as film and electronic resources have been embraced in schools, yet the vast majority of teachers are still reluctant to introduce comics and graphic novels into the classroom (Duncan & Smith). Perhaps these teachers question the literary value of graphic novels, or it could be they are uncomfortable with the multimodality of the format. Graphic novels are a relatively new medium, at least in American high schools, but Brenner predicts they will become as ubiquitous and accepted as any other medium, as they have already spread across platforms to be accessed digitally. Schools need to reflect the wide range of multimodal literacy practices in which students engage. As a multimodal text, graphic novels help students develop the skills necessary to thrive and be fully literate in the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

Page 29 image from AMERICAN BORN CHINESE by Gene Luen Yang. Copyright © 2006 by Gene Yang. Reprinted by arrangement with Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

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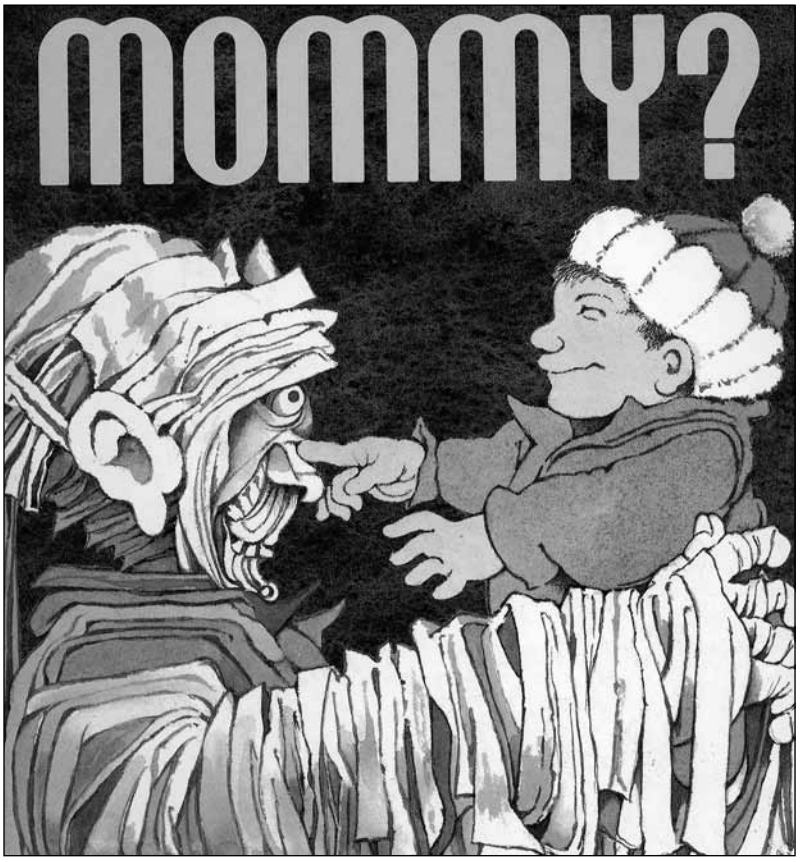
Games Inside Books for Young Children

by MENI KANATSOULI



Literature as a constructed world of fantasy is a game in itself. In many cases, the game itself is the sought goal. Its aim is to turn the attention of the reader to the play of texts, how they interact and the inter-textual relationship. The game encourages the young reader to use his or her store of knowledge in a new context, to compare plots and ideologies of stories and, more importantly, it makes them laugh. In children's illustrated books, the intertextual game is transported to the relationship between illustrations and text, particularly with older illustrations and figural representations.

The relationship between literature and play in children's fiction always exists, even when not blatantly obvious. This recognizable relationship is mostly due to the child's need to play, experiment, and try new things, and the same can be said of writers who also share the strong need to experiment and innovate in areas

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such as language and meaning. Brian Sutton-Smith, a foremost play theorist, distinguishes seven rhetorics involving types of play and categories of players. He defines the rhetoric of play as the imaginary, usually applied to playful improvisation of all kinds in literature, which idealizes the imagination, flexibility, and creativity of the human world (11).

The connection between play and the stages of a child's development is a prominent one. In recent years, however, criticism of the view that play is the cause of positive developmental outcomes has increased (Sutton-Smith 40). In the theory of children's literature that focuses on the reader (reception theory, reader response theory), the pre-school reader is by virtue of age automatically connected to play and is defined and examined as the "reader-player." According to Appleyard, "a basic issue for children at this age is whether or not they will learn to trust the world in its fullness. As they develop intellectually and emotionally there are different roles that can be learned. One is to play, and especially to be the kind of player who can separate fact from fantasy and still trust the world of fantasy" (Appleyard 22).

A child in his pre-school years exists in a state of confusion and often cannot tell the difference between reality and fantasy. He lives in a two-fold reality and believes in the existence of fantasy creatures and fantasy events as well as real creatures and real events. The fairy tales that a child is told by his parents in his home environment may excite his imagination, but they may also inflate his fear of the fantasy world. According to Appleyard, it is only when a child reaches kindergarten level and is forced to exist outside the comfort zone of his own home that he begins to participate in the socialization process and is able to recognize the existence of both worlds while still placing his trust in the fantasy world. This is achieved as the child begins to discover the "secrets," i.e. the materials with which the narratives are constructed. For example, in the plot there are repetitive motifs such as the conflict between the hero and the villain. The more the young child is in a position to recognize the structure of the story, the more he is motivated to reproduce stories of his own, either by narrating them or playing them, as he roleplays or pretends to be a certain character. He creates his own symbolic game and takes on roles. In this game of roleplaying, he learns to trust the fictional world.

This article will highlight the "poetics" of play in books for young children by combining Sutton-Smith's four-part organization of play in literature with the attributes of Appleyard's reader/player.

Sutton-Smith suggests that there are a number of ways in which literature and play relate to each other. Firstly, there is the view that all literature is, to some extent, play; secondly, there is literature with playful content; thirdly, there are play forms that are themselves literature; and fourthly, literary metaphors or tropes can be a form of play (Sutton-Smith 156). This article will highlight the "poetics" of play in books for young children by combining Sutton-Smith's four-part organization of play in literature with the attributes of Appleyard's reader/player.

As broad a generalization as it is to say that that all art, and, in this case, all literature, is play (perpetuated by artists and philosophers over the years), there is no doubt that the end result of many children's books (the combination of text, illustration, and the norms that govern them) is transformed into play. This play can be achieved through the reader's passage from the world of reality to the world of fantasy and vice versa, or through his passage from the literal to the metaphorical and back again to the literal. An entire narration can be structured on this journey. When the small boy in Anthony Browne's book, *My Dad*, verbally expresses his admiration for his father by saying "my father is not afraid of anyone, not even the big, bad wolf," or, "my dad is strong like a gorilla," or, "he is gentle like a teddy bear," the metaphor becomes literal through imagery and figurative language. In the illustrations, the father is at first shown kicking out the bad wolf (and in so doing exorcising the fears of the young child) in his real human dimensions, while in the illustrations that follow he is depicted as a gorilla, a small bear, and so on. This co-existence of both the real world and the fantasy world in the mind of the literary hero corresponds very well to Appleyard's reader/player. It correlates to the type of reader-player who can separate fact from fantasy and still trust the world of fantasy. The fantasy world remains safe and familiar to the child, because all figures representing his father, whether as a gorilla or a bear, are dressed in the father's checkered robe.

In Sutton-Smith's third category, the interaction of play and literature, the literature itself takes on a ludic form, as, for example, in the literature of nonsense and humor. Children are so enchanted by matching, nonsensical sounds that they are often times motivated to become creative themselves. Tongue twisters (for instance, o papas o pahis efage pahia faki, giati papa pahi efages pahia faki) and many traditional chant-like tunes called "lahnismata" that (Greek) children would make up in order to accompany their games are typical examples of the ability of children to be poetically inventive.

The first attempts at verbal play begin at about the age of two. The child combines sounds and words with rhyme and rhythm, which give him/her pleasure, and is not concerned with meaning. As the child grows up, s/he becomes more interested and more skillful in playing and enjoying not only verbal and sound combinations, but also combinations of meanings (Bariaud 86; Tessier 13). In childhood, there is a strong relationship between games and humor, particularly in language constructs. For Arthur Koestler, games only appear when the child has ridden himself of his basic physical needs (the need to survive), and so is in a position to take a break and play (Koestler 415-16). The older a person becomes, the more he searches for sophisticated ways to free himself; this he does through verbal/semantic constructs of literature.

Eugene Trivizas, one of the most popular contemporary Greek writers of children's fairy tales, makes use of every possible type of word

play, whether it is within a word itself or between words or groups of words that exist in more than one single text. In particular, names of persons and places are in his books a continual word play that aims not only to produce a chuckle in the reader, but also to make him stop and think. In *The Magic Pillows,* the names of the corrupt politicians of the city of Ouranoupolis who abuse their power and try to get into the good graces of their tyrant are not chosen by chance: Tilios Xeftilios is a play on words. Tilio is a type of tea, and Xeftilios rhymes with Tilios and comes from the word "xeftila," which means "lowlife." The phrase Voulimios Vlimas follows the same word play. Voulimios comes from the word "bulimia," which means greed, and the word "Vlimas" is a colloquial term for "dumb." Savrilios Vriselieu is a combination of words, the first name meaning "lizard," denoting something sleazy, while the surname "Vriselieu" is a double word-play. On the one hand, it rhymes with (Cardinal) Richelieu and, on the other is a derivative of the verb "vrizo," which means "to curse, or use bad language" (see also Tsamadou-Jacoberger 86).

Similarly, poet Themi Hortiati, in her two collections of poems, both aptly entitled *Paihnidogela* [Games of Laughter] and *Paihnidolexa* [Words of Play], invents all sorts of word combinations. She illustrates how language can be playful and inventive in a number of ways, such as in creating new compound words from old words (neologisms), combining words in the same stanza that are nonsensical, playing with alliteration or interjecting tongue-twisters, riddles, and "lahnismata" (chants from oral folk tradition). For example,

> Trigiro sta portofila
> Kai sta parathirofyla
> Stafilia klimatofyla
> Kai klino ta matofyla. (*Paixnidolexa* 28)

The entire stanza is based on a play on the word "fyla," through the continuous alliteration of the phonemes f and l, and the inventing of a new word by combining words together (matofyla is a word made up of the word "mati," which means "eye," and fyla which means leaves, i.e. eyelid).

The decoding of language that occurs in the play of words constructed by the author is almost always accompanied by a decoding of meaning as well. The mental game that ensues is complex and requires the reader to have the intellectual ability to respond. It also assumes that the reader has more or less overcome his fears and difficulties and has mastered skills and psycho-mechanisms that will enable him to enjoy literary meanings. Kornei Chukovsky believes that the child, through games, confirms previously mastered skills. Appreciation of twists and turns in stories can only be achieved if the child is in some way familiar with this sort of development in a story. In order for the child to appreciate twists and turns of events or juxtaposition of roles in a text,

Appreciation of twists and turns in stories can only be achieved if the child is in some way familiar with this sort of development in a story.

he must have a firm understanding of the previously existing text (Chukovsky 101). This textual game, which is in fact an inter-textual game, leads to enjoyment through the complex process of comparison or clash between at least two texts, that of the older and a newer one.

According to Sutton-Smith, the second way in which play and literature interact is through literal texts that contain explicit playful content as a part of the art form itself (Sutton-Smith 137). Whether as a metamorphosis or a paradox, the meta-communicative nature of play denotes that play is not merely play, but also a message about itself (a meta-message). It is both *of* the world and *not* of the world (paradox), and makes up the essence and content of this category of literary texts. This paradox of play in children's books emerges when conventional story plots familiar to the reader are usurped or reversed. Inter-textual play's aim is to turn the attention of the reader to the play of texts, how they interact, and what the inter-textual relationship is. It encourages the young reader to use his old store of knowledge in

a new context, to compare plots and ideologies of stories, and, more importantly, to laugh.

In *The Three Small Wolves*, also by Eugene Trivizas, we see how this popular myth about the three little pigs and the bad wolf is transformed into a fairy tale of the three little (good)

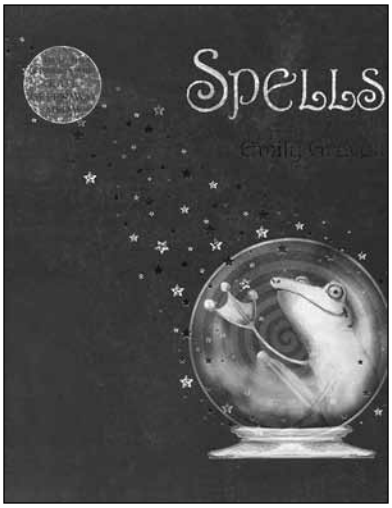
wolves and the bad pig. The reverse assignment of the good and bad roles in this new adaptation becomes a mind game and incites laughter only on the condition that the child reader is in a position to recognize the old tale and to compare it with the new one. As Nikolajeva and Scott note, "intertextuality presupposes the reader's active participation in the decoding process, in other words it is the reader who makes the intertextual connection. It means that the allusion only makes sense if the reader is familiar with the hypotext (the text alluded to)" (228). In children's illustrated books, the intertextual game is transported by the relationship between illustrations and text, particularly with older illustrations and figural representations. Intertextuality, or rather, intervisuality as a more appropriate term in connection with images, references well known works of art and naturally creates a playful atmosphere (Nikolajeva 67). Thus, in the book *Willy's Pictures* by Anthony Browne, some of the masterpieces of European Art like the *Giaconda* by Leonardo da Vinci or *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli develop into a parody as the figures depicted in the paintings are replaced by the figures of chimpanzees. Similar to Browne, Greek illustrator Sofia Zarabouka, in her book *Cats,* replaces the heads of humans in some of the most famous paintings in the Prado museum (such as Goya'a masterpiece) with the heads of cats, and, in so doing, offers in Sandra Beckett's words, "a particularly exciting medium for parody's 'inter-art discourse'" (Beckett 176-177). In *Ooh-la-la* [Max in Love] by Maira Kalman, the illustration of *Giaconda* is parodied—typical of the style of Dali—by having a moustache drawn on her face. The parodied, artistic game is a game for children according to which, in Flagan's words, "play is not practice, it does not imitate adult behavior but parodies it" (Morgenstein 75). Behind the smile of Giaconda, illustrated as a chimpanzee, is a parody of the adult world.

It is not the work of art that is being parodied, but rather the need of adults to reaffirm themselves by perpetuating and transferring to future generations their inflexible views and opinions on what is aesthetically beautiful. Through the subtle nuances of parody, the adult world is portrayed as a symbolic game of role-playing where reverse order prevails: the roles that adults play are caricatured and the adult world is overturned while the world of children is met with approval.

…the roles that adults play are caricatured and the adult world is overturned while the world of children is met with approval.

The playful aspect of children's book becomes a real, tangible game with book-objects, which can be used both as a book and as a game. Playfulness is often expressed through their materiality, or their quality as an artifact (Nikolajeva 57). Book-objects are books that may not only be read, but also played, for example, a book shaped like a car. They may also be books like Emily Gravett's *Spells*, which include mental games, verbal games, and brainteasers.[1] In *Spells*, most pages are cut in half and the child has to match the magic words and spells with the top half and

bottom half of another page so that the enchanted frog is transformed into a prince and not a fird: f(rog) + (b)ird, or fake: f(rog) + (sn)ake. The word game becomes an entertaining game with the bodies of the illustrated figures: if the words do not match, then the frog will have the legs of a bird in the bottom half and the tail of snake in the top half of the figure that emerges.



In Maurice Sendak's pop-up book *Mommy?*, the pages contain broken pieces that unfold as dolls, or emerge elsewhere as the setting of the story. Here, the material of the book creates the real feeling of a game. The purpose of the book is the liberation through play of the young reader from his fears of frightening creatures; the heroes of the book are mummies, Frankenstein, vampires and Wild things. The way they pop out as games makes them lose their frightening aspects.

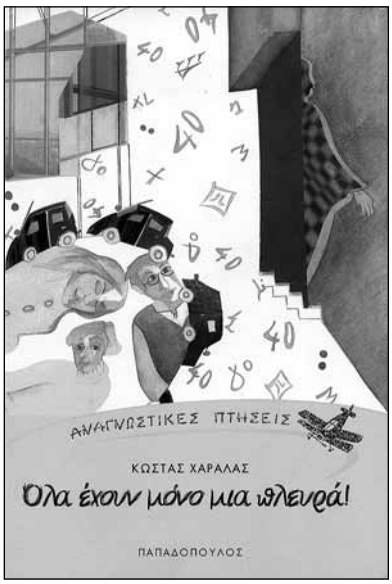
Sutton-Smith's forth category includes play as a literary trope, particularly as a metaphor for other things, and involves a preoccupation with the rhetoric of the imaginary (Sutton-Smith 142). In Sakis Serefa's *Shadows for Sale*, the fantasy game is played between a sole player and his shadow. In one instance, the shadow refuses to obey the player, while in another, a thin man drenched in sweat is forced to drag the burden of a fat man's shadow. Still in another, a firefighter's shadow is one of a young girl in braids. One day, while in the midst of putting out a fire, he is teased by his colleagues who shout at him: "Take care that the lace on your hem doesn't catch fire!" (Serefas 21). In Serefas's book, the game with shadows may well be a fictitious invention, but in the real world of young children it sparks interest regarding the relationship between light and shadow, and between reality and fantasy. Thus, this type of play is a transference (to use Sutton-Smith's definition of metaphors) of a child's need to explore the world through play.

The purpose of the book is the liberation through play of the young reader from his fears…

A similar surreal reality unfolds in Kostas Harala's *Everything Has Only One Side*. What would the world be like if everything had only one side? A painting has only one side, records have only one side, and a coin has lost its flip side. This absurd world of unlimited fantasy is a metaphor, a symbol of human reality and of a human society that ceases to be polymorphic and pluralistic. Everything is the same. So, when things do finally embrace their many sides, the metaphor game becomes a pleasurable reality:

> But what changed forever the hearts of men is that they learned to appreciate each and every side differently to the point of being willing to defend each different side with their lives because life itself is a polygon. If you take away one side believing it to be useless, the polygon will cease to be a safe and secure shape and will sink once and forever into an abyss of air. (Haralas 106)

Creating a fantasy situation is characteristic of pre-school children; it is not something that comes out of nowhere. In fact, it serves a useful purpose in that it helps the child release pent-up tension. In a Vygotskian sense, a child at this age enters a magic world where tensions are allayed and unfulfilled wishes are realized: this world is play (Papadopoulous 150).



In *Holidays at Isidoros's Home,* the small hero, Isidoros, is told by his parents that going away for the summer holidays is out of the question because money is tight due to the financial crisis. Following the advice given to him from a castaway, Isidoros reverts to the world of fantasy and turns his home into a summer holiday spot: "You can bring in a huge potted plant for vegetation and borrow a CD with sounds of nature, birds and the surf. Instead of the sea you can use a plastic pool on the veranda. You can also hang a poster of the jungle on your wall. At night you sit on the floor with your parents and light candles to keep the wild animals away" (31-34).

There are numerous versions of play in books for small children, and despite all efforts to come up with a poetics, it is clear that play as noted by Sutton-Smith, has a double or ambiguous meaning. Play in literary texts cannot be put into one strict and limited category because it overlaps with others. The one sure thing that theorists of children's literature agree on is that all children's books inevitably involve play. For Morgenstein, "the children's novel must exist as an object of play" (98-99), and "the adult who forgets how to play like a child is morally flawed, a fact which is the moral of every children's novel" (88).[2] For Maria Nikolajeva, "children's literature is basically about play. It can be serious and dangerous play, involving killing dragons in faraway mythical worlds, but the young characters are inevitably brought back to the security of home" (Nikolajeva 206).

Notes

1. See also the chapter on the "thingness of books" in Giannikopoulou Aggeliki's *In the Land of Coloursv (*Athens, Papadopoulos 2008: 316-331).
2. Morgenstein's viewpoint, however interesting, has caused much controversy as it mainly generalizes, stating that all children's books can be categorized as games. See also Nodelman, Perry. "Former Editor's Comments: Or, the Possibility of Growing Wiser." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 35.3 (2010): 238.

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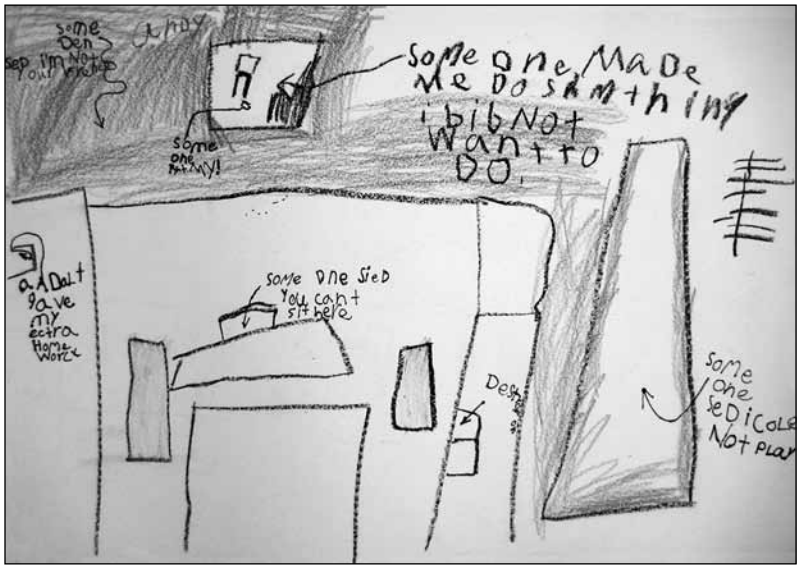
Children's Agency for Taking Action



Children need agency in order to believe that they can take action and exert power in a particular situation. Their agency is often ignored in school projects directed by adults that result in charity rather than authentic action. In one primary school, teachers and children explored global issues and alternatives for taking action locally and globally through inquiries into human rights and hunger. Literature played a key role in supporting these inquiries by offering demonstrations of authentic action.

by KATHY SHORT

The experience of trauma is increasingly represented in global children's literature through portrayals of the suffering and pain experienced by children from war, genocide, all types of violence, racism, enslavement, abuse, and natural disasters. In these stories, children are typically portrayed as innocent, sometimes as "victims" who require adult protection and guidance, and other times as "saviors" who survive trauma and offer an example of triumph over pain through love, trust, hope, and perseverance (Smith). Many of these texts focus on the ways in which children recover from physical and psychic pain.

The traumas experienced by children often occur within social domains that are shaped by adults who create the situations leading to those traumas. Higonnet raises the issue of the effect of national politics and societal experiences on a young person's sense of agency. A child's sense of agency is critical, not only in the healing process, but also in whether children feel some control within the situation

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and a sense of being able to take action to better the lives of themselves and others. Agency reflects children's belief in their capacity to take action or exert power within a particular context (Nieto). The focus on agency reflects a shift in views of childhood from adults making assumptions about the *needs* of children and what is best for them to an emphasis on the *rights* of children to have their perspectives taken seriously and to participate in decision-making. This view of childhood challenges Western values that often construct children as passive recipients of adults' actions rather than as agents (Smith).

My interest in children's sense of agency and their willingness to take action when faced with social injustice became a tension during an inquiry with children on human rights. The children were surprised that they would be expected to take action—they saw action as the responsibility of adults. Their skepticism led me to examine the types of action projects that typically occur in schools. I realized that most projects take the form of charity or volunteering rather than authentic action. The teachers at the school were concerned about the children's views of themselves as lacking agency because we believed that willingness to take action is essential to intercultural understanding (Case). Also, children's sense of agency connects to their ability to cope with trauma, both in their own lives and in their reading of global literature that raises issues of trauma. The children's tension about their responsibility to take action led to shifting the focus of our inquiry from human rights to action and an exploration of the ways children can take action for social change. This article focuses on this inquiry and on the issues surrounding the ways in which teachers can engage children with literature to encourage their sense of agency and action.

Many of these texts focus on the ways in which children recover from physical and psychic pain.

Taking Authentic Action in School Contexts

The most common form of action in many schools is charity, where children raise money in response to hunger, violence, or natural disasters. These fundraisers are often initiated by adults as isolated projects, and children spend their time figuring out how to raise money rather than examining the issues. This "give the unfortunate a handout" approach may invoke children's compassion, but it does so from a stance of pity rather than an informed understanding, sense of connection with children in these situations, or a belief in their own ability to make a difference. In the United States, the annual canned food drives that occur at Thanksgiving require children to bring cans from their parents' pantries for the community food bank to be given to the "poor" without a sense of commitment or understanding of the families receiving the food. Another common form of action is volunteering where children pick up trash on the playground, clean a vacant lot or polluted stream, or visit the elderly in a nursing home.

Although charity and volunteering are valid ways to respond to

needs, they do not involve taking action for social change or the development of new possibilities. These actions are not embedded in children's inquiries and experiences and so the action does not grow out of understanding and goes no further than raising money or picking up trash. Collecting trash in a stream is volunteering; action becomes possible when children analyze that trash, figure out sources, and work with the community to reduce pollution (Cowhey). Children need time to understand the need and research the context of that need so that the action addresses the root causes of local and global problems, rather than only dealing with surface issues. Literature can play a critical role in children developing understandings of the root causes of hunger, pollution, or violence. These understandings, in turn, lead to a different set of actions and to developing compassion for those who are in need. Taking action for social change is more than filling a gap in services or donating money; it involves encouraging students to question prevailing practices and to work at making the world a better place (Freire).

Many charity projects involve one-directional giving where children remain distanced from those experiencing hardship. Authentic action grows out of a mutual exchange where everyone gains from the experience (Wade). Literature can provide a way for a mutual exchange even when children do not have direct interactions with the recipients of their actions, because children gain a sense of connection through the characters in the books. Children also need to have responsibility throughout the process, including witnessing the outcomes of their action when possible. When their actions always involve sending off money or collecting cans that others deliver, they are not aware of the impact of their work and are not able to engage in a continuous process of action, reflection, and problem-solving in order to effectively take action within a particular context (Kaye).

Literature can provide one means of offering alternatives for how they view their responsibility and for developing their agency.

Frequently, the action projects in schools are conceived and directed by adults with little room for student voice or choice. Adults introduce the project to children, engage them in fund-raising, and then send the money off to the organization. The problem, of course, is that children do not develop a sense of their own agency for taking action, and the power and control stays in the hands of adults instead of shared collaboratively. Adults work *for* children rather than *with* children (Hart). Over time, children come to accept this hierarchy, unless presented with alternative ways in which to view their agency. Literature can provide one means of offering alternatives for how they view their responsibility and for developing their agency.

An Inquiry on Rights and Taking Action

The context for this inquiry was a small public school of 200 students, ages 5-12, within a large urban district in the American Southwest with a culturally diverse population. We collaboratively engaged in a 4-year

action research project as educators to develop a curriculum focused on global inquiry through literature and the arts, using a curriculum framework to enact our theoretical beliefs and organize instruction. This framework highlights multiple ways of engaging with global literature to support children's critical explorations of their own cultural identities, ways of living within specific global cultures, the range of cultural perspectives within any unit of study, and inquiries into complex global issues (Short).

As part of our professional learning, we developed a school-wide inquiry into human rights to explore critical inquiries that might lead to social action. Our initial plan was to focus on issues of rights within the school, expand to examining human rights across the world, and culminate with children engaging in their own investigations of specific human rights issues from which they would take action.

Developing Conceptual Understandings about Rights

The human rights inquiry focused on a conceptual understanding of rights as the needs we have as human beings in order to live in a society. We knew that children would struggle with the difference between needs and wants as well as the balance of individual voice with group responsibility. We realized that this concept plays out in students' lives through their complaints about what is "unfair," especially at lunch or recess, and so decided to begin with concepts of fairness. We read aloud *A Fine Fine School* (Creech 2001), about a principal who loves his school so much that he wants to have school every day of the year, to begin our conversations about unfair decisions in school. We also put out many picture books about school for browsing, such as *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill 2002) and *Say Something* (Moss 2008), that focus on bullying and teasing on playgrounds, lunchrooms, and buses. These books naturally led to children sharing their own stories about unfair things that had happened to them at school.

Each student created a map of the school, such as Maria's map above, and labeled places where unfair events had occurred and shared those stories with a partner. Many stories involved adults who made them wait in lines, stopped their play at recess, made up arbitrary rules, or forced them to sit silently in the lunchroom. Other stories focused on peers, such as not being chosen for a team at recess, losing a friend, getting hit or pushed, or being teased or taunted.

Once the maps were shared, we talked about what determines whether we consider something fair, and the notion of unfairness as the sense that your rights are violated in some way. Students worked in small groups to create lists of their rights within the school based on the entries on their unfair maps, such as the right to be treated with respect and the right to have more places to play. These discussions were intense and engaged, providing them with a conceptual understanding of rights as well as strong connections to their own experiences.

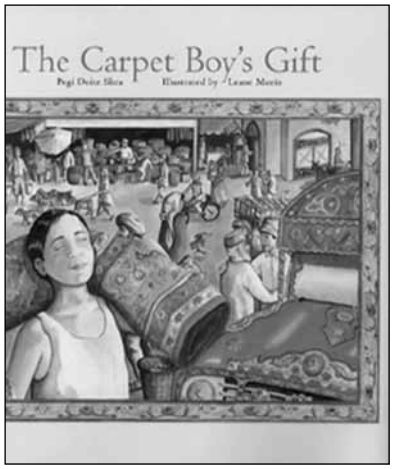
The younger children, especially the first and second graders, were convinced that they did not have responsibility for taking action because they believed action was something that adults do for them. They considered their rights as doing what adults tell them. They did not see themselves as having agency to make choices that lead to actions and consequences. We read picture books, such as *Fred Stays with Me* (Coffelt 2007), *Daddy is a Monster Sometimes* (Steptoe 1983), and *Evan's Corner* (Hill 1993), about children who negotiate with their parents, to help children realize that they are not powerless. In our discussion of *Daddy is a Monster Sometimes*, about two children who manipulate adults to get an extra ice cream cone, the children shared the strategies and sad faces they used on their parents as six-year-olds as a persuasive technique.

The fourth and fifth grade students were particularly engaged with the issues of rights and felt empowered to assert their rights in the school. Unfortunately, at this point, their focus was on individual rights and using their agency for their own benefit without considering others. One fourth grader asserted his right to do his math assignment whenever he felt like it, without regard for the problems that this would cause for

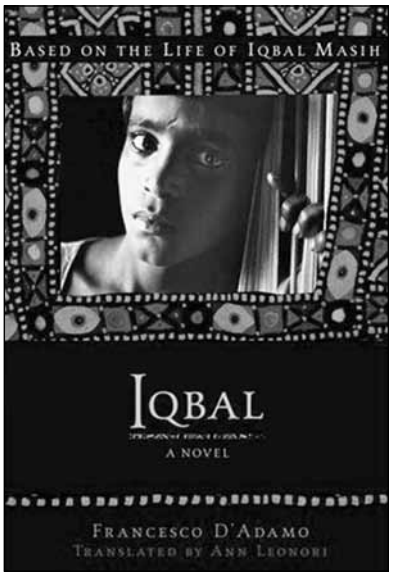
his classmates or teachers, and the fifth graders wanted to determine the playground rules to give themselves the most desired places for playing.

Expanding from Local to Global Perspectives

To expand children's understandings and perspectives beyond the school and their individual rights, we immersed them in read-alouds and text sets to expand their knowledge of human rights to global contexts. We put out text sets containing fiction and nonfiction picture books and newspaper articles around issues such as child labor, discrimination, freedom, violence, basic needs, education, and the environment. Students had time to read from these books as well as to talk with each other and web the issues that were emerging.

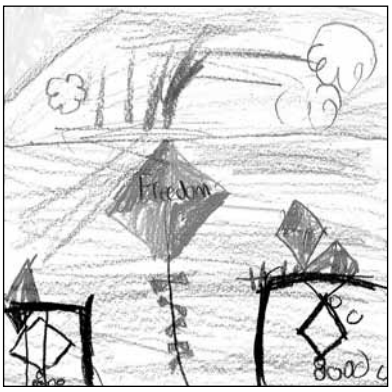


We also read aloud and discussed picture books such as *Rebel* (Baille 1994), the story of a child's resistance to a military dictator in Burma, and *The Carpet Boy's Gift* (Shea 2003), about a Pakistani boy who is forced to work in the carpet mills to pay off his family's debts. Student interest in Iqbal, the real-life boy who led a movement against this child labor, led to reading aloud the novel, *Iqbal* (D'Adamo 2001). The students were shocked that children were punished for making mistakes at the looms and they condemned the parents for selling their children into slavery. They thought the parents were selfish, only concerned for themselves, not their children. Gradually, they came to understand the tremendous poverty that led to such a difficult decision by parents. They were moved by Iqbal's willingness to risk his own life to help others. The stories of children who take action for others, often at great



personal expense, shifted the students' perspectives away from a focus on individual benefit to group responsibility and to recognizing that taking action can involve risk and danger.

We regularly gathered for reflection after read-alouds or book browsing for students to share their observations and chart issues about human rights. Students also worked in small groups to web their understandings and tensions. Our initial plan was to see what area of human rights emerged as a strong interest, such as child



labor or education, and move into investigations around that area, looking both locally and globally. Instead, the most compelling issue for students was their surprise and tension that *kids* can take action. They did not believe that they could make a difference, and so their discussions focused on the strategies that Iqbal and other children were using as agents for social change in their settings.

Taking Local Action to Develop Agency

At that point our focus shifted to strategies for taking action and we realized that taking action in their own school context was most compelling to them. They cared about the ways human rights were playing out in global contexts, but they needed to first experience taking action in their own context to gain a sense of agency and possibility that their actions could make a difference. Also, they did not have enough in-depth knowledge about particular global issues to take action in thoughtful ways at that point in time. They were still at an exploration stage with these issues, but ready to investigate how to take action in their school.

To highlight strategies for taking action, we engaged in improvisational dramas around books in which children engaged with social issues that were familiar to our students, in particular homeless people and undocumented immigrants from Mexico. In these dramas, they took on the roles of characters from *Friends from the Other Side* (Anzaldua 1993), about a girl who protects an undocumented boy from bullies and the Border Patrol, and *The Lady in the Box* (McGovern 1997), about two children who help a homeless woman in their neighborhood. They interviewed each other in pairs as a reporter asking a book character questions about the action that child took within the story. Taking on the roles of children and adult authorities led to multiple perspectives on these issues and explorations of the tensions between individual rights and group responsibilities. Children felt empathy for Joaquin and were angry about the discrimination and fear he faced as an immigrant from Mexico as they explored the complex issues of immigration, documentation, and the Border Patrol. We also read books, such as *Subway Sparrow* (Torres 1993), about people who work together across languages to rescue a bird, and *Sami and the Time of Troubles* (Heide & Gilliland 1992), about a Lebanese boy who longs for peace but is forced to live in the basement during bombings. These books provided examples of collaboration that challenged children's assumptions that individuals act alone.

Students returned to their unfair school maps and webbed the problems they still saw as significant within their school context. Their original webs of problems were somewhat self-serving, without consideration of how their desires would affect other students. We hoped that when students returned to their maps after the global exploration of human rights and action, they might have a different understanding of the balance between individual needs and responsibility to the group.

This shift was evident in that the issues the students raised earlier that would benefit a few at the expense of others were no longer raised. Each small group chose the top 1 or 2 problems from their list to share with the class and each class engaged in a discussion to determine the problem they wanted to take on. They talked about their experiences with that problem and brainstormed a list of people who had perspectives on the issue. They invited several for an interview with the class and individually conducted other interviews. Based on these interviews, they came to consensus on a strategy for taking action.

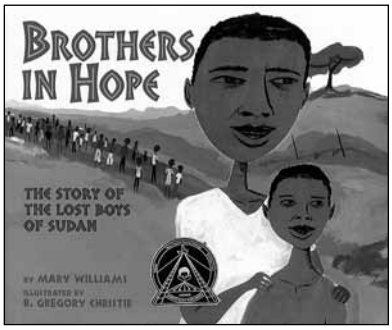
Each classroom decided to focus on one problem instead of breaking into small groups on different problems, because they recognized the difficulty of taking action with adults in school contexts and felt they needed the power of coming with their requests as a group. One group was concerned about the quality and options for school lunches, particularly the lack of fresh vegetables and fruit. After interviews with school personnel, they found out that their lunches were made in a central district location and then trucked to schools. They realized that the problem was district-based and worked on a petition that they asked parents, children, and teachers to sign for delivery to the district head of food services and the superintendent. Another class was concerned about their lack of voice in decisions about the many rules that governed their play on the playground. Upon interviewing their parents, they realized that there was a tremendous difference of opinion and reasons for and against children having a voice in school rules. Their interviews with playground monitors gave them insights into why adults made rules, who was making the rules, the haphazard nature of how rules were created in response to a situation, and differences between older and younger students' views of the rules.

Children needed time to research and to understand their issues from multiple perspectives by investigating the nature of particular problems.

Children needed time to research and to understand their issues from multiple perspectives by investigating the nature of particular problems. The second graders thought that trash on the playground came from the local landfill and planned to write a letter of protest to the owners. Their research revealed that children were the source of the trash and that the problem was the location of the trash barrel at the far end of the playground. Their action turned to a focus on moving the trash barrel and raising awareness among other children in the school.

Although these actions were local, some groups also engaged in global action. The fourth graders felt a strong emotional connection with children in refugee camps through books such as *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams 2007), about two Afghani girls who become friends in a camp in Pakistan, *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan 2004), about an Afghani boy living with loss and terror-filled memories, and *Brothers in Hope* (Williams 2005) about the forced journey of the "lost boys" of the Sudan. The children particularly focused on the significance

of relationships within these extremely difficult situations and the courage and caring that the characters showed for each other. Literature became a tool for envisioning a mutual exchange with other children in refugee situations, even though they did not have direct interaction with recipients. The students decided to raise money for refugee children in Darfur because they felt



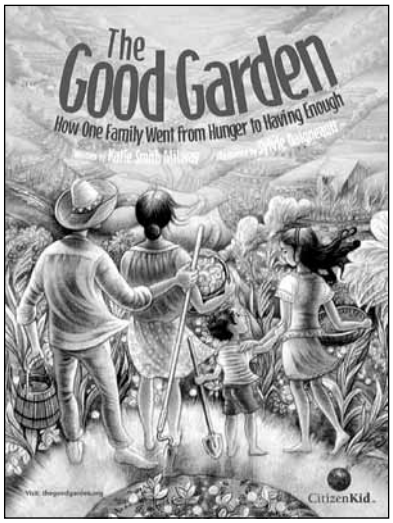
that they had learned so much from the characters in books about courage and perseverance in the face of tremendous hardship. They wanted to give something back in return, and their action came out of respect, rather than pity.

Moving from Local to Global Action

Although the human rights inquiry led to local action, we later engaged in an inquiry on the interconnections of power with hunger that involved global action. Students initially explored "tight times" to connect with the economic crisis in their community, using the picture book, *Tight Times* (Hazen, 1983), as a touchstone text. This story of a family that struggles after the father loses his job was a situation that many children knew their families or neighbors were experiencing. They realized that many families face "tight times," even though for some that means not going to Disneyland while others face hunger and the loss of their homes. This sense of connection moved them beyond feelings of pity or blame toward those experiencing hunger.

We examined the root causes of hunger locally and globally through fiction and nonfiction, films, guest speakers, and a drama simulation of a global banquet. The banquet involved dividing all of the students into three groups and giving them food according to the world population, with 12% receiving more than they could eat in the form of pizzas, 60% receiving just enough to eat in the form of rice and beans, and 28% receiving not enough to eat in the form of one small shared bowl of rice. They also read novels, such as *Nory Ryan's Song* (Giff 2000) about the Irish Potato Famine, and *A Long Walk to Water* (Park 2010), about a "lost boy" from the Sudan, to gain insights into the experience of hunger, as well as nonfiction books, such as *Famine* (Bennett, 1998).

Only after examining root causes did children identify ways to address hunger through working with community and global organizations that focus on sustainability where those receiving a gift use it to take responsibility for their own



survival. Books such as *The Good Garden* (Milway 2010), about a family in Honduras who learns how to use their garden to provide their food, and *One Hen* (Milway 2008), about a young boy in Ghana who uses a small loan to buy a hen, as well as a visit from a volunteer in our local food bank, helped them understand the issue of sustainability through gifts that provide ongoing support and agency for the recipients. This inquiry involved children taking action locally through a community garden project at the local food bank, as well as globally through organizations that provide seeds and animals for communities.

The hunger inquiry occurred during a time of economic crisis in our community when some families went from a comfortable lifestyle to the threat of homelessness and hunger. One fifth-grade student tragically lost his father when he suffered a fatal epileptic seizure because he could not afford medical care. The mother also lost her job, and so the family was suddenly at great risk while struggling with grief. The children in his classroom immediately mobilized themselves for action with fundraisers for the family as well as supporting their peer with compassion and friendship. The boy who had argued for his rights over his classmates at the beginning of the human rights inquiry walked his neighborhood for several weeks, telling them about his friend and asking for donations so the mother could repair their car and find work. This shift is his sense of agency as involving not only himself, but also others in need, was an enormous change in perspective.

Final Reflections

Taking action runs counter to the individualistic and materialistic nature of many societies, and to adult views of children as needing protection. Many children do not have opportunities to engage meaningfully in making decisions that affect their lives. Adults determine their choices and protect children instead of engaging them in experiences where they gain new perspectives and strategies for problem-posing and problem-solving. Children need perspective, not protection, and a sense of possibility in order to develop agency. Children are constructing themselves as human beings and developing the ways in which they think about and take action within their lives and world. Our challenge is to build on children's lived experiences to move them toward multiple perspectives and social action.

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Children's agency in taking action is based on their ability to move beyond accepting or critiquing the current world into thinking about possibility (Freire 1970). There is no reason to take action if children believe that the current structures and practices of society cannot be changed or are not part of their responsibilities. Literature in which the characters take action for social change provides a way for students to "see big" and envision new potentials (Kornfeld & Prothro). Engagements around these books open up spaces in classrooms for conversations that challenge their world views and the ways in which they work with others to take action. These perspectives are especially critical when children are coping with trauma or difficult situations in enabling them to gain a sense of agency and possibility for their lives and world.

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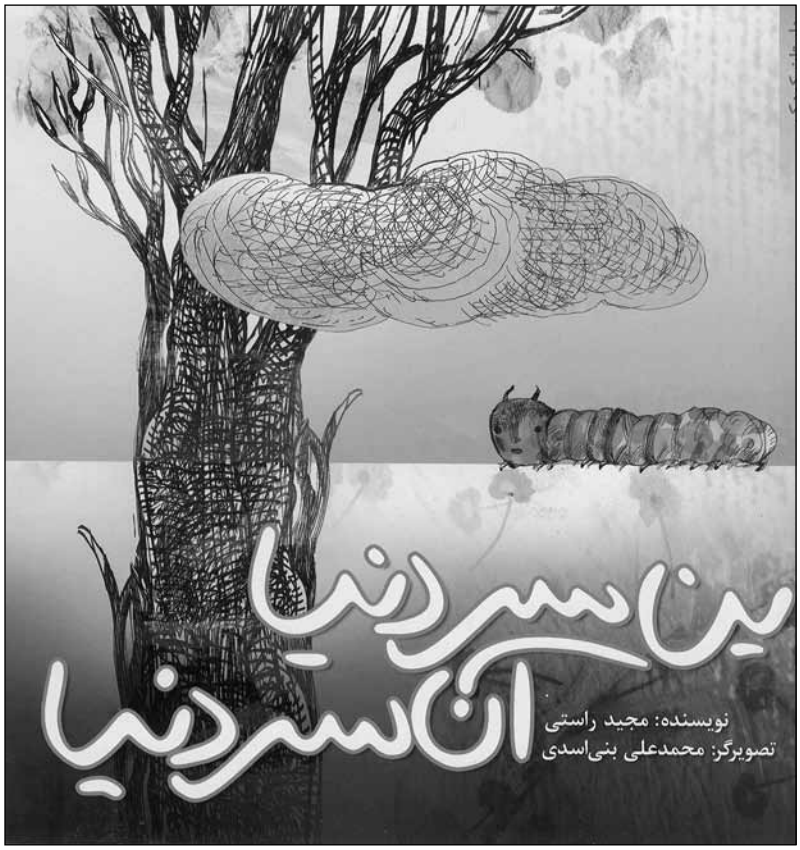

Mohammad Ali Baniasadi: History & Innovation

by BAHRAM KALHORNIA
Translated by BAHAR ESHRAQ

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Bahar holds an M.A in Translation Studies from Shahid Beheshti University, is a translator of children's and YA books, and a librarian at the acquisition department of Reference Library of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children & Young adults (Kanoon). Bahar is also a member of the CBC (Children's Book Council) of Iran.

Baniasadi's Birth Place and Background

Developing an appreciation for a piece of art is often linked to understandings of the artist's life, and viewers work to uncover details of the artist's life experiences within the piece. People are compelled to gain biographical information about artists because the artist not only explicitly steps into a different and exciting world, but understanding the artist's background may also reveal hidden meanings in his work. Mohammad Ali Baniasadi was born in 1955, in the Semnan Province of Iran. The Iranian painter, caricaturist, illustrator, and sculptor has taught his views and techniques to younger generations over the course of his career, and has had an outstanding role in the development of visual thinking in Iran. Baniasadi grew up in Semnan, and it was in this city that he spent his most fruitful years of development. Semnan is the historical urban city in the Northeast, the city of endless horizons, the city of khaki color, and the city of historical mysteries. The untouched nature and expansive horizon line in his hometown inspire his work and supplement the sense of mystical wonder in his art.

Baniasadi's work incorporates historical expression, and in order to discuss the maturity and the ancient expression of his it is first necessary to explore the historical mode of his land. A crucial aspect of his art is his use of earth-colored schemes: the harmonious khaki tones, colors that are prominent in Iranian landscapes, resurface

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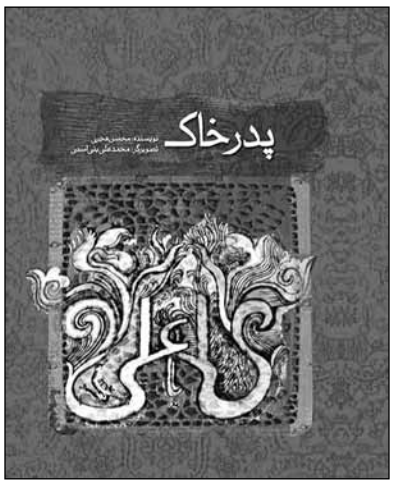
throughout his visual works. Aside from their brightness and vivacity, the colors are embedded in Iranian experience, and his use of Iranian historical arts and indigenous textiles express a uniquely Iranian foundation. Throughout history, Iranian artists have created a recognizable set of common colors that resurface throughout Iranian art, and Baniasadi has adapted this recognizable technique in his own work. He is able to evoke images of Iranian folklore and cultural histories in work through colorful artistic expression.

Design and Composition in Iranian Arts

Baniasadia's close attention to architectural detail reflects his ability to express differing eras of Iranian culture throughout history. Contemporary artists often face the dilemma of adhering to traditional schools of art or breaking the culturing norms through innovative artistic techniques, and Baniasadi manages to incorporate the best of both of these worlds. However, he does not simply blend features of Iranian cultural art and contemporary creative techniques. Through scrupulous research and critical thinking, Baniasadi has managed to develop a skilled aesthetic eye, and rather than strategically merging two distinct schools of artistic thought, he creates his artworks using his own aesthetic judgment. Inventively and imaginatively structuring his illustrations as he creates them, Baniasadi expresses a deeply personal artistic form that permeates his works.



Traditional Iranian artists carefully design their works with meticulous calculations, often using rulers and other tools to ensure careful measurements. These painstaking techniques reflect aspects of Iranian culture, which values organization, planning, and structured methodology. This meticulous and precise method, with its systematic attention to detail, allows illustrators to parallel written texts and narratives in a uniform and logical fashion. Baniasadi has adopted this technique in his illustrations, yet at the same time he incorporates personal touches into cultural techniques. Much like a poet, he remains innovative and unpredictable while at the same time, to a certain extent, adhering to artistic norms. Baniasadi composes his works with creative fluidity and consistent unpredictability, and, through his self-motivated poetic freedom, has transcended the limits of academic artistic technique. His loose brush strokes and freehanded pencil lines give him an identifiable signature style, one that allows his viewers a glimpse into his soul and acts as a vehicle between his subconscious and artistic expression.

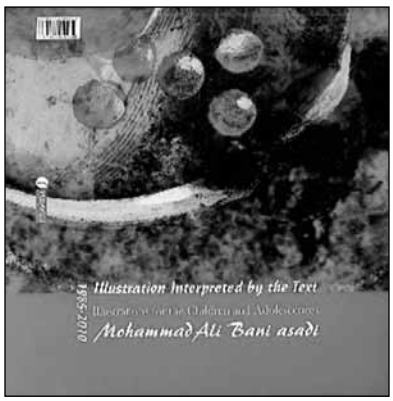
Symbolic Language and Semiotic Message

As social beings, the world as we understand it is embedded in a semiotic nature. Therefore, the audience's perception of an artwork depends on the piece's referential message. Artists have always been aware of art's ability to carry deep, semiotic meanings, and these messages have presented themselves in various forms over the course of social

development. This semiotic language is a key aspect of Baniasadi's paintings, caricatures, and illustrations, and these deeper meanings communicate throughout his oeuvre. He uses a great deal of Iranian cultural-historical patterns and drawing techniques that draw parallels to specific historical eras in art, and his works often reference Iranian symbolic literature and other art forms. Baniasadi's work expresses an Iranian-Middle Eastern attitude and mysticism.

Baniasadi focuses on creating mystical concepts and conveying semiotic messages. Expressing the emotion and personal devastation in social crises in different eras is virtually impossible, and it is difficult to properly understand the shaping effects of these crises on the subjects. The Iranian ontological worldview considers most phenomena as examples of superior messages. These messages are typically inaccessible to humans, but each human experience in the universe brings us closer to ontological truth. Baniasadi strategically presents the difficulties of these mystic messages in his art, and he is able to capture the complex and meaningful nature of the experiences. He has developed an understanding of his audience over the course of his career, and his viewers have come to expect layered meanings within his works.

Communicating layered meanings in artworks requires meticulous attention to detail and artistic skill, and it also requires a certain degree of attentiveness on the viewer's part. By extending the gaze to incorporate deeper meaning, the viewer is granted access into Baniasadi's artistic consciousness.



Aesthetic Values and Their Background

In creating his artworks, Baniasadi takes note of artistic techniques throughout history, and meticulously studies artists' strategies and methods. One such strategy, for example, is the influence of lithography in the Ghajaar Era of Iran, which played an enormous role in creating a sense of Iranian culture and folklore. The influence of these lithographic artists is no longer entirely recognized in contemporary Iranian culture, but a few artists are still involved in Iranian lithographic arts. Baniasadi has a special place here. His methods of incorporating Iranian lithography, his delineation and sketches, and his ability to eliminate the dullness of everyday life while emphasizing natural beauty allows him to create a world of beauty and excitement. Using these techniques, Baniasadi has been able to create a deeply personal and recognizable artistic style.

He is also masterful in his tendency to alter well-known narratives or artworks by changing their proportions and altering key elements or characters in his depictions of the tales. Baniasadi has a keen eye for color, and understands its impact on aesthetic value and meaning. His color coordination relies on features of Iranian tapestry art. He incorporates cultural aspects of his everyday life into his work, and conveys expressions of his own responses to worldly art and beauty.

His Style and Mode of Expression

Throughout his artistic oeuvre, Baniasadi is consistently narrative-oriented. Storytelling is a unifying force, and connects the cultural phenomena within his artwork. The Eastern, particularly Iranian, life is narrative-oriented, and the typical Iranian often makes connections between his or her personal life and folklore. Iran's landscape offers an enormous amount of artistic potential, and offers a foundation for storytelling and imagination. According to traditional Iranian ontological texts, the universe is comprised of conflicting forces of good and evil, and human beings are placed in the center of this conflict.

Baniasadi articulates values from these narratives in his artwork, and, in so doing, his personal connection and emotional involvement shine through in his works. The tradition of Ghahveh Khaneh painting (or Parde Khani) has a long history in Iran, and the Naghal (or storyteller) cooperates in recreating the concepts of the story and played a role in telling it (Naqqali and Parde khani are traditional Persian theatrical genres in which the drama is conveyed wholly or predominantly through music and singing). The poetic language of the Naghal stimulated the minds of the audience through characterization, themes, and motifs.

Like a Naghal, Baniasadi also expresses themes and motifs through a particularly artistic language. The images in his oeuvre are relatable and ultimately human, much like the Iranian celebrated texts. The recognizable images in his works reflect and (re)shape the texts' themes and influences. His ability to create mystical and imaginative worlds within his artworks while at the same time referencing traditional Iranian culture allows the viewer to recognize and appreciate the deep, layered meanings implicit in his work. This process takes time, though, and Baniasadi's works often require many viewings to fully understand their meaning. As his images offer a vast labyrinth of readings, one may find something new in each viewing, as if each viewing functions through constant renewal.

Baniasadi's art communicates through pictorial language, and each piece is able to tell a story without necessarily being literary; his ability to narrate without words is comparable to lullabies sung by mothers throughout history. His mysterious and subtle narrations about humanity, the universe, and life, and his reference to the complicated and conflicting nature of light and dark forces, relates to children and reminds them of traditional stories told to them by their mothers.

Regional and Indigenous Modes of Expression

Images undoubtedly carry cultural significance. Each and every artistic expression is shaped and reflected by the social and cultural milieu of the artist, and these social and cultural aspects are pertinent within the work of art itself. Baniasadi's Iranian heritage is recognizable throughout his oeuvre, especially in his fascination with narrative. What is particularly fascinating is his ability to convey these wholly Iranian cultural narratives to a universal audience, and to connect with viewers unfamiliar with Iranian or Middle Eastern culture.

Unique cultural experiences pertaining to national identity create deeply personal responses to art, and without these cultural connections the world, as we understand it, would be vastly different. Relatively recent innovations in terms of media and information communication have reshaped our understandings of cultural diversity, and have connected cultural beings in ways that have historically been impossible. Baniasadi's tendency to incorporate cultural aspects from many areas of the world takes on the same effects of connection as contemporary media, and his mystical and imaginative works are relatable to viewers all over the world. In this way, Baniasadi creates a universal artistic language. It is important to keep in mind that art in a particular genre often falls into the expectations and conventions of the genre itself, and occasionally loses any sort of individual and creative meaning it may have. Baniasadi has transcended this tendency, and maintains his creative voice in the genre of children's illustrations by remaining imaginatively

creative while at the same time remaining true to his Iranian roots.

Baniasadi's Effect on Society, Children, and Young Adults

Each work of art, regardless of its creator or its public reception, affects human social activity and culture. Artistic creations are crucial aspects of human ontology. More influential pieces—those that are publicly scrutinized and appreciated—play a much more significant role in cultural development and ontological human understandings. The end of the first life of an artwork is its entrance into a museum. This event is relatively inescapable, but illustrators develop a more complex relationship with their audiences than those of other visual artists; the image's relationship with literature create a more personal and long-lasting connection to the viewer, one that remains within the subconscious. The illustrator is able to resurface throughout the viewer's day-to-day life, and takes on a valuable and functional purpose.

Baniasadi, through his almost lyrical and influential style, deeply affects his audience and influences the lives of children and young adults, in particular. His ability to relate to all cultures, social groups, and national identities is masterful, and upon first glance, the audience is allied with Baniasadi internally and complicatedly. He invites his viewers into the deepest realms of his being, and creates a visceral reaction while upholding a firm connection to the text.

The Birth of the Expressive Tradition

Iranian culture subtly resurfaces in each of Baniasadi's illustrations, yet he is able to establish connections with viewers from all cultures, social spheres, and nationalities. The generations of illustrators who have come after Baniasadi have been heavily influenced by his techniques, especially in Iran. Traces of his artistic methods and style permeate the works of emerging Iranian illustrators, and not only has he asserted himself as an inspirational and successful professor, but also a mentor and role model to many inspired young artists.

Baniasadi is an influential figure in Iranian art and folklore, and his pieces both perpetuate the meanings of Iranian cultural texts and provide his viewers with visceral responses to relatable and familiar content, despite their cultural backgrounds.

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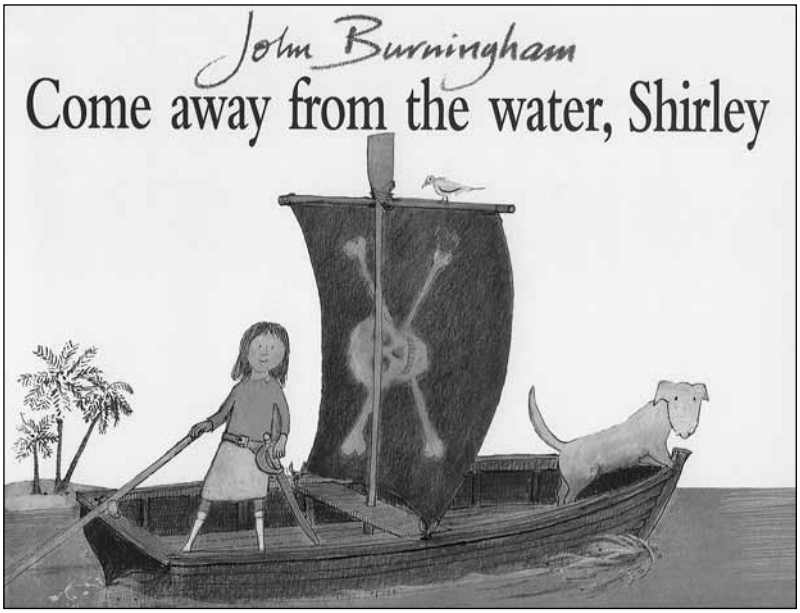
The "Preposterousness" of John Burningham: Complexity Made Accessible

by LYDIA KOKKOLA

Lydia Kokkola is Professor of English and Didactics at Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. Her main areas of research include reading in a foreign language, trauma literature, and adolescent sexuality.



John Burningham, the British candidate for the 2012 Hans Christian Andersen prize for illustration, has been a prolific author-illustrator of picture books, producing more than a book a year for over half a century. His works appeal to children, adults, critics, and teachers in different but overlapping ways. Although he claims "I am not thinking about [children] when I do this at all. I never do anything differently because it's for children. I am not trying to make a landscape that children can understand. I am just making a landscape" (qtd. in Jones), he is revered precisely for his ability to make complex ideas and emotions accessible to his young readers.

Burningham's debut picture book was *Borka: The Adventures of a Goose with No Feathers* (1963), and it remains one of his most loved picture books with its delicious blend of realism and fantasy. Borka the goose is born without feathers, and so her mother knits her a grey woolen jumper to keep her warm, but she can never learn to fly. So when her companions migrate, Borka must make her way down the British coast without flying. She boards a ship and earns her passage by coiling ropes and picking up crumbs. She finally makes a home for herself amongst the other unusual birds in Kew Gardens.

The key to *Borka's* success, as Brian Alderson explains, is that the "low-key presentation of these preposterous events helps to suggest a complete normality." This suggestion is evident not only in the story lines, but also in the illustrative technique as slightly different techniques are used to distinguish the "preposterous" from the expected. In the 1970s, the division is made manifest in Burningham's two books about Shirley: *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (1977) and *Time to Get Out of the Bath, Shirley* (1978). These counterpoint picture books use the gutter to separate the mundane world of the adult from the imaginative interior world of the child's

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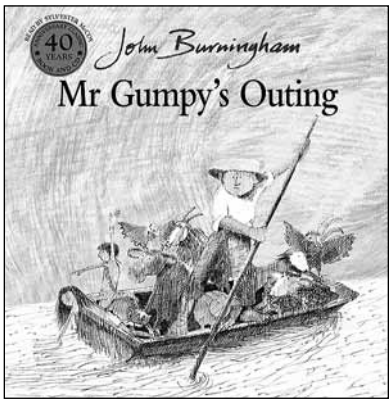
imagination. So while Shirley's parents focus on the prosaic concerns of the coldness of the seawater or bath water on the floor, Shirley imagines herself into a fantasy world where she can fight pirates and find treasure. Her parents are depicted in subdued sketches lightly washed with color, images which only lightly intimate the adults' physical environment and so suggest they are out of touch with what is going on around them. Shirley, by way of contrast, is depicted in thickly painted mauves, pinks and yellows, and mixed media is incorporated to add further texture to these imagined environs. She is deeply connected to her imagined environment. Despite her silence (we only read what her mother says, never what Shirley has to say or think), Shirley's feisty adventures demonstrate she does not lack autonomy.

Shirley's parents "are easy prey for the satirist or the social critic, but they are in Burningham-land where the criteria are different. The reader does not despise so much as feel sorry for them" (Alderson). And herein lies Burningham's main contribution to children's literature. He takes a deeply complex subject—in this case a parent-child relationship that seems somewhat awry even though it is far from abusive or uncaring—and he makes it, not simple, but accessible. To make it simple would be to remove the subtle nuances, to treat the child reader as being incapable of understanding the complexities of their own lives. Instead, Burningham celebrates the complexity of the child's emotional world without taking cheap shots at the adults in their lives.



The same standards apply in the opposite direction when Burningham explores the so-called "bad" behavior of children. Julius, the child character of *Where's Julius?* (1986) never manages to join his parents for their well-cooked, varied meals because he is always off having imaginative adventures and exploring. Instead of berating their son, Julius's father patiently brings his son meals to eat in the exotic fantasy worlds Julius has created. At the end of the book, Julius is ready to visit his parents at the kitchen table and the three of them share their first family meal.

In her discussion of adult-child relations in Burningham's picture books, Clare Bradford draws connections between Burningham's unorthodox education in the alternative educational establishment, Summerhill School. This is an independent boarding school that was founded by Alexander Sutherland Neill. The basic idea behind the school was simple: schools should be made to fit the child, rather than forcing the child to fit the school. In practice, this means that the school is run as a democracy in which teachers, other staff, and pupils all have equal voting rights. Pupils are free to do what they like (including deciding whether or not to attend lessons), provided that their actions do not harm others. In Neill's words, they have "Freedom, not Licence." For Bradford, Mr. Gumpy—the titular hero of *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (1970) and *Mr Gumpy's Motor Car* (1973)—is "a figure reminiscent of A. S. Neill" (205).

Mr. Gumpy welcomes all and sundry to join him on his trips as he takes a boat along the river or a motorcar out into the countryside. As with *Borka*, the scenario quickly becomes "preposterous" as Mr. Gumpy is joined not only by children, but also by chickens, pigs, rabbits and other articulate animals. As the creatures join Mr Gumpy in his boat, they are welcomed with the proviso that they do not behave in the way that one would expect the creature to behave: the children are not to squabble, the chickens are not to flap, the pigs must not mess about, the rabbit must not hop, and so on. Inevitably, everyone is true to form: the children squabble, the chickens flap, the pigs mess about, the rabbit hops with the inevitable result that the boat capsizes and everyone ends up in the water. And this is where Burningham departs from the expectations born of centuries of folk tales in which those who misbehave get their comeuppance. Instead of berating his passengers over the loss of his boat, Mr Gumpy simply helps everyone out of the water and takes them across the fields to his house for tea. After all, no one has been harmed as a result of simply being themselves.

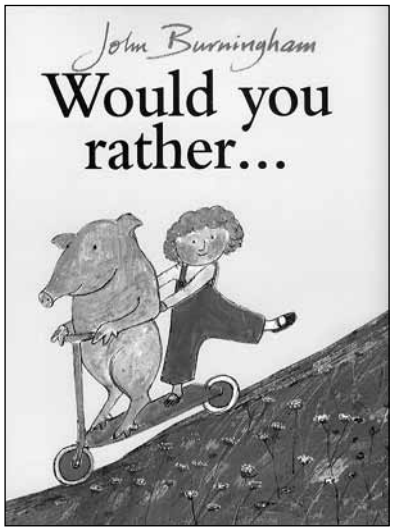
"Burningham's skill," O'Reilly points out in relation to another book, but applicable to all Burningham's production "is his ability to present this as a delightful and funny story, without any overt preaching." O'Reilly puts this observation into the context of the 1960s, when Burningham began his career under the guidance of Jonathan Cape's innovative editor, Tom Maschler. Burningham became part of a movement that saw children's literature shed the burden of heavy didacticism in favor of a complexly nuanced interrogation of values. This is not to suggest that Burningham is without morals, on the contrary, as David Gooderham shows, *Mr Gumpy's Outing* is designed to encourage moral growth. The difference comes through the successful modeling of appropriate ways of being in the world, without preaching or demanding that others follow suit.

Burningham's ability to model appropriate behavior without making demands is also evident in his depiction of underdogs. He allows momentary pity, but does not allow his underdogs to wallow in their victim status. Borka's lack of feathers is not directly linked to any specific human infirmity, although she is clearly handicapped. As a result of her difference, Borka is isolated and lonely, and the opening in which Borka is depicted watching her (mostly unkind) companions migrating, leaving her alone amongst the reeds does encourage readers to feel sympathy with her plight. But Borka is not defeatist. She may not be able to fly, but she is perfectly capable of migrating south by other means. She is fully capable of contributing to society and forming friendships. The book does not preach for the rights of the handicapped to be incorporated into society, it models a successful featherless goose. It is preposterous, but watching Borka negotiate around her limitations makes the complexity of how a handicap impacts on an individual's daily life accessible.

One can only be oneself; all that is required is that one finds a way of being oneself that does not infringe on the rights of others. Trubloff's desire to learn to play the balalaika causes no harm to others, and so Burningham does not allow the mere detail that Trubloff is a mouse to hinder his hero's journey towards self-fulfillment. Like Borka, Trubloff must negotiate around his limitations, but he also aspires to do things others think are not possible. Borka and Trubloff have the confidence to challenge the status quo. Difference—even eccentricity—is celebrated as each of Burningham's odd-ball characters find their own niches. In Burningham-land, everyone benefits when eccentric characters find their own ways of being in the world. Courtney, the scruffy mongrel from the pound chosen by the children in *Courtney* (1994), is a disappointing choice for the snobbish parents in the family. They would have preferred a dog with a pedigree. Yet, despite her rather scruffy experience, Courtney turns out to be the Mary Poppins of the canine world. Not only can she juggle and cook, she also keeps the children in her care safe and helps restore family harmony. Everyone benefits from Courtney's eccentricities, but Burningham does not need to preach to get his message home.

The only departure from Burningham's refusal to simplify matters and create an overtly didactic picture book in his oeuvre is *Oi! Get Off Our Train* (1989). This work was commissioned by the Japanese Expo '90 to promote a strong ecological message. On the surface, the plot resembles that of *Mr Gumpy's Outing*. A boy and his toy companion drive a train through the night, stopping to demand that various creature who try to board the train should get off. As each endangered animal reveals how mankind is destroying his natural habitat, they are allowed to stay on board. This text contains numerous overt, political statements on ecology and human pollution. Humans have over-stepped their freedom, and do not have the license to behave in ways that impact negatively on others.

Burningham is at his best when he says less and allows his characters to make a complex emotion accessible. His picture book, *Granpa* (1984) is a particularly tender depiction of a young girl's relationship with her grandfather. Narrated through the things the adult and child do (or do not) say to one another, this picture book, like the Shirley books, maximizes the power of absence as a way to communicate without limiting the imagination or forcing a single didactic message. Inspired by "the relationship between his youngest child, Emily, and her maternal grandfather who lived next door" (O'Reilly), *Granpa* is the least preposterous of Burningham's books. Nothing in this sensitive, celebratory depiction of the very special relationships that can form between the very young and the very old belongs to world of the imaginary, and that includes the poignant loss that comes with the death of a loved one. In *Granpa*, as in Burningham's more preposterous blending of the real and imaginary, the deeply complex emotions explored in this picture book are not made simple although they are made accessible.



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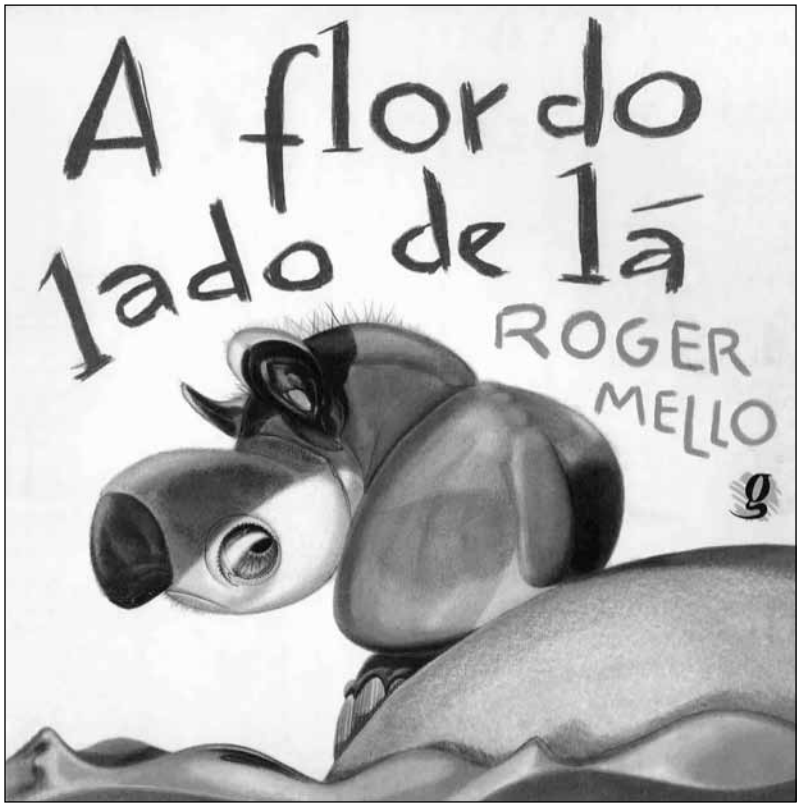
The author of **Like You and Me**, Shahnaz Qayumi, draws from personal experience and childhood memory in order to create a wonderful narrative to go along with beautiful illustrations that comment on the equality of all the world's ethnicities. Young children will find this picture book captivating as well as informative, as it suggests the biases that stem from differences existing among cultures are unnecessary, because everyone, in essence, is just "Like You and Me." The story goes through a number of ordinary, everyday activities, in which young children may notice dissimilarity between how different cultures go about the same practices. Children reading the narrative will feel as if it is addressed directly to them, which will allow them to become immersed in the story while unknowingly learning a valuable lesson in tolerance and acceptance. Shavon Cheng illustrates this narrative, and presents smiling, rosy-cheeked children, no matter what activity they are taking part in, or what they may be wearing. Ultimately children will recognize that although specific cultures may eat, play, or dress differently, everyone cries, dreams and laughs just the same.

Tia Lalani

Shahnaz Qayumi

Like You and Me

Illus. by Shavon Chen
Taipei: AuthorHouse, 2011.
ISBN: 978-1-4520-3-8397-1
(Picture Book, Ages 3-5)



Roger Mello: Time and Transformations

by SAMANTHA CHRISTENSEN
and ERIN PETERS

As an illustrator, writer, and playwright, Roger Mello has brought delight to children and adults alike, illustrating over one hundred titles, and writing twenty of them himself. Born in Brazil in 1965, Roger Mello grew up with a love of reading, drawing, and writing. His illustrations provide avenues to explore the history and culture of Brazil. The driving force behind Roger Mello's work is the need to tell a story, and he satisfies this need without imposing an agenda or attempting to moralize or teaching a lesson. He does not underestimate a child's ability to recognize and decode cultural phenomena in images, and his illustrations allow the child to be guided through stories by their imaginations ("Imágenes y palabras de Roger Mello y Graça Lima [Pictures and Words by Roger Mello]"). Travel and discovery are important aspects of Mello's artistic expression. The culturally and geographically rich content of his illustrations reflect his passion for folklore and other cultural production, and for worldly exploration. Embedded within many of Mello's celebrated illustrations is identifiable cultural content, allowing his young viewers to make imagination-fueled escapes to unknown lands and civilizations. Young children can develop relationships with both their own cultures and those of other child-readers around the world through illustrated storybooks; exotic yet relatable images encourage children to immerse themselves in social experience and differing ways of life, establishing a respectful and appreciative understanding of other cultures. This essay explores the recognizable historical and cultural aspects of Roger Mello's

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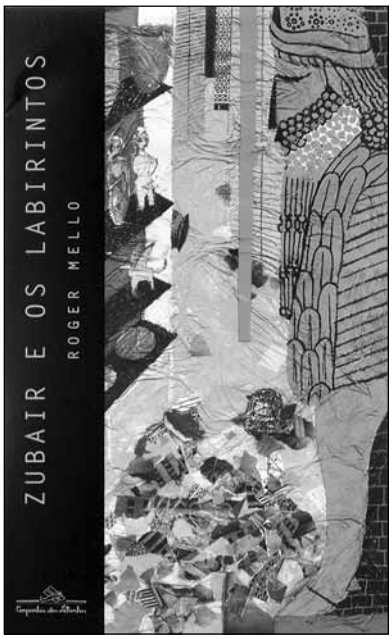
Erin Peters is a student in the Master's of Library and Information Science program at the University of British Columbia, where she researches children's book awards.

illustrations for children, and traces the international influences of his culturally inclusive art for young people.

In a 2012 interview with Gabriela Romeu, Mello discusses the importance of cultivating children's interests in literature and storytelling. He encourages a sense of respect and confidence in children's ability to both understand and engage with cultural imagery, and places responsibility on the part of his young viewers to think critically about implicit cultural content and formulate questions based on their own perceptive insights. His picturebook, *A flor do lado de lá* [The Flower on the Other Side], tells the story of a tapir—a browsing mammal native to Brazil—in search of a particularly delicious flower, but in order to enjoy this tasty botanical he must first overcome a variety of natural obstacles. *A flor do lado de lá* is a picturebook without words, and while it encourages the child reader-viewer to take note of the recognizable wildlife native to Brazil, it allows the child to formulate questions, make predictions, and think critically about the tapir's journey. Mello notes that internationally, picturebooks are understood as written storybooks with accompanying illustrations, but in Brazil, picturebooks are entirely comprised of pictures, whereas picturebooks with words are referred to as illustrated storybooks. As he suggests in his interview with Romeu, "A book without words does not have answers, but questions," and by prominently incorporating animals, vegetation, and cultural material into his storybook, he embeds the reader-viewer in Brazilian experience (qtd. in Romeu). *A flor do lado de lá* is wordless, and therefore is universally approachable for children all over the world, but because Mello publishes primarily in Portuguese and particularly targets a young Brazilian audience, children in Brazil are able to relate most readily to Mello's incorporations of distinctly South American wildlife. However, while trusting his young viewers to develop their own understandings of the illustrations and take note of the characters' surroundings, his ability to masterfully create relatable images of distinct cultural phenomena makes his art approachable to children of all cultural backgrounds.

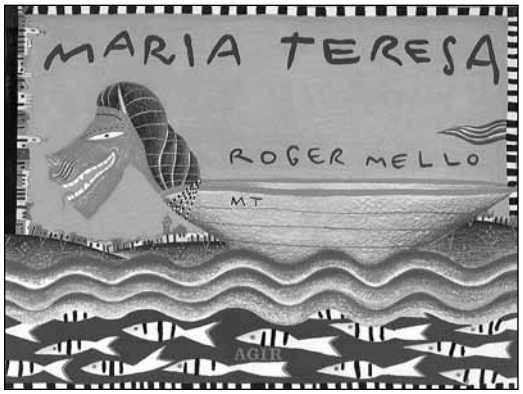
Along with portraying an in-depth and respectful understanding of geographically distinct wildlife in his illustrations, Mello also displays an appreciation for nationally identifiable folklore. His illustrations offer deeper meanings regarding issues of place and national identity, and while his works are often accompanied by text, he does not rely on textual explanation to convey his intended messages. In his accompanying image to "Jorge da Capadócia" ["George of Cappadocia"], Mello supplements the Brazilian folktale of Saint George, a well-known figure in Brazilian folklore, told via a child-like and imagination-fueled poem. The poem describes Jorge's famous battle, and suggests a child-like sense of mimicry; it evokes images of a child, dressed and armed like Saint George, setting out on an adventure to slay a dragon. Mello's use of color, textures, and cultural material culminate to evoke a distinctly

Brazilian experience, and he incorporates aspects of contemporary Brazilian culture even as he narrates a traditional historical tale. In "Jorge da Capadócia," the viewer's gaze travels through the rich colors of the nearly slain dragon, up to the horse's mane, to the determined stare of Jorge, and is absorbed into the starry night scene on the shield. The shield acts as the focal point of the painting, and reminds the viewer of the tale's imaginative possibilities; the exact possibilities that fuel children's interests in cultural lore. Mello's use of color is masterful, and gives the illustration a dream-like quality. The blues, yellows, and greens embed the painting in a distinctly Brazilian background, while the soccer ball suggests a childlike imagined state. The poem itself seems to create a scene of childhood playtime, and the soccer ball draws the viewer back to imagined playtime while foregrounding a contemporary Brazilian experience. This piece is entirely relatable to children, and while soccer is an important aspect of Brazilian childhood and cultural involvement, the soccer ball is a universally recognized object; this image is, to a certain extent, relatable to children from all cultural backgrounds. Mello uses material to embed his young viewers in Brazilian culture, but at the same time is able reach a universal audience through his relatable cultural subject matter.



Mello's cultural interests do are not limited to Brazilian experience, and a broad understanding of international ways of life is an important aspect of his career. In his interview with Romeu, he notes that travel is, in fact, an art in itself, and his passion to make new discoveries in unknown cultures and rituals drives his artistic expression. He is both aware and active in international issues, especially in terms of personal impact and emotional response to political issues. In *Zubair e os labirintos* [Zubair and the Labyrinths], Mello tells a haunting tale of life as a child in Baghdad in 2003. Through eloquent text and rich, thought provoking images, Mello is able to make adult issues approachable to children, and creates a relatable scenario embedded in Iraqi experience. Zubair must navigate through the labyrinth that has become his life, and as the child becomes immersed in his story, he/she is able to unfold the covers of the book and use Mello's intricate and logical illustration to further relate to the Iraqi boy. Mello uses rich colors, such as deep yellows, oranges, and greens on the cover, which are reminiscent of traditional Iraqi tapestry and art, and, with the help of his cubist style, he is able to capture the sense of fear and utter melancholy spreading through the broken nation. The war in Iraq and its resulting riots and uprisings are indeed adult issues, and while he takes risks in exposing children to this subject matter, Mello trusts his young audiences to recognize the underlying cultural themes in these images and take away valuable lessons from them ("Imágenes y palabras de Roger Mello y Graça Lima"). He once again leaves a great deal of deciphering images to the viewer, and incorporates a great deal of mystery and ambiguity in his illustration. Mello respects his young viewers and keeps the power of imagination in

mind throughout his oeuvre, even as he explores international issues of political unrest and crises.



Mello, of course, does not merely focus on international issues of political unrest, but delves into the beauty and deeply meaningful aspects of international cultural material and ritual. He believes that world peace can be achieved through the International Children's Library in Munich, and appreciates the library's ability to integrate cultural content from all over the world while welcoming children to learn about and discuss cultures with which they would be otherwise unfamiliar. Just as the International Children's Library foregrounds an interest in worldwide travel and curiosity in child-readers, so too does Roger Mello. Through his incredibly colorful and thrilling illustrative tales, he encourages young readers to explore that which they do not understand, and advocates deep and extensive cultural understandings. *Maria Teresa*, one of Mello's most popular picturebooks, narrates the adventure of the eponymously named ship travelling down the River São Francisco. While *Maria Teresa* remains in her native country of Brazil, Mello advocates travel and cultural exploration by maintaining an imaginative mystery and sense of adventure throughout the story. With warm, glowing colors, the child reader-viewer's senses are constantly stimulated, and Mello sparks a cultural curiosity at the root of Maria Teresa's journey to new territories. Ignoring rules of perspective, size, and scale, while continuously incorporating fantastical colours, Mello creates a dramatic fantasy grounded in travel and exploration ("White Ravens: Portuguese"). By advocating a respectful and intriguing relationship to other cultures and territories, Mello foregrounds the possibility of world peace that he attributes to the International Children's Library in Munich.

Mello's illustrations for children are both innovative and inclusive, and his ability to flawlessly incorporate cultural content into his images promotes tolerant and respectful relationships to individuals of differing cultures and traditions. By consistently understanding travel as an art in itself, Roger Mello sparks a compelling interest in international cultures and traditional art forms, one that affects the child-reader/viewer from an early age. Illustrations such as those found in *A flor do lado de lá* [*The Flower on the Other Side*], "Jorge da Capadócia" ["George of Cappadocia"], *Zubair e os labirintos* [*Zubair and the Labyrinths*], and Maria Teresa each stimulate a passionate curiosity in cultural material, whether from Mello's native Brazil or other areas all over the world, and he continues to play a crucially positive role in young readers' lives. With his incredible illustrative skill and respect for childhood, we can expect before long to see Mello's work published and translated internationally.

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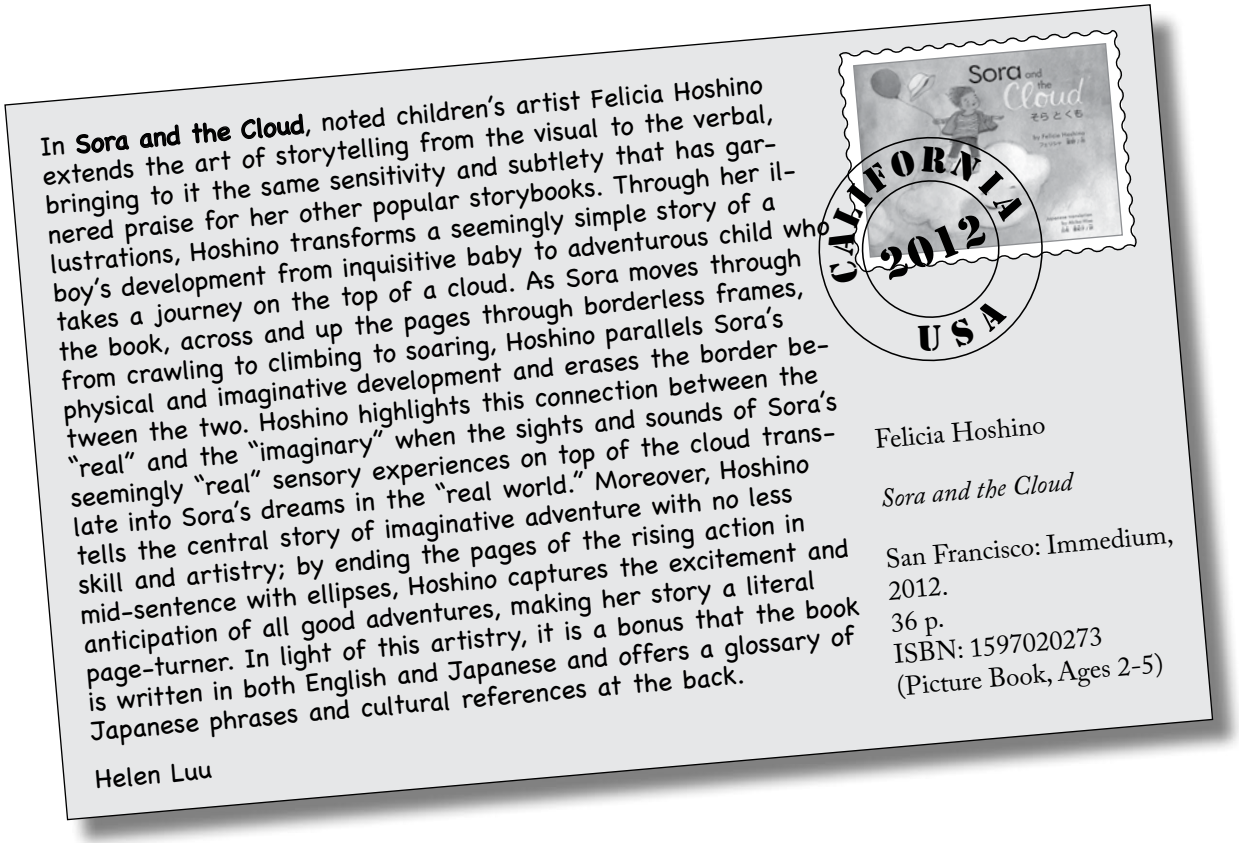

Javier Zabala: A Nonconformist in Spanish Children's Literature Illustration

by LAURA VIÑAS VALLE
and MARTÍN N. ROGERO

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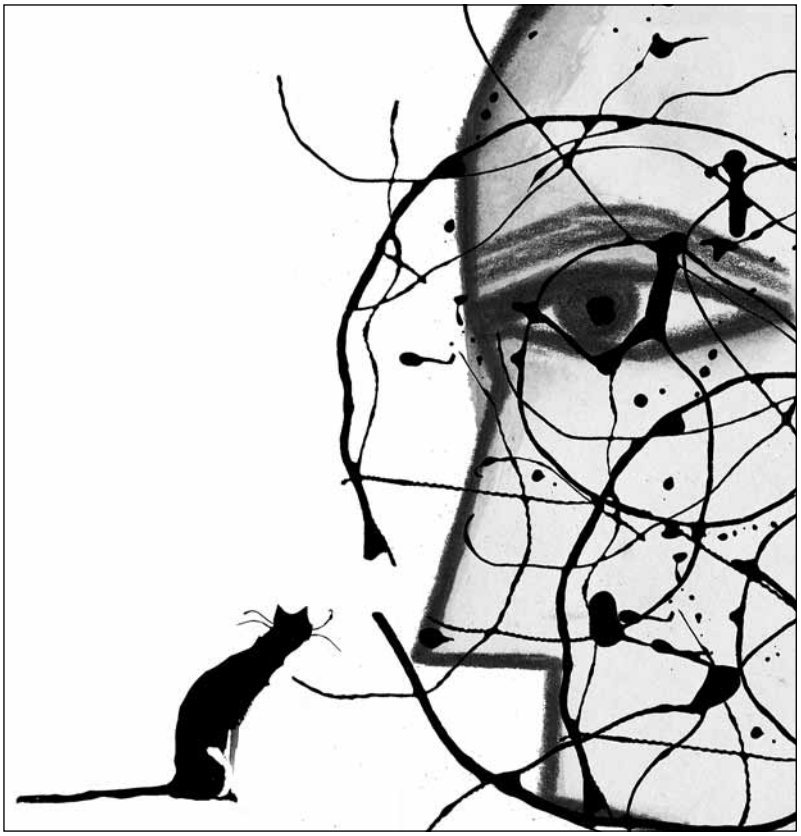

Javier Zabala, born in León in 1962, is one of the most acclaimed illustrators in children's literature in Spain. After graduating from the School of Graphic Design and Illustration in Oviedo, he moved to Madrid in 1989 to begin working for Spanish publishers and magazines. The Swiss publisher Bohem Press contributed to his early international reputation with the publication of *Madrid für Kinder* [Madrid for Kids] (2002) and *Barcelona für Kinder* [Barcelona for Kids] (2003). To date, Zabala has published over seventy books and has been translated into fifteen different languages. He has received numerous awards such as an Honourable Mention in the Bologna Ragazzi Award fiction category (2005) for his picture-book *Pictogramas en la historia de Don Quijote de La Mancha* [A picture history of Don Quixote de la Mancha] and also in the Poetry category (2008) for *Santiago* [Saint James]; The White Ravens Award (2007) promoted by the Internationale Jugendbibliotek in Munich for *Las Cosas Perdidas* [The Lost Things]; and the first prize in the category of Best Children's Book Banco del Libro de Venezuela (2009) for *Sin los Ojos* [Without Eyes]. In Spain he received the National Illustration Award in 2005 for *Pictogramas en la historia de Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and the Iberia Junceda Award (2010) for *Hamlet*. Zabala also delivers courses and workshops in libraries and art schools in Europe and Latin America, and has taught summer courses in illustration at the University of Macerata, as well as at the Ostia Library in Rome.

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An Introduction to Zabala's World

Zabala's artwork is in continuous evolution. Each of his books is somewhat different from the previous one, revealing an artist who does not conform, but who enjoys introducing and experimenting with new techniques. The style that has won him recognition evolved between the approximate years of 2002 and 2007. During this period he produced *Pictogramas en la historia de Don Quijote de la Mancha* (2004), *El Soldadito Salomón* [The Soldier Solomon] (2004), *Santiago* (2007), *Sin los Ojos* (2004) and *Las cosas perdidas* (2006), which received national and international acclaim. In his earlier years, Zabala worked primarily with graphics, color, watercolor and a touch of naïve art to convey a bright, lively and cartoon-like world. His style is reminiscent of Raoul Dufy's French Riviera watercolors, especially in the depiction of the personal visual interpretation that Zabala makes of Madrid and Barcelona in his illustrated tourist guides for children: *Madrid für Kinder and Barcelona für Kinder.* From 2008 onwards, and perhaps because most of the books that he now illustrates are addressed to adults or young adults, his illustrations have evolved into a more sober, minimalist style, generally darker in shade and with black and white playing a dominant role. However, although we can clearly observe an evolution, a number of visual features appear throughout all of his work. These features allow us to identify any one of his illustrations with his name. What follows is a description of those recurrent elements, and the transformation they have undergone in the two basic stages his career is visibly divided into.

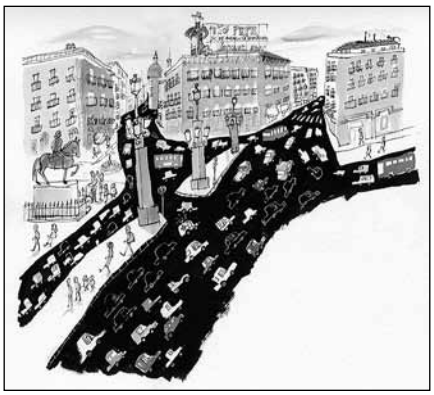
The First Stage (2002-2007)

Broadly speaking, in these first years Zabala worked with pencil and ink drawing and applied watercolor, gouache and acrylics for color. To a lesser extent, he also introduced the collage technique by including bits of newspaper cuttings and photographs, but always in a highly integrated way. An illustrative example includes the neuron structure prints taken from medical books and inserted as pictures hanging in the office of Ramón y Cajal (Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine, 1906) in *Pictogramas de Santiago Ramón y Cajal* [A picture history of Santiago Ramón y Cajal] (2007). The use of collage is also particulary interesting in *Pictogramas de la historia de Don Quijote de La Mancha* when Zabala uses as the main body of the windmill on the front cover a section of text from Cervantes' novel. Zabala also includes text in his picture depicting Cervantes writing *Don Quijote*. In the illustration of Don Quijote kneeling and holding an upright lance, Zabala again uses newspaper cuttings as his material from which to form his beard and his lance. Significantly, all these clippings are in Spanish, Italian and Japanese, thus visually suggesting the universal fame of the novel.

Another feature of this period includes elongated figures, whether of people, buildings, trees or animals. They are outlined in black or sepia ink with broken, nervous lines, which charge the drawing with energy and movement. The lines are usually fine, although sometimes they become thicker to create shadows. With few exceptions, similar to what we see in Don Quijote's lance, we can observe an almost complete absence of straight lines at this stage. Figures shown in profile abound and the depiction of facial features is reduced to that of the matchstick man, bringing the illustrations close to caricature. Faces are drawn simply with two black dots for eyes, a pointed nose and a simple curve or short straight line for the mouth, although occasionally women exhibit lips. The color of the illustration comes mainly from the characters' clothing or from the buildings. The faces are usually filled in with soft colors or are left blank. Most of them are given rosy cheeks, so that besides the cartoon-like touch, the illustrations acquire a naïve air.

Another prominent feature is Zabala's tendency to place figures and objects against large white and empty backgrounds with the absence, in many cases, of a defined horizon line. This forces readers to draw their own imaginary line to avoid the impression that the pictured objects are floating in the air. Zabala creates this illusion of invisible horizons by aligning the various elements in the illustration at different heights.

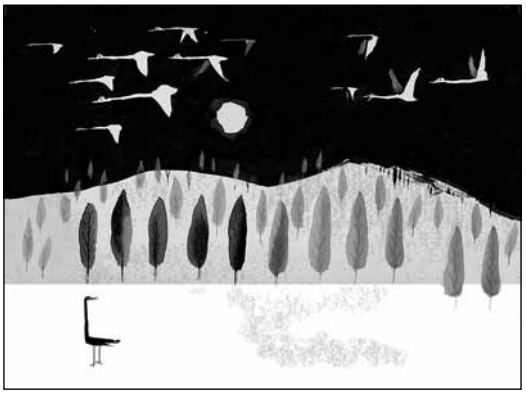
The influence of the Cubist perspective, which can also be observed in this period, increases from 2008 onwards. Cubism is particularly noticeable in the outline of profiles so that the two eyes are usually situated on one side of the face. Sometimes, as in the case of *Madrid für Kinder*, and most likely done in order to be in tune with the readers the book is specifically addressing, the child's perspective is imitated. An example is the large central green square that represents the Retiro Park in Madrid with the cars going up and down sharply without regard to realism. The same applies to the houses surrounding the park, which lean sideways in the corners.



Furthermore, there is a series of visual motifs not alluded to in the text which feed into Zabala's personal style. The most notable is the inclusion of very elongated black or striped cats. They populate the pages of *Pictogramas en la historia de Don Quijote de la Mancha*, *Pictogramas de Santiago Ramón y Cajal*, *Santiago, El soldadito Salomón*, and, obviously, *Madrid für Kinder*, in clear reference to the nickname of "cats" that is attributed to the locals. We must stress the conspicuous presence of the black cat in *Pictogramas en la historia de Don Quijote de la Mancha*, where we can also find some mice that invite the readers to a treasure hunt. The black cat, as well as the mice, is introduced in the endpapers and they act as silent witnesses to the adventures of the knight-errant throughout the book. Including these animal characters might be a way for Zabala to bestow a touch of old to his illustrations, considering this is an old story. The cat and mice pop up again on the back cover in an attitude that suggests they might represent avid readers of literature. The position of the cat poking his head and half of his body from a corner with his tail curved like a hand invites the reader into the book, or perhaps invites the reader to obtain more titles from the same collection, as advertised in the back endpapers.

Some of the other visual motifs Zabala uses are more decorative in nature. Zabala tends to draw stars in the shape of asterisks and concentric curves in the tails of mice and cats and in the whiskers of men, and also has a tendency to draw men with top hats when the story he is illustrating is set in the past (*Pictogramas en la historia de Santiago Ramón y Cajas, El soldadito Salomón*). We will now offer a closer analysis of Santiago, a picture book written within the first stage,

which already points to the experimentation that becomes more fully pursued from 2008 onwards.



Santiago

In *Santiago*, Zabala returns to face the challenge of illustrating a classic of Spanish literature, this time a poem by Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936) about the Apostle St James, patron saint of Spain. Zabala's graphic composition breathes new life into the text, offering itself to a wider audience as if it were a story. The illustrator proposes a parallel decoding with surreal details—such as the crescent Moon with one eye, taken from a drawing by Lorca himself—and original images such as the representation of Santiago as a black swan, whereas he is usually depicted riding a white horse. This visual decodification merges with the high symbolic content of the poem. The first part refers to the imaginary procession of Santiago and his warriors along the luminous path of the Milky Way. Zabala's illustrations first offer a mid-shot of the characters defined by thick and simplified lines to which collage is added, and then focus on a long shot of the landscape. In the second part of the poem, we are introduced to the story of an old woman who once saw the apostle and when he went past her house; he left her a series of gifts. Zabala uses different graphic styles for her characterization, from a simple child's drawing to cartoon, while at the same time retaining the essence of the cultural prototype: the traditional old village woman with a bun or headscarf and a black robe. Zabala is interested in offering his own earthly view of the Way of Saint James, so he shows the rural surroundings he has known as a pilgrim, which explains why some of the pictures focus on items not present in the poem, such as the cows that populate a doublespread, the long-shot of a landscape that shows the same animals grazing, the celebrated iron cross in the town of Foncebadón (León), or a sketch of a sample of architecture that can be found on the Way. The child characters in the poem that listen to and ask questions of the old woman are visually brought to the foreground. These children are very simply drawn, as if children themselves did the drawing, and they turn their eyes expectantly to the beholder, increasing the degree of intimacy and involvement within the poem. The final illustration, which highlights the blackness of the night crossed by white birds in allusion to the path of the Milky Way, enhances the true sense of the poem: the expression of the poet's sadness.

The Second Stage (2008-Present)

Many of the pictorial elements described in the first years continue, but some features begin to take a leading role. From 2008, the collage technique becomes fully exploited and white and black tend to be the dominant colors. There is also an increasing experimentation with empty spaces and, in general, minimalism and abstraction are given prominence. Gone are caricature and the cheerful and naïve style of old, to make way for a dark and disturbing atmosphere where an unspoken threat or mystery appears to lurk. In this period, the interest in the human figure increases to acquire full expression in *Aeternum* (2008). Here Zabala employs athletic silhouettes full of movement. As a novelty, these human silhouettes have no contour lines so the color itself creates the edges of the figure, and quite often, the empty backgrounds they are placed against evoke cave painting. Sometimes, a horizon line is drawn using watery grey brushstrokes and cubist shapes made by roller printing, a technique Zabala had never used before. While the faces of the silhouettes become mere black and white circles, close-ups provide very detailed features, something which also did not happen previously. This experimentation with the human silhouette continues in *Puss in Boots* (2011) and

Hamlet (2009), although it is combined with the more traditional black ink drawing of his first stage.

El perro con el corazón amarillo [The Dog with the Yellow Heart] (2009) takes minimalism to the extreme. The trees, for instance, are simplified to resemble fish bones. The visual motif of the asterisk stars becomes fully exploited, and the contrast between the white of the empty backgrounds with the black outline of the characters is almost aggressive. The only concession to color is the yellow heart of the dog in question. There is also further work with faces in profile, which become much rounder, like curly brackets. The top hat motif returns as well as the Cubist perspective of both eyes on one side, which also occurs with the dog of the title.[1] The other animals in the story are depicted with a great eye in the middle that looks straight at the audience. From the second stage, we would like to highlight *El hombre que compró la ciudad de Estocolmo* [The Man who Bought the City of Stockholm] (2008), a picture book that combines the more traditional style of Zabala with the avant-garde.

El hombre que compró la ciudad de Estocolmo

This large-format picture book with brief text by Gianni Rodari (1920-1980) tells the story of a barber who buys the city of Stockholm in a market "in exchange for a haircut and a splash with eau de cologne" (2008:6). The story is a satire about vicious capitalism in the modern world, and unfolds in doublespread illustrations which surprise the reader with their groundbreaking style. The story also mixes collage with geometric shapes, straight lines and oblique planes. The pointed triangles of the towers, the trapezoids of the roofs and rectangles of the buildings are interspersed with textures of corrugated cardboard or floral wallpaper and photo clippings. All of these elements are placed against large white backgrounds where figures and objects are slightly inclined in different directions, thereby providing movement to the whole illustration. As for color, besides the classic combination of black and white, Zabala uses a playful game with red and blue. These colors sprout from the traditional barber's trade sign, a pole with helical colored stripes (usually red, white and blue). The roofs, clothes and shutters of the buildings of Stockholm are painted in these colors, and the barber's pole itself appears occasionally in place of the main character. Red, white and blue also blend with grey shades made by roller printing, similar to a technique Zabala uses in *Aeternum*. Moreover, the illustrations also include minimalist touches, such as the elongated cypress-like tree leaves printed in different shades in a doublespread. These elements are representative of Zabala's new tendency to suggest concepts rather than define them. However, these novelties are intertwined once again with his most characteristic black

ink drawing when it comes to represent the people of Stockholm (black cat and top hats included). The difference is that this time the figures, instead of being elongated as in the first years, now resemble rows of bottle silhouettes of all different shapes and sizes. Several of these characters are seen holding black and red umbrellas, a visual motif recurring throughout the book, and already introduced in the endpapers, perhaps as a symbolic representation of the inhabitants of Stockholm themselves.

To conclude, Zabala is an artist who does not content himself with repeating a successful formula. Each of his books moves forward, like pieces of a chain where the old meets the new. It is most likely this particular feature that sets him apart from other contemporary Spanish illustrators of children's literature. Whereas his work is in continuous development, his colleagues tend to keep to a particular style. Zabala's artwork, in this sense, is outstanding, and his career promises to be long, prolific and exciting. In the current world of Spanish children's literature, Zabala has definitely made a place and a name for himself, and we are sure that his future work will continue to surprise and impress us.

Acknowledgement:

All images are used courtesy of Javier Zabala. Madrid, 29 June 2012.

Notes:

[1] The top hat motif is also present in *Puss in Boots, El hombre que compró la ciudad de Estocolmo* [The Man who Bought the City of Stockholm] and *Bartleby, el escribiente* [Bartleby, the Scrivener]).

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This collection of poems for children, honored by the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany, in 2011 and included in the prestigious annual White Ravens Catalogue, represents a unique collaboration of author and illustrator to combine a marvelous world of poetic images with a vividness and vitality of illustrations. The free verse poetry presents the child reader with everyday situations, waiting to be discovered. A little white rabbit washes its face during the winter, a house celebrates its birthday, and a tree kisses a child with its leaves. The poems are short and vibrant. The illustrations create the visual world surrounding the content of the verses, providing additional movement and rhythm to the text. One poem and illustration from the book will also be included in an annual children's calendar called Arche Kinder Kalender 2012. This book represents a major stepping stone in the promotion of a rich Ukrainian children's literature on the world arena.

Oksana Lushchevska

Vasyl Holoborodko

A Mitten Full of Poems / Virshiv Povna Rukavychka

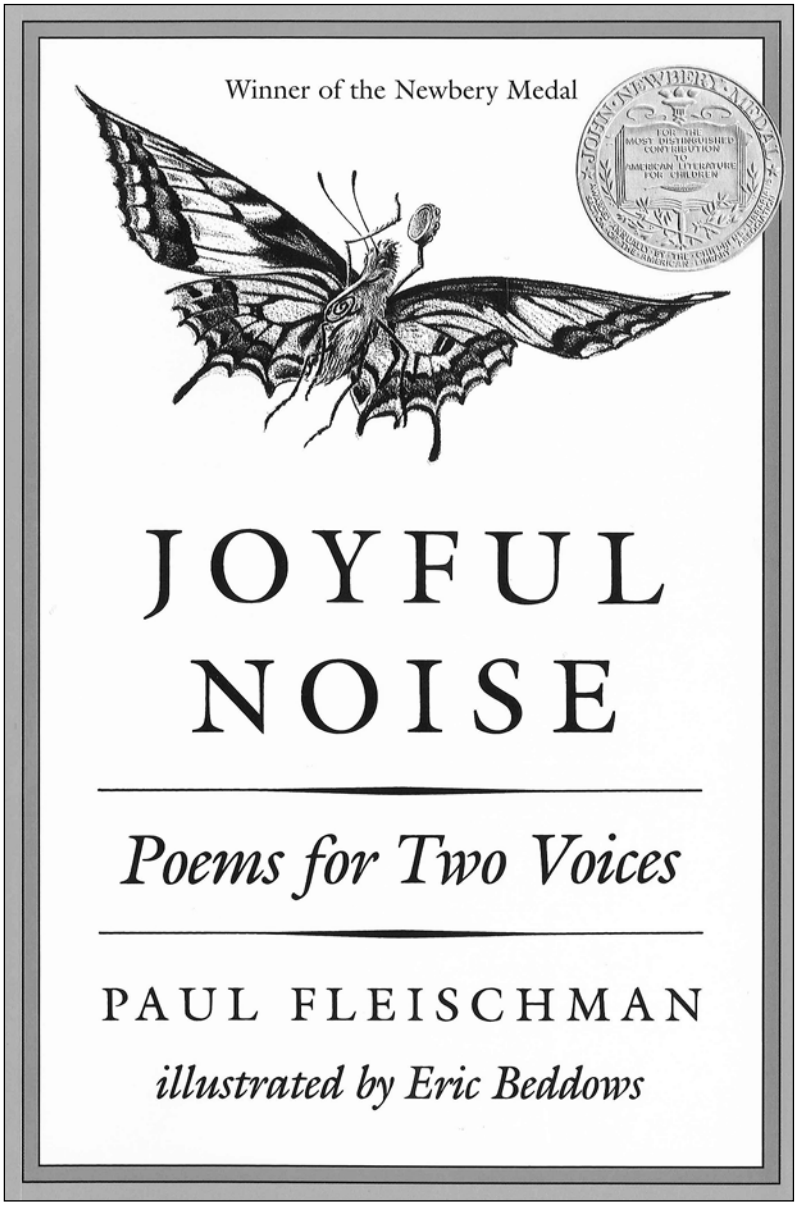
Illus. Inga Levi

Kyiv, Ukraine: Grani-T, 2010.

80 pp. ISBN: 9789664653005
(Picture book, 6-9)

Paul Fleischman: Affirmation of Hope and Community

by JOAN V. GALLOS



Award-winning author Paul Fleischman, U.S nominee and short-list finalist for the 2012 Hans Christian Andersen Award, is known for melodic and inventive work. His trademark is meticulous attention to detail and to the sound, placement, and meaning of every word. Fleischman speaks of growing up in a "house of voices:" a hustling-bustling home filled with music, conversations, and his father's dramatic readings of his own writing (Fleischman's father is Newbery Award-winning author, Sid Fleischman) ("My House of Voices"): "We grew up knowing that words felt good in the ears and on the tongue, that they were as much fun to play with as toys" ("Meet the Author"). These early life experiences inform the imaginative rhythms, forms, and playfulness seen across his broad range of work: picture

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Joan V. Gallos is Vice President of Academic Affairs and Professor of Leadership at Wheelock College in Boston. Gallos holds degrees from Princeton and Harvard and is author of four books and more than fifty articles on professional effectiveness, diversity, and leadership. She blogs as *The Leadership Professor* at http://theleadershipprofessor.com, and tweets at https://twitter.com/#!/JoanGallos.

books, middle age novels, poetry, short stories, young adult fiction, non-fiction, and plays for youth and adult audiences. He uses a variety of subjects and settings to tackle complex moral and developmental issues at the core of growing up strong, confident, and accepting of self and others. Fleischman's works reflect sensitivity to the "traumas and textures of modern life" and strong belief in the power of humor and imagination for resilience and growth *(Zap 4)*.

Fleischman's writing begs to be read aloud and enjoyed in community. "Throughout my writing life, I've worked on books designed to bring readers together," he notes ("From Seed to Seedfolks"). Works like *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices*, Newbery Award-winning *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*, and *Big Talk: Poems for Four Voices* cannot be fully understood without that fact. As with a musical score, narrative arc, color, and impact are revealed through performance. In Fleischman's words, his writing "attempts to carry the camaraderie and synergy and do-it-yourself pleasure of chamber music into poetry…for family and friends" ("My House of Voices"). Novels like *Bull Run* and *Seedfolks* advance their stories through short chapters, each in the voice of a compelling character, making the books perfect for readers' theater. Creative formats in works like *Seek* (written as a radio script), *Graven Images* (short stories in the tradition of Edgar Allen Poe), *Zap: A Play* (an exaggerated parody of seven well-known playwrights for the remote control era), and the National Book Award finalist *Breakout* (with chapters that alternate between present reality for a budding playwright stuck in a traffic jam on the L.A. freeway and the script of her future one-woman show chronicling her escape from a challenging past) make them ripe for dramatic readings ("A Teacher's Guide to Zap"). Rhymes, metaphors, humorous dialogue, and dynamic words in books like *The Dunderheads* are roll-off-the-tongue, speak-out-loud fun.

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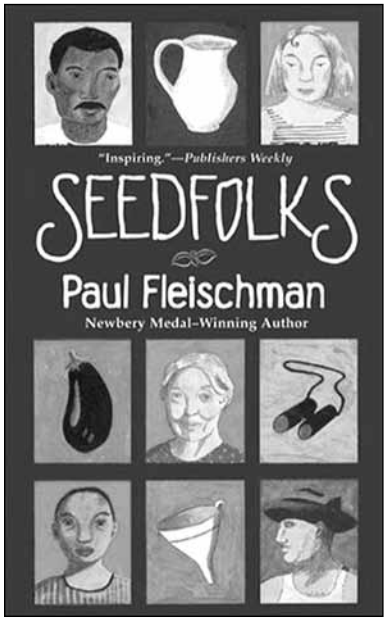


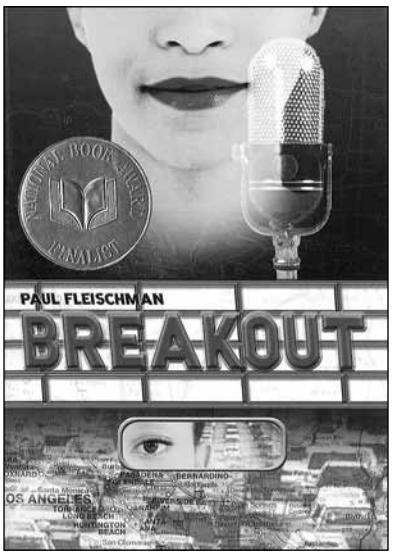
Paul Fleischman is a painstaking craftsman and a technical wizard from whom writers can learn. However his greatest contribution to world literature rests in the fact that his emphasis on authenticity, musicality, and creative community closely aligns with and reinforces his powerful messages of affirmation and hope: the beauty and magnificence in everyday life, the healing power of self-acceptance, growth as the gift from adversity, imperfections as the wellspring of contribution, imagination as the key to contentment, the human capacity to connect with others despite our differences—and the rich and rewarding relationships formed because of them. By wedding form and content skillfully, Fleischman draws readers into the lives and words of his characters. We see ourselves in their struggles, and we grow and learn from them. The result is a deeper

understanding of self, human potential for contribution and community, and the larger world. A look at *Seedfolks* provides illustration.

Seedfolks is a simple tale of a make-shift, community garden in Cleveland's urban core. With garden as both vehicle and metaphor for individual and community development, the story unfolds in thirteen chapters, each written as a first-person account by one of thirteen fictional characters. Chapter sequencing is carefully orchestrated, reflecting Fleishman's eye for performance in the everyday theater of life and his search for the right rhythm and patterns to support his message. Each character only speaks once yet appears "in the background of other speakers' accounts, presaging their entrances and following up their exits" ("From Seed to *Seedfolks*"). Form reinforces content: individual lives intersect in ways we may never fully know. Characters are unique and richly developed yet familiar: they use their own voices and experiences to share the meaning and impact of a simple garden on a rat-infested, vacant lot. Together their stories chart the shaping of a community among estranged neighbors, separated by differences and prejudices, now united in hope and a new joint venture.

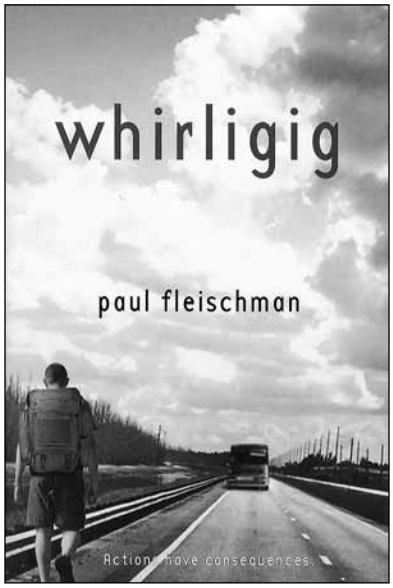
Together their stories chart the shaping of a community among estranged neighbors, separated by differences and prejudices, now united in hope and a new joint venture.

Fleischman researched deeply, as is his habit, studying gardening, immigrants, cities rich in immigrant traditions, community gardens, Cleveland, and more to support the faithfulness of his prose. He drew on his mother's volunteer work in a therapeutic garden at a veterans' hospital, his father's backyard fruit and vegetable gardening, stories from friends, and his own experiences planting and tending a row of beans. His account of how *Seedfolks* grew from research, various projects, and the creative integration of experience and serendipity offers the kind of "backstage pass" into the writer's psyche and creative process that Fleischman provides into characters in works like *Breakout* and *Whirligig* ("From Seed to Seedfolks"; *Breakout* back cover).



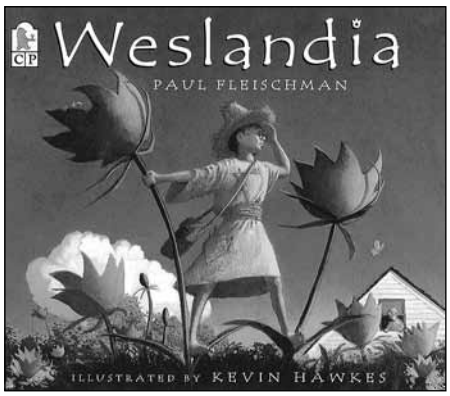
The power of *Seedfolks* rests in the simple ways the characters overcome their differences in order to forge a community that supports individual growth and development for all: old and young. Haitian, Caucasian, African-American, Eastern European, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, English, and Hispanic; formally educated and not; healthy and ailing; men and women; strong and physically challenged; Christian, Hindu, and Jewish. The differences are large and seemingly insurmountable. Fear, stereotyping, and isolation fuel the alienation that everyone feels until a young Vietnamese girl plants four lima bean seeds in an abandoned lot to honor the memory of her father. The simple action has powerful consequences—and echoes a central theme across Fleischman's work that small choices can yield large returns. The seeds sprout, raise neighborhood curiosity, and set the development of the community and

its garden in motion. The result: new ways to look beyond differences, new reasons to believe in self and others, new relationships, shared purpose, and neighborhood pride stronger than anyone could have predicted.



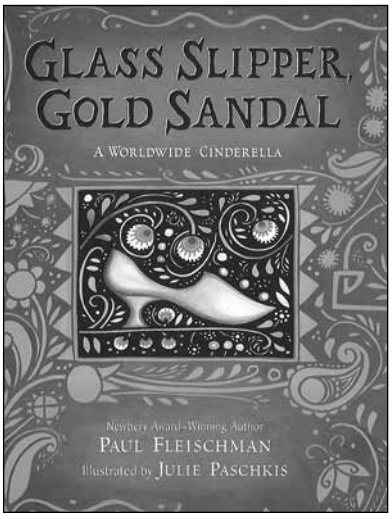
The book's format and simple storyline add to the accessibility of its message—another hallmark of Fleischman's writing. Complex topics like prejudice, isolation, risk-taking, failure, intolerance, or fear are lightly handled through the reflections, choices, and conversations of the characters. Although Fleischman's value positions are clear—individuals have more in common than they often believe, community fosters hope, differences can be transcended, and relationships are as rewarding as a bountiful garden—he avoids didactic sentimentality. Instead his characters act and talk, and we observe their growth and development. We see them move beyond their comfort zones and become more open-minded. We assess the quality and impact of their strategies for managing differences, empowering themselves, and building trust. We celebrate small moments of humanity that touch the human spirit and remind us change is always transformational. Take, for example, the Indian storekeeper who "dared to remind" an older Italian woman, admiring his ripening eggplants, that she had once called him a "dirty foreigner" for accidentally giving her wrong change. Her repeated response is powerful, simple, and beautiful: "Back then, I didn't know it was you…"

Seedfolks was written for young audiences. But like much of Fleischman's work, its power and poignancy speak to adults who know the challenges in navigating through an increasingly diverse and complex world. The book is a gentle reminder that how we make sense of the world may be different from how others understand and experience it, and those differences are a vibrant source of creativity and learning. We connect across the divide when we know ourselves and when we have learned to *reframe*—to see a situation as if through another's eyes (Bolman and Gallos). The book models and stimulates good inter- and cross-generational connections. U.S. National Public Radio, for example, chose *Seedfolks* as its *Backseat Book Club* selection in April 2012 (Norris). It has been the *One-State-One-Book* selection in Vermont ("Seedfolks and Vermont Reads"); the statewide recommendation for *Read On Wisconsin*; and a community reading selection for cities in California, Massachusetts, Illinois, Wisconsin, Florida, New York, and Utah ("One Book, One Community").



I read the majority of Fleischman's work, back-to-back, to prepare this article and was struck by four things. One, there is consistent attention to vital detail and craft across genres, projects, and audiences. Form and content tightly link. Information is accurate. Characters are unique and captivating, yet deeply human so

that readers identify with them. Word use is economic, storylines crisp and clear. Two, each piece evokes thought and emotion. Picture books like *Sidewalk Circus, The Animal Hedge, Weslandia, The Dunderheads, Rondo in C,* and *Glass Slipper, Golden Sandal: A Worldwide Cinderella* carry a strong message and punch as do longer works for older audiences like *Whirligig, Breakout, Zap: A Play, Seek, Bull Run, Saturnalia, Graven Images, Seedfolks,* and others. Three, humor, irony, and quirky characters are beautifully disarming, opening readers to reflection on tough topics, like rejection, financial hardship, dysfunctional families, bullying, tyranny, punishing adults, suicide, psychic pain, alienation, and death. Children develop resilience and trust with honesty from caring adults and safe places from which to explore the messiness of life. Fleischman offers both. Finally, universal themes of hope and community speak across time, age, and cultures: redemption, connection, creation, transformation, the beauty of imagination, and the indefatigable power of the human spirit. "I'm looking for something deep, universal, and strong," said Paul Fleischman. "If writing doesn't have that, then readers won't be moved by it" (qtd. in Christensen 60).



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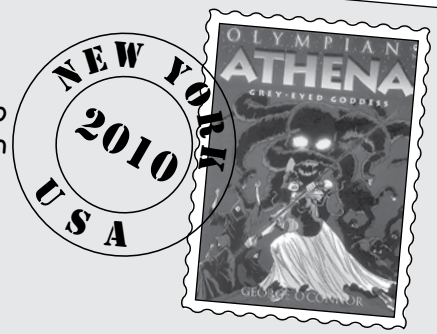
This well-crafted series of graphic novels, The Olympians, includes not only the mythology of the Greek Goddess Athena, but also that of Zeus, Hera, and Hades. Readers are introduced to classical literature which, when presented through text alone, is often difficult for young people to comprehend and appreciate. The language is rich and full of action, including dialogue that is often humorous and includes a variety of the sound effects that are so typical of this genre. Engaging illustrations carry the tales forward at times without words. Both reluctant readers and students who are strong visual learners will be able to access the myths surrounding the naming of the goddess, Athena. The abundant supportive information, including "An Olympians Family Tree," "Author's Notes," and "Greek Notes," provides background information and additional resources to explore.

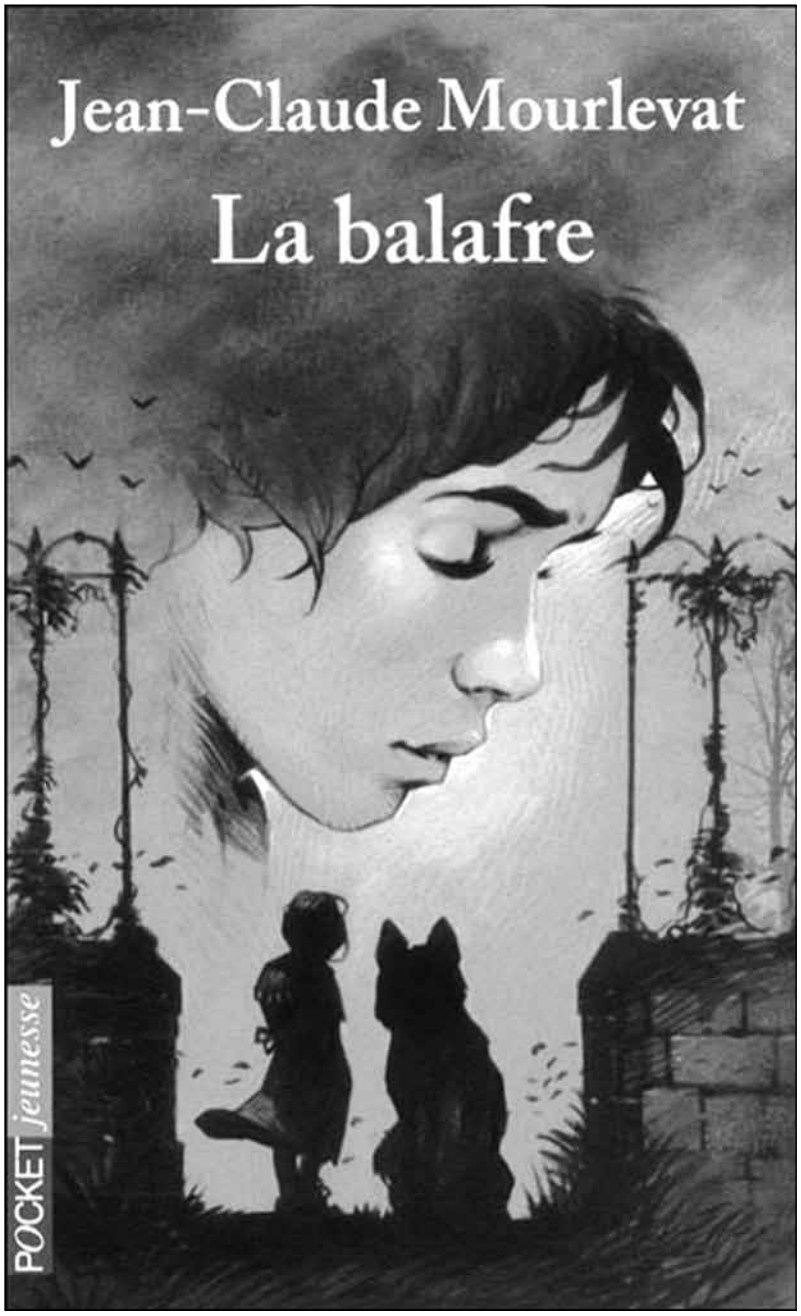
Jeffrey Brewster



George O'Conner

Athena: Grey-Eyed Goddess

New York: First Second, 2010
77 pp.
ISBN: 9781596434325 (paperback)_
ISBN: 9781596436497 (hardcover)
(graphic novel, ages 10+)



Jean-Claude Mourlevat: Life's Great Battles

by ALICE BRIÈRE-HAQUET
Translated by CLÉMENTINE BEAUVAIS

In the past ten years, Jean-Claude Mourlevat's books have become eagerly anticipated events for French people. Young and not-so-young readers alike wait for them, look out for them, hope for them, and worry too: will the next one be as good as this one or that one? Social realist novels, epic fantasy, comic tales: Jean-Claude Mourlevat always manages to produce unexpected works, and stubbornly refuses to walk down the avenues he himself opened with his previous successes.

Mourlevat is an expert in small, untrodden paths. He was born in 1952 in Ambert, a large village in the French region of Auvergne.

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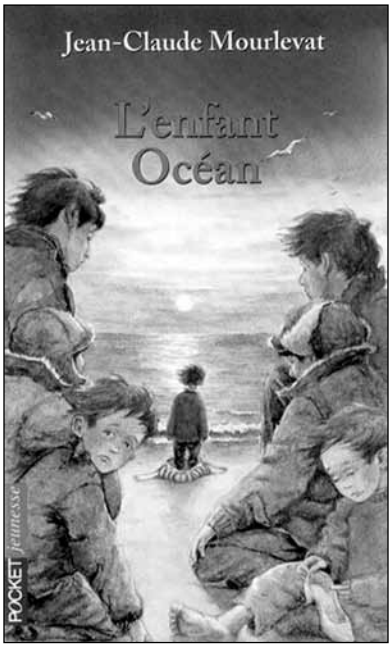
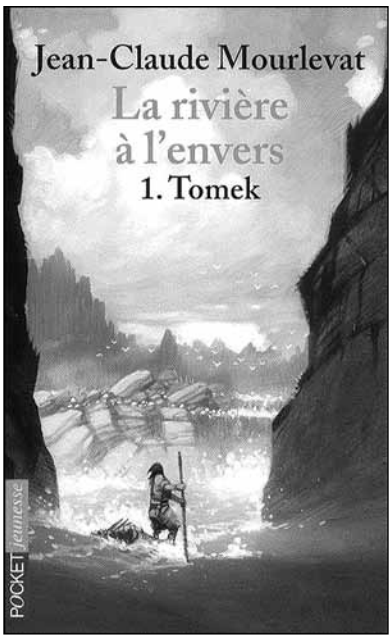
Before starting to write for children and becoming a professional author, Alice Brière-Haquet taught literature and art history in high school. She has published over thirty picture books, novellas, and non-fiction books. Alice Briere-Haquet is also completing a PhD in fairy tale adaptation at the Department of Comparative Literature of Sorbonne University in Paris.

His father was a miller and his mother looked after the farm and the six children in the family. The Mourlevat family was full of games, mutual understanding, and joy, but had very few books. The rural world in which Mourlevat grew up has sharpened his sensitivity to the here and now: "My childhood culture is not bookish. It was transmitted to me, rather, through 'real life.' As a very young child, I experienced dark nights, huge snowfalls, spring brooks, the depth of the forest" (qtd. in *Ricochet*). At boarding school, his first great literary encounter occurred with *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe: "I felt like a voice was coming out of the book—like someone was speaking to me" (qtd. in *Lecture Jeune*). This revelation marks the emergence of young Mourlevat's fundamental principle: a book is a voice. However, at this point in his life he still did not know anything about his own voice. Following another path, he met Kafka's discourse, and lectured about him for a few years. He became a happy but atypical teacher—the kind that likes, above all, to see his students laugh, so he decided to be a clown. For 12 years, he roamed the world with this new character. His audience, children and adults, followed. Little by little, though, Jean-Claude Mourlevat started to feel somewhat trapped: "I was an 'average' comedian, what I was most interested in was the staging process: I liked guiding comedians, imagining the set, the music, etc." (ibid). He became a stage director, but these words already hint at the organisational work of the novelist. One little spark would be enough for him to start writing, and a friend of his, an oral storyteller, lit it by asking him for a few stories. Mourlevat wrote five of these stories, and after three of them were published, he launched his career as a writer.

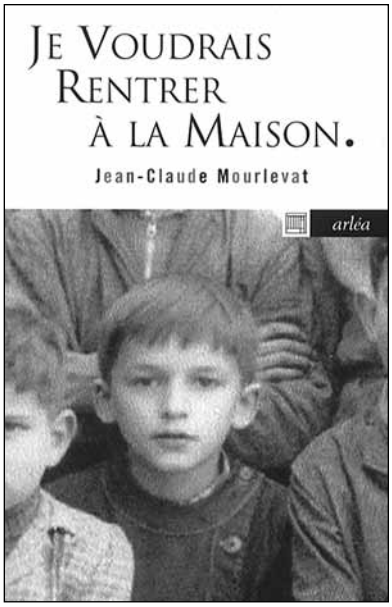




In 1998, he published *La balafre* (The Scar), a semi-historical, semi-fantasy novel. However, critical success came a year later, with *L'enfant océan* (The Ocean Child). Readapting the tale of "Hop-o'-my-thumb," Mourlevat weaves a contemporary social saga, dark, uncompromising, but shimmering here and there with beautifully humane passages. The narrative premise is particularly audacious: each chapter of the story is delegated to one of the characters, each viewpoint mingling and reflecting within the multifaceted whole. Mourlevat was perfectly aware of the originality of his project: "*L'enfant océan* was a risky literary endeavour, and that novel was a true turning-point. I kept asking myself, 'Is anyone else in the world apart from me going to be interested in this?'" (ibid). Apparently so—the novel has so far sold over 800, 000 copies.

From then on, the audience grew, and Mourlevat continued to entrance his readers. In 2000, *La rivière à l'envers* (The Reversed River) offered a radically different universe. In an allegorical, vibrant world, two young protagonists go on a quest for enchanted water to save a bird. Here again, the voice is split: Tomek (volume 1) and

Hannah (volume 2) both tell the story which leads them to each other. But here the voice is not the scattered, vertigo-inducing kaleidoscope of his earlier novel. Instead, the reader is taken to the heart of the lovers' relationship, rocked, like the couple, by the succession of events, but also lulled by the softness of their feelings. Mourlevat reinvests here the voice of Crusoe, who so moved his ten-year-old self. His technique works, as the novel earned 17 awards.



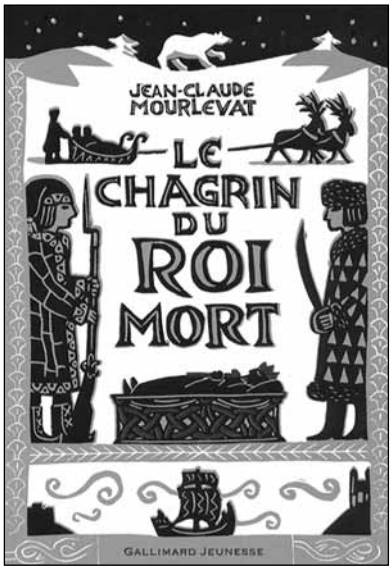
Thus for 15 years, novel after novel, Mourlevat remains an ever-changing novelist. *Je voudrais rentrer à la maison* (I Would Like to Go Home, 2002) is a collection of autobiographical memories, *La balade de Cornebique* (Cornebique's Walk, 2003) is a quirky animal fable, and *La troisième vengeance de Robert Poutifard* (Robert Poutifard's Third Revenge, 2004) is a cruelly funny novella à la Roald Dahl. *Combat d'hiver* (Winter Fight, 2006) stages a group of friends rebelling in a dystopian world, *Le chagrin du roi mort* (The Dead King's Chagrin, 2009) is a Nordic saga, and *Terrienne* (Earth Dweller, 2011) ventures into science-fiction. All are different, but all share a deep fraternal bond, with recognisable personality traits from one book to the next.

A number of his novels pass off as quests. Heroes move forward, often as duos, through antagonistic worlds. Hannah and Tomek are been mentioned above, but also among Mourlevat's young heroes are Aleks and Brisco, the almost-twins in *Le chagrin du roi mort*, and the young runaways of *Combat d'hiver*, Milena and Helena on one side, Bartolomeo and Milos on the other. As couples move, split up, and look for each other, friendships are broken, love stories are born, old pals die, and new ones emerge. Each book offers plural quests which are all, ultimately, symptomatic of adolescence. Jean-Claude Mourlevat explains it very well in an interview:

> Going away… and, therefore, leaving… Opening the door, but closing it behind oneself, too. Dying somewhere, to be born somewhere else. Bidding farewell to people who disappear in the dark, and seeing already the silhouettes of other people appearing—people we'll leave too, one day. Abandoning one's past, one's childhood, the uncertainty of everything, of oneself, but the ardent desire to live. Is adolescence that moment in your life where all of this is condensed most intensely? I believe so. (qtd. in *Ricochet*).

Without being didactic, Jean-Claude Mourlevat thus stages the great battles of life. The battle of culture against barbarity is particularly dear to him. It can be on an individual scale, as in *L'enfant ocean*, where Yann has to run away from his father's close-minded stupidity, and then again from a better-mannered but crueller fascist politician. However, it can also put the survival of a whole people at stake, as in *Le chagrin du roi mort*, where the invasion of

peaceful Little Earth culminates in the fire of its splendid library. This theme is at the heart of the writing process in *Combat d'hiver*: a tyrannical power, the "Phalange," has eradicated all forms of culture. Four teenagers realise they might have the ultimate weapon to upturn it: Milena's voice, charged with emotion and beauty, a voice that will reawaken humanity in human beings.



Voice, the bearer of the many beauties of a language, modelled by individuals but linking them to the world, ultimately might be what best symbolises the work of Jean-Claude Mourlevat. It is that "thread stretching between oneself and others" (ibid.), a constant in his life, from teaching to performing all the way to his novels today: a voice that is still heard as he meets pupils in schools, or in his shows, *A voix haute* (Out Loud), which he regularly organises. What remains is for this voice to leap from mouth to ear:

> *"How many of them are there? I can't see them all."*
>
> *"Heaps of them, I'm telling you. They're waiting for you to talk to them. Here, climb up there and go for it."*
>
> *"But they won't hear me. My voice isn't strong enough."*
>
> *"No need to talk loudly. Just for those in front – they'll pass it on. They'll repeat exactly what you say all the way to the back."*

This scene from *Combat d'hiver* is a *mise en abyme*: Mourlevat's words themselves are repeated, far away, resonating down the little paths, and beyond our frontiers, towards tomorrow.

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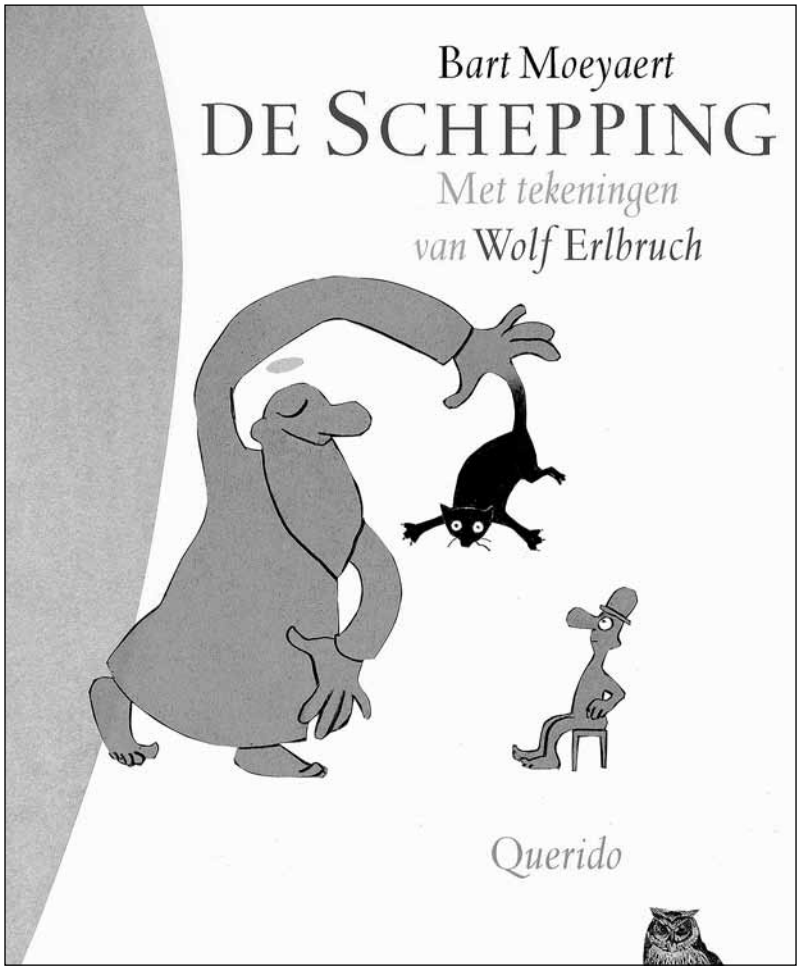
Bart Moeyaert: Sensual Appeal and Difficult Issues



If children's literature is to take itself seriously, it will have to acknowledge that it's part of culture and therefore has to be as broad as it can be. Developing a culture means you have to be able to show all four corners of the room and not only the middle, where the children's play mat is. All the corners. The dark ones included. And the places under the table.

Bart Moeyaert (qtd. in Kustermans)

Ever since his début at the age of 19, Bart Moeyaert has been extremely popular in Flanders and the Netherlands, and over the past two decades his fame has also grown internationally. Many of Bart Moeyaert's books have been awarded with national prizes and international mentions, including several nominations for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. Not only is he loved by the critics, but his books are also widely read among children, young

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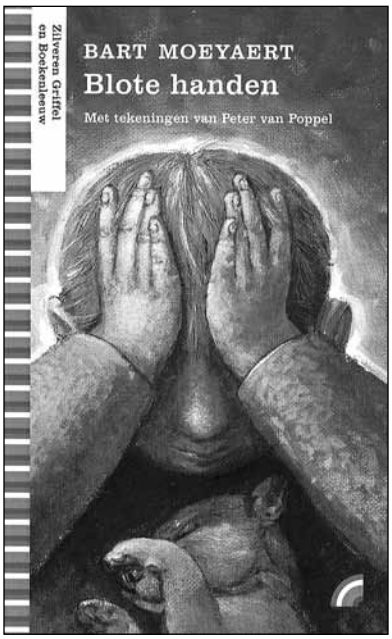
by VANESSA JOOSEN

Vanessa Joosen is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in children's literature at the University of Antwerp. She is the author of the book *Critical and Creative Perspectives of Fairy Tales* (Wayne State University Press 2011), and has published widely on children's books in such collections as the *Routledge Companion to Children's Literature* and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. She has also been a jury member for several Belgian awards.

adults, and adults. His début *Duet met valse noten* [Duet out of Tune], published in 1983, has already been reprinted for the 16th time. More recent work, such as *Het is de liefde die we niet begrijpen* [It's Love We Don't Understand] (1999), and *Broere* [Brothers] (2000) for the 9th time. These numbers are exceptional for children's books written in Dutch, especially since Moeyaert's work is so literary and rich. The long list of translations is growing fast.

For Moeyaert, becoming a writer felt similar to becoming human; as he testifies in a lecture that he recently presented at the Radboud University in Nijmegen: "In 1983 I had made my début as a writer, and to my feeling also as a human being. For a writer, 19 is a young age to make a début, for a human being, it's rather late. The first also went more smoothly than the second" (qtd. in Schoeters).[1] Ever since then, his work has developed rapidly and in various directions. Moeyaert's first two books primarily caught the eye of the Children's Jury, but with his third book, he established the reputation of an accomplished literary author, which he has not lost since.

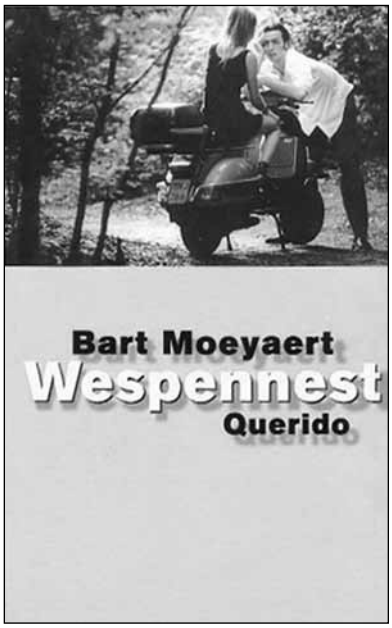


The first striking quality of Moeyaert's work is the diversity of genres and target groups for which he writes, ranging from toddlers to adults. He has practiced almost any conceivable literary genre: novels, short stories and picture books, books for early readers, poetry, theatre, audio books, song texts and television scripts, essays, columns, etc. He approaches all of these disciplines with the same zeal and pursuit of perfection. Realism is the mode in which Moeyaert most frequently writes, and family relationships and (troubled) friendships are often his narratives' focus of attention. From Ward's troubled relationship with his mother and her new partner in *Blote handen* [Bare Hands] (1995) to the tragic-comical situations that Moeyaert describes as the youngest of seven rather mischievous brothers in his collection of autobiographical short stories *Broere* [Brothers], Moeyaert flawlessly captures very real issues of everyday human life. But Moeyaert is equally skilled in more fantastical genres, rewriting, among others, fairy tales and biblical episodes. He has also written a collection of animal stories, and some of his young adult novels contain hints of magic realism. This technique provides a particularly powerful ending to *Het is de liefde die we niet begrijpen* [It's Love We Don't Understand], in which a brother and sister love each other deeply but are driven apart by the harsh circumstances their family is facing, and by the struggles between the brother and the mother. In the final, moving episode, brother and sister find each other in a loving embrace, even though the brother is now living with his boyfriend and the two siblings are sleeping in beds that are miles apart. Moeyaert's versatility of genres and styles has resulted in a wide echo of his work beyond the restricted circle of young readers and their educators. He is one of the few authors of children's literature who has managed to maintain his crossover appeal throughout most of his oeuvre.

Throughout the different genres in which he writes, Moeyaert is able to appeal to all the senses. That his writing is so evocative of images can perhaps be explained by the way the stories first enter his mind:

> Every book starts with an image. Suddenly I see something in front of me and I know a 100 percent sure: this is going to be it. I feel a very strong urge to put the scene to paper, with a swiftness that will never come back, because the rest of the book is hard work. […] It is a truly filmic image, with smells and colours and noise, something very physical, as physical as we are sitting here now.[2] (my translation; qtd. in Kellendonk)

Although none of his books have been adapted to film, the filmic images in his literature do lend themselves to visualization and theatrical adaptation. Moeyaert's work has often been performed on stage and combined with music, and illustrators are easily captivated by his imaginative style. Two of the artists he has recurrently worked with are the Flemish groundbreaking illustrator Gerda Dendooven, and the internationally lauded Wolf Erlbruch.



Moeyaert's writing itself appeals to various senses. The title of his debut, *Duet met valse noten* [Duet out of Tune] already signals his interest for music—something that he not only evokes in the content of that book, but also in the musicality of his language. His novella *Dani Bennoni* (2004), dealing with the impact of the threatening Second World War on a small Flemish village in 1939, was partly inspired by swing dancing. The protagonist Bing's feet are not only moved by his desire to play football, but also seem to tap to the rhythm of swing. *De melkweg* [The Milky Way] (2011) is set to the tune of Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walking." The reader wishes to call out "start walking" to the children playing dangerous mind games, and they eventually do just that. In *Blote handen* [Bare Hands], Moeyaert is able to make his readers shiver at the cold, threatening night where a little boy feels that his world is falling apart. In contrast, *Kus me* [Kiss Me], *Wespennest* [Hornet's Nest], *Het is de liefde die we niet begrijpen* [It's Love We Don't Understand], and *De melkweg* derive their growing tension from the subtle descriptions of an ominous heat that makes everyone tense, and eventually helps to push the characters beyond their limit of control. In appealing to the reader's sense of smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch, Moeyaert practices the literary command of "show, don't tell" with perfection: he evokes an atmosphere in the most subtle and poetic way.

The same is true for his characters. Moeyaert invites his readers to look beyond surface appearances, and he shows but does not tell what the characters in his books are like. Often the reader must to read between the lines to understand what a character really feels and what is just pretense. Sturdiness often hides fear, and initially weak or silent

characters can come up with amazing strength. Communication is hardly ever straightforward in Moeyaert's novels and short stories, and characters only gradually open up. The vulnerability that you see when they do is often deeply moving, especially in his most recent works, such as *Dani Bennoni* (2004), *Het paradijs* [Paradise] (2010) and *De melkweg* (The Milky Way). Moeyaert encourages his readers to practice a form of "slow reading" to become attentive to the richness of his style and the psychological complexity of his characters. Only then can you understand why the children and adults in these books have such a hard time telling each other what they want and fear. Oskar, in *De melkweg*, for example, has a hard time expressing his sorrow after his mother has left the family to find some peace of mind. Rather than sharing his longing and fears with his dad and brother, he resorts to bullying. Moeyaert describes the turning point in the book, when Oskar finally opens up somewhat, as follows:

> I wanted to suggest that loneliness is largely your own fault. When Oskar withdraws into silence about what he feels and thinks, he becomes more lonely. He discovers that as soon as he opens his mouth, even a little, people come closer. In the kitchen scene, when he dares to say something to his father despite the difficulty they have in communicating, his father does in fact respond. Not with very many words, but with just the right kind of attention: a cuddle that last several minutes. An awkward cuddle, but a cuddle all the same. (qtd. in Kustermans)

In *Het paradijs* (Paradise), Moeyaert describes the communication difficulties between the first man and woman on earth, narrated alongside Wolf Erlbruch's illustrations, that depict characters who turn inward and look vulnerable and lost. Cast away from paradise, the first battle that Adam and Eve have to face is a true battle of the sexes. Only by admitting evil and death to their lives can Adam also invite Eve to open up to him emotionally. It is one of the most cryptic and mysterious books in Moeyaert's oeuvre, and offers several possible hints as to why Adam and Eve are at first alienated from each other, but eventually do come together.

The form of "slow reading" that Moeyaert's work demands, and that is so exceptional in children's literature, is made acceptable and interesting not only because of the beautiful language in which Moeyaert writes, but also because of the unique combination between humor and seriousness that characterizes his work and prevents it from becoming too bleak. He offers a peculiar sense of gravity and lightness at the same time. *De Schepping* [The Creation] (2003), for example, raises existential questions in an imaginative setting and voices them through a most entertaining, funny narrator: a little man sitting next to God while He is creating the world. The situation is absurd and yet easily relatable at the same time. The little man, after all, cannot help feeling jealous and had wished for a greater part in the creation than God at first seems willing to grant him. *De melkweg* (The Milky Way) starts with a highly sinister competition: three children bet who is going to die first: an old lady or her little dog. What follows is a lot of waiting, watching and more waiting. However it is difficult to stifle

laughter at the watching and guessing of the children as they are waiting for the outcome of their bet. According to the jury of the Boekenleeuw [Book Lion], who awarded *De melkweg* the main award for Flemish children's literature in 2012, the book has crossover appeal not in spite of, but because of its literary complexity. "The beautiful thing is that every reader, with his own reading experience, can draw something from this layered book," the jury argues, "no matter on which level of the story, with whatever background you read it, the story keeps its incredible strength" (my translation; "Juryverslag").[3]

Bart Moeyaert is not only significant for Belgian children's literature as an individual author, but also as someone who has inspired an entire generation of aspiring authors, and as a spokesperson for qualitative children's literature, which demands to be taken seriously. Critics have lauded him for capturing the child's perspective so well in his children's books, without simplifying his stories. In "A Sheep Called Amazing," Moeyaert explains that he would never, as some authors do, maintain that he is still the same person that he was when he was 9 years old. However, Moeyaert does believe that it is possible, even as an adult, to re-experience what it was like being a child and looking at the world in wonder, without wrapping those memories in clichés and looking down on childhood as a stage far removed from adulthood. He describes the moment he starts writing from a child's perspective as follows: "What I do know is that when the moment arrives […] I'm all the children I've ever been, or have ever seen. I believe I do still have a connection with the past. I have an affinity with children, I tend to assume that by making a stupid joke, for instance, I can see into their heads and think along with them about their response" (qtd. in Kustermans). Writing for children, then, mainly has to do with finding the right tone, which can prove to be more difficult than writing for adults:

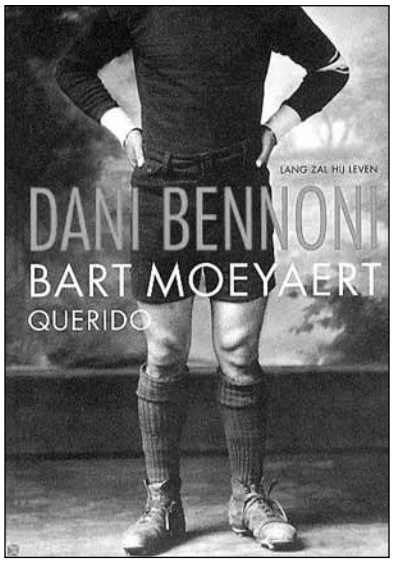
> The tone is everything. It really is a matter of sustaining that tone. I live for months with a book like this. I'm inside a book night after night, day after day. […] You have to be strict about cutting and crossing out whenever you feel you aren't being faithful to that tone. It can be damn difficult. Call it a curse, if you like. It's like knitting a sweater. I know what a sweater looks like; there are sleeves and a hole for the head. I try to knit the most beautiful, close-fitting sweater. As soon as I notice it's going wrong, I unpick everything back to the point where it was going well. Then I start again. In the case of *The Milky Way* it was unbelievably hard work. (Ibid.)

But that childhood perspective is not all sunshine, sweetness, and wonder, as several of Moeyaert's children's books show. When Oskar and his friends visit a geriatric hospital ward in *De melkweg*, the children come eye to eye with terrifying aging bodies. As Moeyaert explains,

> the elderly that the children observe have already entered the semi-darkness. Soon complete darkness will come, but the half-dark is already there. I had to write that scene. Somewhere in the distance I can already hear some people saying: you can't confront children with that! But mothers and fathers take children to visit old people and those children sometimes get to see the half-darkness. Do me a favor and skip that scene if you find it so dreadful, but I'm not going to scrap it. (Ibid.)

Confronting scenes abound in Moeyaert's work, without ever giving the reader the feeling that the author is seeking sensation. Between the lines of *Dani Bennoni*, you can read that Bing is so desperate to learn how to play football that he is putting himself in the hands of a pedophile. Some of Moeyaert's protagonists live through intense periods of fear, pain, and loneliness, and that pain is not always inflicted on them by adults. In an attempt to take revenge on his mother's lover, Ward in *Blote handen* kills the

man's duck, and in *De melkweg* Oskar and his brother Bossie bully their friend Geesje to a point of no return. Carrie, in *Kus me*, tries to hide her sorrow over her brother's illness by terrorizing others. Moeyaert acknowledges how cruel and manipulative children can be:



> I don't believe in the innocent child that does not know about anything. I believe that soon enough you are introduced into the adult world because after all you are a part of it and that you copy adult behaviour as well or badly as you can. Everything you see you take one. That mommy can get something done from daddy by casting him a sweet look and that daddy can also move things forward a bit by looking angry; you already grasp those tricks when you are four (my translation; qtd. in Vermeulen).[4]

Bart Moeyaert's popularity in Flanders and the Netherlands has been fed by multiple contacts with his readers and by an unremitting interest from the media for this original talent and well-voiced opinions. He is known and estimated for his permanent reflection on the specific identity of an author for a young readership and for his considerations on the position of (juvenile) literature in a contemporary cultural context. His credo is that children's literature and its authors, illustrators, and readers deserve to be respected; with his solid literary reputation and personal charm, he has therefore been able to influence the public debate on children's books. Above all, Bart Moeyaert's unique talent, in addition to the energy he puts into national and international approachability, has resulted in a lively interest for children's literature from authors, readers, and critics who before considered children's literature a minor literary genre. In this respect, the entire Flemish scene of children's literature, which has been booming over the past twenty years, is greatly indebted to him.

Notes

1. Original text: "In 1983 was ik gedebuteerd als schrijver, en naar mijn gevoel ook als mens. Voor een schrijver is negentien een vroeg debuut, voor een mens is dat aan de late kant. Het eerste ging ook gemakkelijker dan het tweede."
2. Original text: "Elk boek begint met een beeld. Opeens zie ik iets voor me, waarvan ik 100 procent zeker weet: dit wordt het. Ik voel een heel sterke aandrang om de scène op papier te zetten, met een vlotheid die nooit meer terugkomt, want de rest van het boek is zwoegen. […] Het is echt een filmisch beeld, met geuren en kleuren en lawaai, iets heel fysiek, net zo fysiek als we hier nu zitten"
3. Original text: "Het mooie is dat elke lezer, met zijn eigen leeservaring, iets uit dit sterk gelaagde boek kan halen: op welk verhaalniveau, met welke leesbagage je dit ook leest, het verhaal blijft overeind, ijzersterk."

4. Original text: "Ik geloof niet in het onnozele kind dat nergens van afweet. Ik geloof dat je snel genoeg wordt geïntroduceerd in de volwassenenwereld omdat je er nu eenmaal middenin staat en het gedrag van de volwassenen zo goed en zo kwaad als het gaat kopieert. Alles wat je ziet, neem je op. Dat mama met lief kijken iets van papa gedaan krijgt en dat papa met boos kijken ook een en ander kan laten vooruitgaan; die trucs heb je op je vierde al door."

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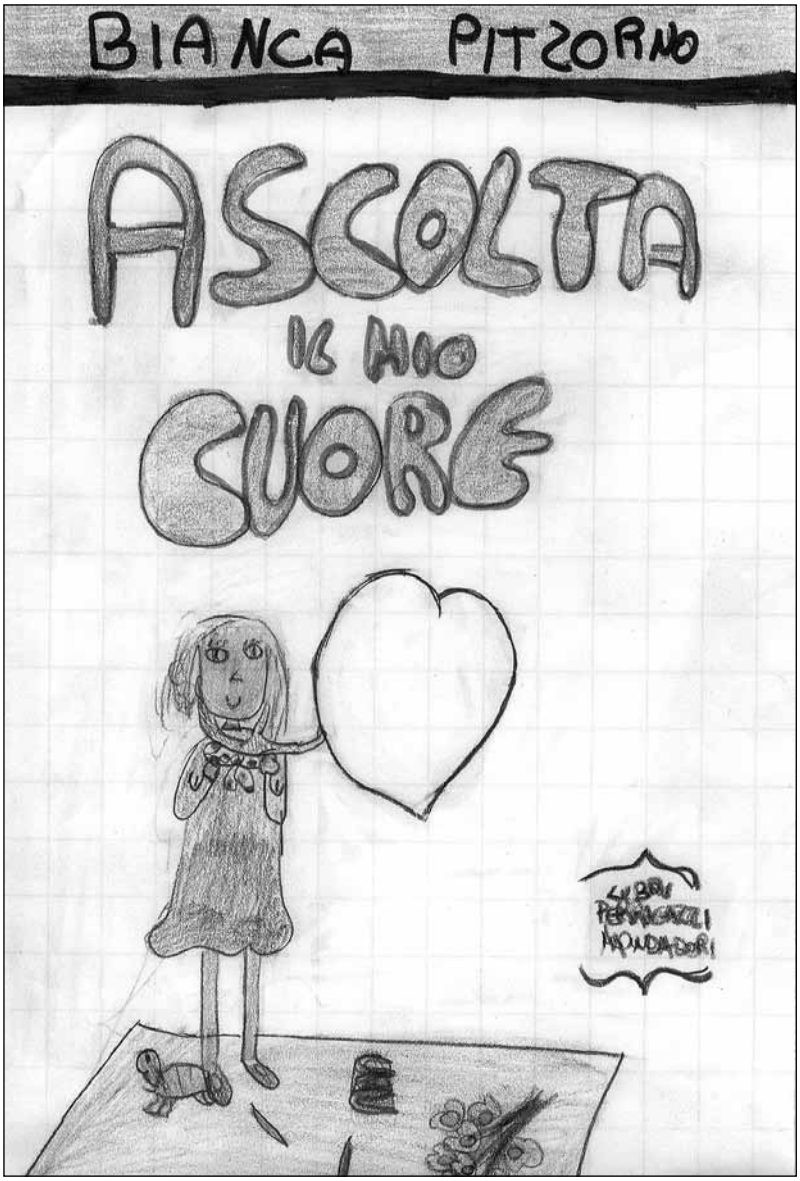
Bianca Pitzorno: Imagination and Feminism

by MELISSA GARAVINI

Melissa Garavini is a PhD student at the University of Turku. She is writing her PhD thesis on Finnish-Italian translations of the picture books of Mauri Kunnas. Her research interests include translation studies and picture books. She also teaches Finnish-Italian translation courses at the University of Turku. She graduated as interpreter and translator at the University of Forlì (Bologna). Her current project is funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.



Bianca Pitzorno was born in Sassari, Italy in 1942, and after earning a degree in Classical Literature with a thesis on Prehistoric Archaeology, and her masters in Cinema and Television, Pitzorno started a seven-year collaboration with the Italian state-owned broadcaster RAI as head of the production of cultural programmes for the young audience in 1970. Included among her most famous programmes are: *Il Dirodorlando, Sapere, Tuttilibri, Chissà chi lo sa?* and *L'Albero Azzurro,* which is still broadcast today. Pitzorno now lives and works in Milan, and has published numerous books for children.

In 1970, Pitzorno's first picture book for young readers, *Il Grande Raduno dei Cow Boys,* was published in Switzerland, and was also her first book to be published in a foreign language. In 1973,

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Pitzorno published *Sette Robinson su un'Isola Matta,* which represents an ironic parody of adventure novels. Just a year after, in 1974, one of her first big literary successes, *Clorofilla dal Cielo Blu* [Chlorophyll from the Blue Sky], came out as a clear example of the self-styled "fanta-ecologic novel", a genre that combines fantastic and supernatural elements with the main theme of ecology and environmental problems. *Clorofilla dal Cielo Blu* also became very popular abroad. For instance, when it was translated into Polish, the book inspired a radio programme, while in Switzerland it gave rise to an animated cartoon. During the 1970s, Pitzorno started to write song lyrics used as signature tunes on television as well as in theatre.

Throughout her long career, Pitzorno has written more than 40 books to date, and she deals with many controversial and complex issues, ranging from diversity and childhood, to a multitude of environmental, social and political problems (for instance, pollution, political corruption, social class, and race). Although her books range over such a wide variety of topics, the plot has always remained imaginative, stylish, and amusing. Nevertheless, Pitzorno notes that while the subjects she has been interested in and her writing style have changed over time, keeping her focus on female characters the only constant element in her many stories. Girls are indeed the only characters of Pitzorno's books that seem to tackle the problems involved with being a woman, a girl, or a little girl, in contemporary society, as well as in the past. Pitzorno, a left-wing feminist, is considered to have created a new season of literature for children and young readers focusing on female children or young girls who have complex personalities and are the main characters of the stories.

The peculiar characterization of those in her stories and of their personalities is one of Bianca Pitzorno's hallmarks, and might also be considered one of the reasons for her popularity. Pitzorno usually tells her great and imaginative stories orally before writing them down with vivid detail, and these stories often include troubling narrative elements, such as suffering and death. These aspects are not eliminated or softened because, according to Pitzorno, they are a part of everyone's lives, lives that are complex and complicated. Even childhood should not be considered a "carefree period" as it is usually depicted, because these sad realities exist in children's lives as well. An example of this includes the work *Principessa Laurentina* [Princess Laurentina], which describes the powerful emotions connected with adolescence and family difficulties.

These great qualities have rendered Pitzorno one of the most successful Italian authors for children. According to Pitzorno herself, her books are this popular, especially among young readers, because she has always aimed at writing timeless stories, which include disparity between people both weak and strong and the arrogance of the latter, along with the struggle of the weak to become free of their ailments. Another reason for her great success among the younger generations may be due to the fact she has always considered their pain worthy

enough to be described, and she also uses irony in order to render it as important as adults' pain.

Another of Pitzorno's hallmarks is the clear handling of a number of taboos not usually found in children's literature, including death, divorce, social critiques, and excrement. For instance, in one of Pitzorno earliest masterpieces written in the 1980s, *L'Incredibile Storia di Lavinia* [The Incredible Story of Lavinia], the author deals with the taboos of death and excrement. The tale that recounts the misfortunes of a hungry, cold, little match girl, who faces death, is reminiscent of Hans Christian Andersen's tale, though it parodies the original by giving Lavinia a magic ring that transforms objects into excrements. Another great work written in this period is *Streghetta Mia* [My Little Witch], where the reader is involved in the adventures of a young witch as she takes revenge against misuses of power.

Some years later Pitzorno wrote the book *Ascolta il Mio Cuore* [Listen to My Heart], which is widely regarded as one of her best creations. This moving and realistic novel takes place in post-WWII Italy, and the author, through the innocent eyes of a little girl, is able to vividly recreate everyday life during this time period. The characters are children who, during a school year, learn to face injustices by fighting without ever surrendering. This book was so popular that the author decided to release another story about the adventures of the characters in *Ascolta il Mio Cuore* when they were little, set four years before the original takes place, in *Quando Eravamo Piccole*.

In the years 2000 to 2010, Pitzorno wrote a series of detective stories called *Gli Amici di Sherlock* with Roberto Piumini, who was among the writers of the TV programme *L'Albero Azzurro,* and has written many stories, poems, and fairy-tales for children.

In many of Pitzorno's books, the reader can find amazing, but at the same time quite complex, allusions to history, art, literature, and international classical literary works. A clear example is one of her latest works, *La Bambinaia Francese* [The French Governess], which is an intertextual, historical tale, intertwining elements of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* with Parisian and Caribbean revolutionary society in the 19th century. The references to the characters and places of Jane Eyre represent the contrast between different societies of that time; on the one hand, French society is described as more enlightened and flexible, and, on the other, English society is depicted as rigid, moralistic and intransigent. Furthermore, the author takes a stand on the importance of education for everybody, and on the equality of all human beings, whether they are men or women, white or black, nobles or slaves.

In addition to the clear allusion to Brontë's masterpiece, Pitzorno also makes numerous references to other important personalities of the past (musicians, philosophers and writers). Pitzorno alludes to French literature in particular, including references to Hugo, Perrault, Balzac, Molière, Rousseau, as well as towards English or Italian culture incorporating Swift, Dickens, Verri, and Rossini. For instance, Pitzorno's

work includes several references made by certain characters to many essays written by Rousseau about slavery and on children's education in the 19th century, which once again testify to the great effort she puts into research and the respect she has towards her audience.

Pitzorno's use of a large number of references, and of a particular language, has often been criticised for rendering her books only available to a certain kind of audience. However, the author has responded by being an advocate of reading difficult works, because they challenge readers. Her language is as unmistakable as her way of writing is. As previously mentioned, even though her main audience ranges from very young readers to adolescents, Bianca Pitzorno does not simplify the language by using diminutives, short sentences, or simplistic words. On the contrary, she uses a complex vocabulary full of difficult terms, because reading, beyond being a pleasure, might be used as a didactic instrument to stir up a readers' curiosity and have children ask questions in order to learn.

According to Pitzorno, writing is just as important as reading and learning. The author has indeed written books like *Storia delle Mie Storie* [The Story of My Stories] where she has explicated her own writing, as well as *Manuale del Giovane Scrittore Creativo* [The Young Creative Writer's Manual] which is a manual for young writers to test and improve their abilities by doing several exercises contained in each lesson.

In Italy, Bianca Pitzorno's success in the past and present is very clear when you take into account how many copies of her stories she has sold. For instance, Pitzorno has sold more than one million copies in Italy alone, and many of her books, including older publications, are in constant reprint, and also can be found in catalogues today. It must be remembered that her success is not restricted only to Italy because Pitzorno's books have been translated into more than ten languages worldwide, including French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese. Thanks to Pitzorno and the great number of books she has translated into Italian, many Italian children have had the chance to read great international authors and stories, including J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [Le avventure di Tom Bombadin]), Sylvia Plath (*Bedtime, Children!* [A letto, bambini!]), David Grossman (*Uri's Special Language* [La lingua speciale di Uri]), Enrique Perez Diaz (*Minino and Micifuz* [Minino e Micifuz]), Tove Jansson (*Who will Comfort Toffle?* [Piccolo Knitt tutto solo]), Soledad Cruz Guerra (*Le bambine dell'Avana non hanno paura di niente*), and Mariela Castro Espìn (*What Happens During Puberty?* [Che cosa succede nella pubertà?]).

In 2001, Pitzorno was appointed UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, for which she has written two short novels: *L'isola degli smemorati* in 2003 and *Angeli in caduta libera* in 2008; both of these stories have also been adapted into animated cartoons. In the same year, she attended the project *Un mar de sueños,* which aims towards translating and exporting Italian classical literary works into Latin America. Pitzorno also wrote a novel in Spanish for this project, entitled *Cuentos de la isla de las Nuragas.*

Pitzorno has always been beloved by her readers of all ages, and also by critics, insomuch that the Italian publishing house Mondadori has recently prepared a new collection of Pitzorno's works, presented at the Bologna Book Fair. This special collection aims at celebrating the author's 70th birthday on the 25th of March as well as her long and successful career. During this day, renamed "Pitzorno Day," there were a number of events, including readings, taking place in many bookstores throughout Italy. This year, Pitzorno was among the shortlisted candidates for the Hans Christian Andersen Award.

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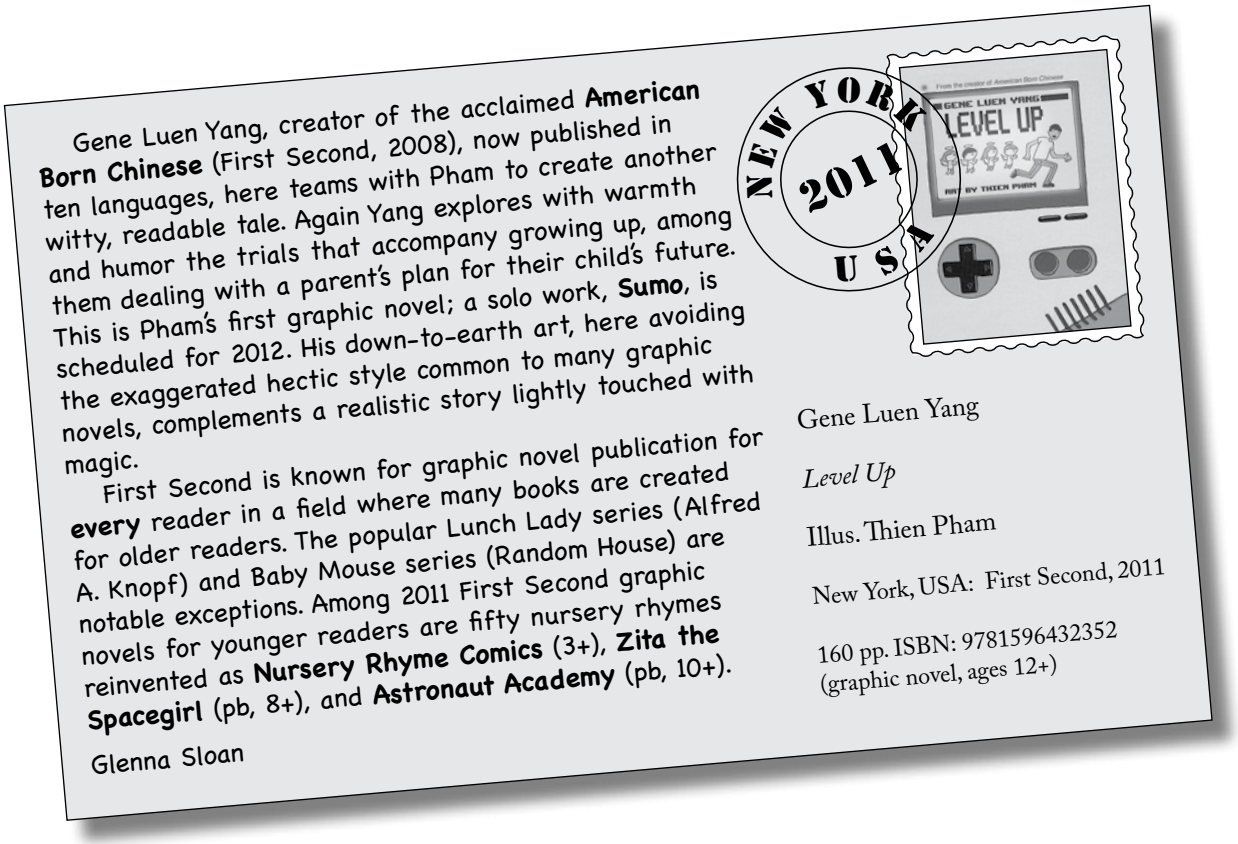

Gene Luen Yang, creator of the acclaimed **American Born Chinese** (First Second, 2008), now published in ten languages, here teams with Pham to create another witty, readable tale. Again Yang explores with warmth and humor the trials that accompany growing up, among them dealing with a parent's plan for their child's future. This is Pham's first graphic novel; a solo work, **Sumo**, is scheduled for 2012. His down-to-earth art, here avoiding the exaggerated hectic style common to many graphic novels, complements a realistic story lightly touched with magic.

First Second is known for graphic novel publication for **every** reader in a field where many books are created for older readers. The popular Lunch Lady series (Alfred A. Knopf) and Baby Mouse series (Random House) are notable exceptions. Among 2011 First Second graphic novels for younger readers are fifty nursery rhymes reinvented as **Nursery Rhyme Comics** (3+), **Zita the Spacegirl** (pb, 8+), and **Astronaut Academy** (pb, 10+).

Glenna Sloan

Gene Luen Yang

Level Up

Illus. Thien Pham

New York, USA: First Second, 2011

160 pp. ISBN: 9781596432352
(graphic novel, ages 12+)

Promoting Literacy in Southeast Asia: SIPAR Helps Cambodian Children Discover the Joys of Reading

by AURÉLIE GIRAUD
and SOCHEATA HUOT

Aurélie Giraud, is the communication and fundraising officer of SIPAR Cambodia since 2011. Just after a Master in Communication and Media graduated at Rouen Business School (France), she decided to involve herself for SIPAR NGO because she has always had a passion for both books and Cambodia.

Socheata Huot, is the editorial coordinator of SIPAR Publishing Program since 2010. Since graduating from the Royal University of Phnom Penh in French literature and civilization, Socheata has always been passionate about reading.

Cambodia is a monarchical country in Southeast Asia with a population of approximately fifteen million, and the country has faced an enormous amount of internal adversity throughout history. The country struggled to achieve independence from a near one hundred-year rule by France, and after much hardship and war, the country gained independence in 1953. After the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, Cambodia faced debilitating drought that destroyed much of the agriculture and led to famine across the country. The Khmer Rouge regime quickly rose to power and attempted to rebuild Cambodia based on Communist China under Mao Zedong, forcing workers into rural areas and eliminating Western medical advancements. It is estimated that anywhere from one to three million Cambodians were killed under the Khmer Rouge regime due to executions, starvation, or disease. Cambodia was then occupied by Vietnam, and was not granted independence until 1993. Considering Cambodia's difficult colonial past, it is no surprise that the country struggles with literacy

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and access to reading material, and the Soutien à Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction des pays du sud-est asiatique (SIPAR) is dedicated to providing children with access to books and reading programs throughout Cambodia.

SIPAR has been working to promote literacy in Cambodia through reading and library programs for thirty years. Based in Versailles, France, the organization was developed in 1982 to aid Southeast Asian refugees in Cambodia, and since then has provided Cambodian readers across the country with school libraries, public reading centers, and several children's books published in Khmer, the official language of Cambodia. During Cambodia's rehabilitation and development process in 1991, SIPAR contributed to educational advancement by prioritizing literacy and encouraging children and young adults to understand the world around them through literature. The project is conducted by a team of thirty-five Cambodians and works under the firm belief that the key to a successful future, both for young people and for the nation as a whole, is literacy. A major step in combating poverty and illiteracy is universal education, and SIPAR is driven to enshrine literacy and love for reading in the Cambodian education system.

SIPAR organizes activities in four main programs: the School Library Program, the Reading for All Program, Communal Educational Services Development, and publishing books in Khmer. Through the efforts of the School Library Program team, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth and Sport of Cambodia, SIPAR has been successful in developing 230 primary school libraries in twenty-four provinces across the country. These libraries provide a quiet place to strengthen literacy skills, and stimulate an early interest in reading. By creating an environment where children feel comfortable and encouraged to explore literary possibilities, SIPAR has worked to make reading a fun and exciting experience in children's lives. Because many children in Cambodian schools have access to very few textbooks and learning materials, these libraries play a crucial role in childhood literary development, and provide young people with opportunities to expand their learning experiences outside of the classroom.

While the school libraries benefit children's education immensely, the positive influence of the program extends further than children in the classroom. The libraries have provided stable employment to 2000 people as trained librarians, and have sparked a substantial amount of career interest in the field of librarianship. SIPAR's library programs have also trained 120,000 teachers in librarianship and information studies, and offer extensive training to prospective librarians in terms of establishing connections with young readers and promoting books as a means of leisure and enjoyment. By combating illiteracy in young people, SIPAR is working to prevent poverty in Cambodia's future by promoting education, and

in turn, employability, and the job opportunities that the program creates also work toward its goal of prosperity.

The Reading for All Program, developed in 2000 in partnership with local Cambodian communities, strives to reach impoverished young people without educational opportunities. The program operates in ten distinct rural communities, and also targets the poor suburbs of Phnom Penh. It functions through 8 mobile libraries circulating through 100 rural communities and suburbs, 29 Centers of Education for All (CEFA), 10 reading centers in pediatric hospitals, and 4 libraries in prisons. There are still a great deal of children in Cambodia with little or no access to education or books, and SIPAR's Reading for All Program is dedicated to providing young people with opportunities for literacy and with safe, quiet places to read. Each CEFA is staffed with councilors who connect with the children and encourage the expansion of their literary abilities. The councilors also travel on motorbikes to remote areas without CEFAs to deliver reading materials, conduct literary activities, and offer educational tools to children who otherwise have no access to books. The mobile libraries, with chauffeur-librarians behind the wheels of large vans, also bring reading materials to Phnom Penh suburbs, and offer larger reading selections to areas with higher populations. SIPAR ensures its accessibility, and, through the Reading for All Program, works to remain available to children in all social, economic, and geographical positions. They strive to promote literacy as a priority in all social spheres, and to communalize access to books and learning materials.

SIPAR has recently started work on a program to develop Communal Educational Services, including support and the expansion of a number of Centers of Education for All, implemented as part of the Reading for All Program. Launched in 2011, Communal Educational Services hopes to support communal councilors in their design and implementation of educational development plans. This program also plans to expand non-formal educational services to the most disadvantaged children and adults, as well as reinforce and diversify the services already in place. The solid experience and success of CEFA implemented in 10 dynamic communities encouraged SIPAR to provide their councilors with greater resources in aiding those furthest away from available literature in Cambodia.

Another of SIPAR's aims is to create a number of titles published in Khmer in order to promote literacy by means of Cambodia's official language. This project arose from the lack of books written in Khmer available to young children, which spurred SIPAR-books, a division of SIPAR interested in the youth of Cambodia, as well as the unavailability of books in their official language. SIPAR-books was started in 2000 in order to publish a number of books in Khmer, as well as train individuals to work in various areas of the publishing sector. The Cambodian

publishing sector was underdeveloped at the start of this project, and also lacked a section of books dedicated to children. Noticing this gap, SIPAR stepped in and has now published approximately 80 titles, with over a million copies. This production has also led to an increased number of trained employees in the publishing sector, in which SIPAR-books is responsible for over 50 training sessions for graphic designers, writers, illustrators, etc. These sessions are authorized by members of

SIPAR, as well as outside contributors, including participants from other publishing houses as well as teacher training specialists from the Ministry of Education in Cambodia. Today, this company has published several series intended for readers aged three to adulthood, and this large variety of books helps appeal to a greater audience, inspiring literacy in both Cambodia's young and old. Some of these series include "My First Stories," intended for children aged four and above, which gives young readers a taste of the wonderful world of literature by incorporating familiar scenes and background in full-colour illustration with text that is easy to follow along. The "I Would Like to Know" and "I Would Like to Know the Life Of" series are targeted toward an older audience, and contain information regarding various subjects of learning, including history, astronomy, health, and science, as well as biographies of important historical figures. With these series and SIPAR's continued process of publishing books in Khmer, the program has proven to be a successful way to promote literacy amongst many Cambodian citizens.

The "I Would Like to Know" series has published biographies on many major historical figures, such as Martin Luther King, Marie Curie, Anne Frank, and Mahatma Gandhi. The books cover the major events of each historical figure's life, and provide colorful illustrations to help the reader connect with the subject matter. The series also publishes books on Cambodia's culture, geography, and history in order to offer familiar subject matter and develop the young readers' cultural identities. Recognizing familiar aspects of the children's own everyday lives in Cambodia helps readers to connect with the literature and stimulates a passion for reading in the early stages of development, while at the same time develops an appreciation and understanding of the culture and nationhood that surrounds them. By creating a strong sense of cultural identity in Cambodian children SIPAR supplements educational, economic, and developmental progress in independent Cambodia, and works to fight against poverty and strife in the nation's future.

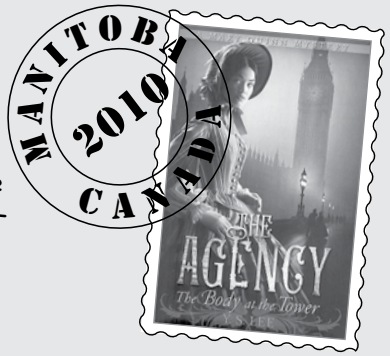
SIPAR has been combating illiteracy in Cambodia for over 20 years, and the various programs they have implemented have been successful in making literature widely available in Cambodia, where historically, this has not been possible. SIPAR's School Library Program was implemented in order to promote students' creativity and curiosity in a safe environment, while the Reading For All Program attempts to reach citizens outside of the school system. Paired with the first two programs, Communal

Educational Services development seeks to support and reinforce the success already demonstrated by SIPAR's work to introduce reading material to those in and out of the educational system. SIPAR-books' publication of over 80 titles in Khmer allows a wide distribution of literature, especially literature for children, in order to promote literacy as well as aid Cambodia's growing publishing sector. SIPAR's successes in their attempt to help developing nations through educational programs has not been ignored, as they were the recipients of the 2012 IBBY Asahi award, which is awarded to programs dedicated to making a lasting contribution to reading promotion for children and young people. SIPAR's various efforts in promoting literacy in Cambodia communicate the importance of literature as a way to open the world through reading and education while successfully battling illiteracy and poverty, and the organization's efforts supplement Cambodia's immense developmental progress.

Recruited to an exclusively female detective agency, Mary Quinn is the spirited young protagonist of Y.S. Lee's new novel **The Body at the Tower**. It is the second book in **The Agency series**, the first being Lee's 2010 debut **A Spy in the House**. Set in Victorian London, **The Body at the Tower** follows Mary on a challenging assignment: the investigation of a suspicious death at the construction site of St. Stephen's tower, the great clock tower now popularly known as Big Ben. In order to uncover the secrets of the site's working men and their master, Mary poses as an errand boy, a strategy that brings her into uncomfortably close contact not only with a menacing team of blackmailing bricklayers but also with her own past, specifically her childhood as a homeless orphan on London's rough streets.

The novel's plot is cleverly crafted and well-paced and Lee's portrayal of life in mid-Victorian London is richly detailed and thoroughly convincing. It is, however, the characterization of the courageous but sometimes charmingly inexpert Mary Quinn that is most memorable and that is sure to secure for **The Agency** a loyal audience of young adult readers.

Vanessa Warne



Y.S.Lee

The Agency: The Body at the Tower

Candlewick Press,
337 pgs, $20 Cnd,

(Readers 13+)

Abuelas Cuentacuentos: The Storytelling Grandmothers of Argentina

by PAMELA JEWETT

The image of a storytelling grandmother captures that beautiful, intimate moment when an adult opens a book and says to a child, "I'm going to read you a story." It's concrete, simple, and magical.
Natalia Porta López, Director, Abuelas Cuentacuentos

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award, initiated by the International Board of Books for Young People, is sponsored by the Japanese newspaper company, Asahi Shimbun. It is awarded every two years to two groups or projects that make a lasting contribution to reading promotion for children and young people around the world, and each group is awarded $10,000. The 2012 awards, announced on March 19, 2012, at the Bologna Children's Book Festival, included Abuelas Cuentacuentos, a reading program in Argentina that features storytelling grandmothers who read to children at a variety of sites across the country.

The Writer's Dream: Helping Children Live Better Lives

While on a trip to Germany in the 1990s, Mempo Giardinelli, the Argentine writer, journalist, and university professor, learned of a group of older, retired people who visited hospitals to read stories

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and poems to the terminally ill. In essence, the group read to the patients as a means to comfort them through stories at the end of their lives. The nobility of the acts he witnessed had an impact on Giardinelli, and reinforced his belief that stories and storytelling should help people at other stages of their lives as well. In 1999, he formed the Mempo Giardinelli Foundation, and established the Abuelas Cuentacuentos (Storytelling Grandmothers) program. While Giardinelli's vision for his foundation initially began with helping children live better lives through programs that provided food and clothing, he firmly believed that an additional way to accomplish this goal was through reading, what he termed, "spiritual food" ("Story-tellers grandmother's program"). He wanted to create opportunities for children to exercise their right to read. He conceived of a plan that would "promote the tradition of reading to young children as a practice that held high cultural value," to offer older adults an opportunity to reclaim their roles in the community, and to preserve the traditional habit of reading to children ("Storytelling Grandmothers Program"). By putting these concepts into action, he was able to make his dream of creating an organization to promote reading come true. The Storytelling Grandmothers program began in 2001, and today it is the foundation's highest-profile initiative, and has won national and international recognition.

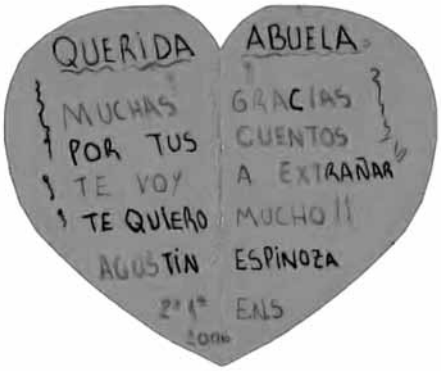
Giardinelli had a special interest in inspiring a love of reading in the country's poorest children. He began the program in his home province of Chaco, which according to official figures has some of the highest poverty levels in the country and is the third poorest province in Argentina. More than sixty percent of the population of this province, and nearly seventy-five percent of children under fourteen, live below the poverty line. Porta López, director of the program, explained that, "Many of these children don't have a bed, a nightstand, books, or a grandmother who can sit next to them at night to read them a story" (Valente). The first group of Storytelling Grandmothers was formed in the city of Resistencia, a city of about 400,000 people in the province of Chaco. It was originally intended as an activity for primary schools, however the popularity and demand for the program spread to high schools, adult education centers, hospitals, orphanages, libraries, dining halls for youths, nursing homes, and prisons. Today, the Resistencia group is one of the largest literacy programs in the country.

The Storytelling Grandmothers: Moments of Beauty

The central concept of the Storytelling Grandmothers program is to reproduce that moment of beauty and intimacy that occurs between grandparents and grandchildren when they read together ("Abuelas Cuentacuentos"). Porta López, program director, explained, "This is

our secret formula: affection, plus high-quality literature, equals children who read. The program is as simple as it is effective. It basically consists of older people, Grandmothers, who volunteer to read books to children" (Drazer).

The Grandmothers make weekly visits to the school or institution assigned to them and read a different story each time to their young audiences. During their visits, however, the Grandmothers emphasize the importance of the children joyfully learning together through shared story experiences rather than doing "work." The driving concept behind the program is that reading and sharing stories with each other are ends in themselves. Read-alouds introduce the rich language of authors to students, and give them opportunities to jointly share the enjoyment of literature. The Storytelling Grandmothers founding document states, "The whole activity is centered on the book itself. The grandmothers teach its symbolic value in the most loving and generous way in order to encourage reading from the earliest age" ("Abuelas Cuentacuentos"). Rather than relying on commercial books, they choose classic stories such as myths, legends, and poetry written by authors from Argentina as well as other countries. If there is enough time left after the story, the volunteers end the session with a poem or tongue twister, or read from books that the children have chosen.



Dear Grandmother, many thanks for your stories. I am going to miss you. I like you very much.

"The children can hear the voices of the characters"

The Grandmothers receive training before they begin their volunteer work, with instruction from specialists in children's literature, guidance in the choice of readings, and coaching in the use of voice, gestures, and art to complement their storytelling. For example, Grandmother Marita describes how she learned to use all of her senses to help the children engage with the story during the shared reading experiences:

> Once the bell rings, I travel through the grades and read to the students. I don't just stand in front of the students and read aloud. I really put all of my senses, my emotions, my energy, and my feelings into the reading so that the children can hear the voices of the characters in stories, legends, and poems. When I finish the text, then we discuss it. (Valente)

Grandmother Marita offers an enriching reading experience for the children as she introduces them—with energy and emotion—to characters they might never have met. By following her stories with discussion, she also provides them with opportunities to learn with and from each other in order to comprehend the story worlds her characters inhabit.

"I cannot express it in words"

Children eagerly await the arrival of their "Grandmothers." For example, Grandmother Francisca wrote about her experience visiting schools. She described the children's delighted responses: "The joy and enthusiasm they had when I arrived was such that I cannot express it in words; it was very emotional." In another example, a storytelling grandmother from the province of Buenos Aires said:

> If there is a holiday one week and I don't go, they miss me. Then when I show up they shout, "grandma, grandma!" and chatter to me about everything they've been doing, bring me their little books, and ask me to stay longer than I can. (Valente)

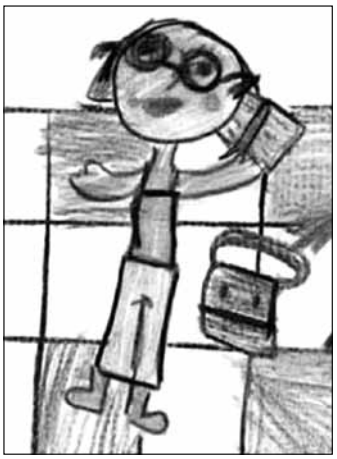
Grandma Raquel, I like your stories.
I want more new stories.
Your stories are beautiful.

In fact, when the Grandmothers visit their schools, they often receive unsolicited notes and drawings (such as those featured in this article) from the children with whom they spend time.

"It was like a birthday party but with books"

Teachers and administrators of institutions who have Grandmother Storytellers commented on how much more eager the children are to read after a Grandmother's visit. In tributes posted on the website, they describe how the children anxiously await the arrival of their Storytelling Grandmother, how the visits have awakened enthusiasm not just for reading stories but for writing stories, and how the storytelling encourages children to use their imaginations ("Abuelas Cuentacuentos"). An administrator also noted how children's desire for reading has moved beyond classroom walls. He says, "Many of the children taking part in the program very rarely have the opportunity for a member of their family to read to them, however, now they have started to ask for stories at home" (ibid). Grandmother Beatriz noted the children's growing delight with the books she brings:

> These children don't have books at home. They really take pleasure in touching them; it's extraordinary. You realize that they have no contact with books. Indeed, one of the children said after the storytelling session one day, "It was like a birthday party, but with books." (Drazer)



Drawing sent to a Grandmother.

"Rediscovering the girl who lives inside me"

While the Grandmother Storytellers acknowledge the benefits of storytelling to the children at their sites, they also speak of the benefits they have found in being a part of this literacy program. For example, Grandmother Marita explained,

> This relationship enhances the self-esteem of the grandmothers because

> sometimes older adults don't have the opportunity to be involved in places outside the family. Having this space of social recognition is very important. It has helped me…rediscover the girl who lives inside me. ("Grandmother Storytellers")

The Grandmothers delight in this new and productive way of sharing their time, affection, and talents as storytellers. In fact, "joyful," "rewarding," and "satisfying" are only a few of the many positive terms used by women taking part in the Storytelling Grandmothers program when they describe their volunteer work with reading and with children.

The common denominator for all of the Grandmothers is their love of reading. They are mainly women between the ages of 50 and 70, who are members of the communities they serve and who have knowledge of the social and historical backgrounds of their individual neighborhoods. The Giardinelli Foundation explains that the volunteer Grandmothers are mainly educated women, who because of their age are often excluded from the labor market by strong competition ("Storytellers Grandmother's Program"). Grandmother Federica agrees that this program has had a meaningful effect on her as a retired woman:

> It gives a new significance to the role played by older women who have retired from working life and who find new motivation in their volunteer work with children. Some of the grandmothers are over 80 and they participate with enthusiasm. No one is forcing us to do this. (Valente)

"It's a two way relationship of love: the kids love us; they hug us; the school welcomes us with affection, too, and we see that the kids are increasingly interested in reading." (Grandmother from Chaco)

"Like a healthy, beneficial epidemic of reading"

Porta López states, "The stories told from generation to generation always fortify the community identity and the collective memory. In every place the Grandmothers visit, the demand for books and reading has increased and changes of awareness and attitude arise" ("Story-tellers Grandmother's Program"). In 2001, the foundation started with 6 volunteer Grandmothers. By 2005, the number of volunteer Grandmothers had grown to 126, and the program has continues to grow steadily. Today, in Resistencia alone, 58 volunteers read to some 16,000 children in more than 60 schools or community sites every week ("ECLAC"). The program has been replicated throughout Chaco and neighboring provinces in 60 Argentine cities.

With the success of this program has come further growth. Argentina's Ministry of Education wanted a program to complement their existing National Reading Campaign, a program that puts millions of free, high-quality literary texts into the hands of readers. Building on Giardinelli's program, and advised by Giardinelli himself, the Ministry launched its own program in 2006, which they called, "Storytelling Grandmothers and Grandfathers." Focusing on retired men and women, they currently have 700 volunteers who read weekly to approximately 200,000 children in 62 towns and cities, in 19 provinces around the country ("ECLAC"). The Grandmothers and Grandfathers Program is now an important reading improvement project within the Ministry of Education.

Further, the concept of Storytelling Grandmothers has spilled over the borders of Argentina and into other South American countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, and into countries further away, such Mexico and the United Kingdom, where the concept of Grandmothers reading to children continues to flourish. Mempo Giardinelli, the founder of the program, commented, "I'm very happy to see how it's expanding, like a healthy, beneficial epidemic—which in fact it is" (Drazer).

Acknowledgement:

The director of Abuelas Cuentacuentos has kindly given permission for me to use these

high-resolution photos from their website as well as the examples of the children's work embedded within the manuscript: http://www.abuelascuentacuento.org.ar/contenido.html

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Christine Hinwood's fantasy novel, **Bloodflower**, narrates the experiences of Cam Attling, a veteran of a long, brutal war, who returns home after battle to reestablish his roots in his hometown, Kayforl. Cam struggles to create a place for himself amongst confused and embittered community members. Told through a series of vignettes from the perspectives of a variety of characters, each involved with Cam in some way, the novel unravels in a complex and exciting series of events. **Bloodflower** will appeal to the avid fantasy reader, and its alluring young characters and relatable subject matter make it a compelling read for a teenage audience. Hinwood deviates from typical fantasy fiction tradition by creating a foundation for a homosexual relationship, a progressive and influential feature of the novel that would undoubtedly appeal to the teenage reader, but the relationship is quickly and unexpectedly abandoned and replaced with heterosexual romance. Squandered homosexual relationship aside, Hinwood's novel is wonderfully poignant and oftentimes utterly engrossing, and is a significant contribution to the realm of fantasy fiction for young people.

Samantha Christensen

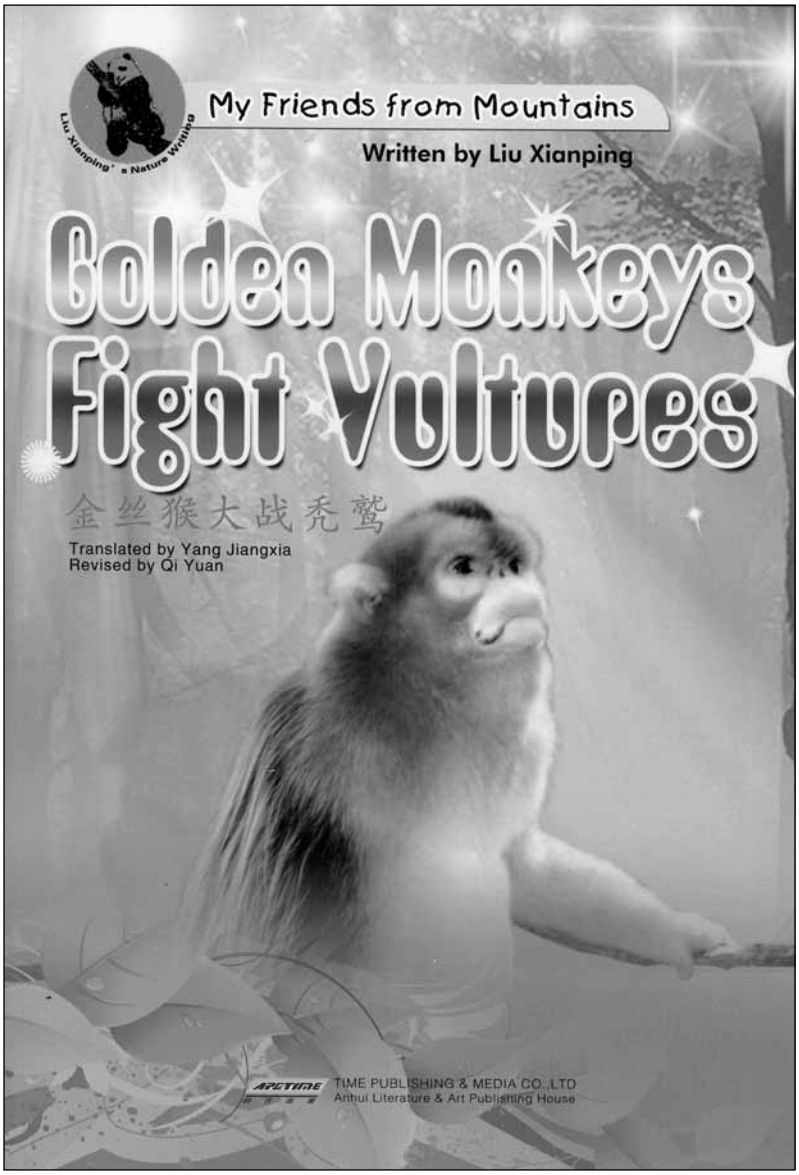
Christine Hinwood

Bloodflower

Sidney: Allen & Unwin, 2009
216 p.
ISBN: 174-175-471-2
(Fantasy novel, 14+)

Liu Xianping: A Literary Call for an Ecological Conscience

by TAN XUDONG
and ANTHONY PAVLIK



Since the 1970s, "Green" literature, ecoliterary studies, and a discourse concerning the connections between literature and the environment have all been developing rapidly. However, they have not been the sole preserve of Western, Anglophone authors and academics. With the environment's fate a global concern, writers around the world have been contributing to the discussion, although much of their work goes unnoticed by Western scholars. One important figure in the development of ideas about how human beings relate to the natural world is Liu Xianping (1938–), well-known writer of children's literature in China, and a pioneer in Chinese nature writing. Since the 1980s, he has regularly travelled with scientific wildlife expeditions to places such as Yunan province and Tibet. These field trips and explorations of nature have resulted in several dozen literary works, with a new theme,

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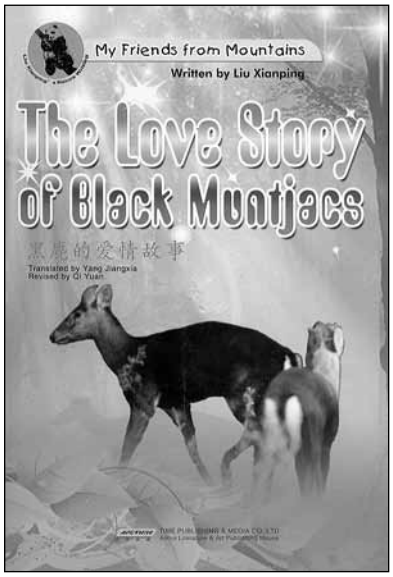
Anthony Pavlik teaches in the Faculty of Education at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. He has published articles on ecocriticism and fantasy literature for children.

new characters, a new look, and an exploration of a new area in literature. Using an almost documentary-like prose style, his work shows the world of wildlife deeply hidden in the forest, or on the desert plateau, and finds a transcendent state of human existence where human and nonhuman nature are in harmony, a coexistence for a common prosperity. Liu Xianping's nature writing has been an important addition to Chinese literature during the three decades of reform and opening up in that country, but it also marks an important change in the concept of eco-writer and eco-aesthetics.

For more than thirty years, Liu Xianping's footprints have covered almost every corner of China, from the southwest to the north, from the east to the west, with his soulful eyes taking in every forest and meadow, lake and mountain, animal and plant. Each discovery in the natural world means not only an adventure, but also reveals his closeness to, and understanding of, natural life. From this point of view, Liu Xianping's great literary creation is not a matter of literary word games; he has raised the banner for nature writing with a feeling for life, a meeting of the soul and nature. Indeed, his is the kind of ecological literacy that David Orr (1992) notes as being the "demanding capacity to observe nature with insight, a merger of landscape and mindscape" (86). Liu Xianping's nature writing is among the most original and creative work in China today.

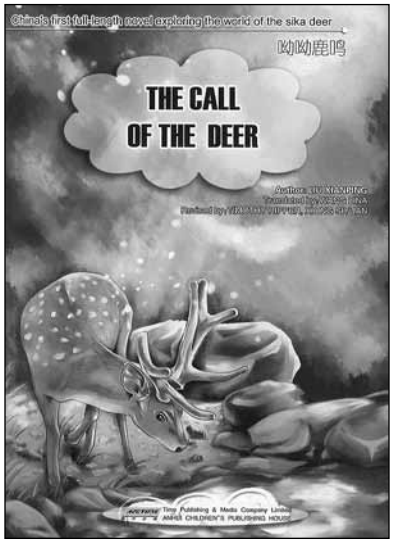


Recently, Liu Xianping has published his *My Friends in the Wild* series through Mingtian Publishing House. His *Nature Literature Series* is published by Anhui Publishing House, which is particularly exciting since it shows the publishing house's move toward a social vision for children. This is a series of nine books; most recent in this series is *Zou Jin Pa Mi Er Gao Yuan: Chuan Yue Chai Da Mu Pen Di* [*Going into the Pamirs: Through the Qaidam Basin*] (2008), a work which Liu Xianping wrote at the age of sixty-six after he visited the Pamirs, travelling through the Qaidam Basin, making observations of this harsh environment, and giving access to ecological feeling and thinking through his text. Together with his youngest son, Liu Junzao, Liu Xianping walked into the Qaidam Basin to study this natural environment in south-western China, to understand nature's magic, deeply feel its rhythms, and then to write about it.

Reading each chapter of this work, one is attracted not only to the magnificent landscape of the Pamirs, the Qaidam Basin, and the geographic and cultural character of the natural environment there, but also to Liu Xianping's deep sense of conscience. Books such as *He Hei Ye Hou Dui Hua* [*Dialogue with Langurs*] and *Xun Zhao Da Shu Du Juan Wang* [*Finding the King of the Rhododendron Trees*] reflect Liu Xianping's consistent literary style, maintaining his usual level of ecological and moral thinking. Other of his works, such as *Yun Hai Tan Qi* [*The Adventure in the Sea of Clouds*] and *You You Lu Ming* [*The Call of the Deer*], give readers a sense of the writer's conscience. Liu Xianping's narratives

enable us to better understand the characteristics of nature writing and learn about nature writing's aesthetic and artistic values.

First, Liu Xianping makes use of his actual experiences in his writing. People who understand him know that all of his nature writing is a body of work that has emerged from direct physical contact with the places he writes about. His earliest works were written after repeated visits to the Huangshan Mountain on foot, passing through numerous deep valleys, crossing waterways, and climbing the numerous steep rocks and hillsides. *Da Xiong Mao Chuan Qi* [*The Legend of the Pandas*] (1987) is a record of his investigations on the Western Sichuan plateau, describing the panda's mysterious life and telling about the western Sichuan plateau itself. It is full of wild natural scenery, but is not a novelistic fiction; each word in his work is the result of sweat and hard work, each word drawn out from deep thought and feelings about what he had experienced countless times, including physical danger.



Second, we can observe a transcendent quality to his nature writing. It should be noted here that, in contemporary Chinese literature, ecological writing is certainly not new. For example, there have been many reports on the issue of environmental pollution, "green" prose about natural landscapes, and "green" poetry about the forests and rivers. However, it is also the case that most of the writers who produce ecological writing only focus on the call for environmental protection, and this operates only on the perceptual level based on people's ecological awareness. Where Liu Xianping's nature writing differs from most other environmental literature in China, however, is not only simply in his shift from an environmental pollution problem to a call for everyone to protect the environment, but in the way his writing truly proceeds from the nature of life and a love of nature, touching the spirituality of nature, explaining the laws of nature, and understanding the significance of nature for human survival.

Zou Jin Pa Mi Er Gao Yuan [*Going into the Pamirs*] is a work in which Liu Xianping not only paints every natural landscape and reflects its quality and internal cultivation, but also takes nature's side, raising a host of questions about human beings. This can be seen, for instance, in the section entitled "Nature is in Crisis," concerning the bird island of Qinghai Lake, where ecological damage has frequently occurred. Liu Xianping gives a warning:

> Ecology is improving, but we still face so many worries. The Lake's water level is dropping, and excessive grazing has accelerated desertification…We will soon be farming barren land; the original pastures have been raped. The many reservoirs built on the upper reaches of the river that empties into Qinghai Lake have stopped the flow of water. This spring, when the huso fish returned, swimming into fresh water to spawn, the reservoir held all the water upstream of the Willow River in Gangcha

> County. As a result thousands of tons of spawning huso fish were left stranded! And the temperature of Qinghai Lake is so low that the fish only grow slowly. (12)

In another section, entitled the "Black-necked Crane," Liu Xianping says, "nature has nature's personality, and its own regulations, and all living things have their own ethical standards. It is in this tragic and cruel struggle for existence that signs of life show their brilliance and their splendor!" (35). In this way, Liu Xianping's great nature literature reflects his transcendence in the creative concept of eco-writing.

Third, Liu Xianping re-examines the relationship between humans and nature, which gives new meaning to literature. His nature writing expresses his respect for the natural world; he re-views the relationship between human beings and nature, no longer regarding people as the masters of the world, but rather seeing people as being a part of nature. This relationship between people and nature is one of mutual dependency; that is to say, in his nature writing, Liu Xianping places the dignity of nature equal to or above the dignity of people. With this approach, Liu Xianping's ideas are very much in tune with the "deep" ecology approach that emerged in the west towards the end of the 1970s.[1] In essence, say Bill Devall and George Sessions, deep ecology thinking 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" (65). For this reason, as Millicent Lenz notes, deep ecologists "reject the premise that the world's ecological problems can be solved through activism, legislation, better resource management, or the application of scientific expertise" (159). Instead, they give more importance to non-human species and ecosystems, seeing human beings as an integral part of their environment. Such thinking, of course, requires a radical re-visioning of people's perspectives with regard to the natural world around them and their place within it.

A part of the rethinking that is required for this shift is a realignment of human ethics and morality when considering the natural world. Consequently, in Liu Xianping's paper, "Calls for Ecological Morality", he makes the point that the traditional moral concept is one-sided in that, as he says, "a moral is a kind of social regulations which people should obey, as well as the sum of the code of conduct in relations between individuals and society" (3-4). The relationship between man and nature is ignored by the "moral" category, and thus human beings lack ecological morals. Previously, ecological ethics has not been one of our mainstream social ideas, but ignoring the fact that nature is fundamental to human survival has been a significant mistake.

Liu Xianping also pointedly notes that it is a lack of ecological morality that is behind the environmental crisis. For a long time, we have been busy dealing with relations between man and nature, but there is no established code of conduct, and with no foundational ecological morality, the law has also seriously lagged behind reality. Thus, with the ruthless plundering of nature, ignoring the right to life of other plants or animals, the arbitrary disposal of waste and rubbish, human beings have abused the achievements of science and technology. As a result, they have caused environmental pollution, resource depletion, a loss of ecological balance and, in return, they have received nature's harsh punishments. Consequently, until the survival of humanity itself is threatened and people finally begin to reexamine the relationship between the natural world/environment and that of humans, the laws that regulate the legal relationship between man and nature and ecological morals must be highlighted. These opinions, expressed in Liu Xianping's writing, are undoubtedly right, for we are all aware of the huge ecological dilemmas facing us. Because of our ecological failings, human beings must renounce their claim to be the masters of nature and learn to respect nature as their mother.

Fourth, there is the poetic and intellectual charm of Liu Xianping's nature writing. His lyrical works include a poet's ecological philosophy and a writer's ecological ideals. Indeed, each chapter is like a poem's painting of the scene. The

section "podiceps cristatus' unique skills" in *Zou Jin Pa Mi Er Gao Yuan* [*Going into the Pamirs*], for example, gives a clear description of this bird, one that is richly poetic and expressive: "in the water in front of more than forty or fifty meters, suddenly out two small podiceps cristatus [Great Crested Grebes], as two grey-brown bobbles fluttering on the surface of the water. They are famous for their diving skills. It is clear that their mother is teaching them to dive, soon after they have been born" (24). More appealing is that Liu Xianping also gives a scientific consideration of these special little lives: "Podiceps cristatus [The Great Crested Grebe] is unique amongst the waterfowl; it is not a duck, the difference being that its mouth is not flat, but rather pointed. This dark brown bird, a ruffian, wherever there are willows, wherever there is water, there you find their shadows" (25).

Similarly, in "The Humor of the Salt Lake," also from *Zou Jin Pa Mi Er Gao Yuan* [*Going into the Pamirs*], Liu Xianping paints a picture of the sky over Chaerhan Salt Lake: "the sky, indigo, indigo, losing its blue, so deep, thick. The Sun is but a small, round bright cake. The world filled with sunlight, the heat steaming from underfoot, the Salt Lake is flat and distant until it touches the sky" (44). This language, with its strong poetic emotions associated with Liu Xianping's personality and temperament, shows us that Liu Xianping gives feeling to every life—every stone, every patch of meadow—and it gives a sense of his deep love and concern for every stream. In his writings, every tree, every lake, every path and every cliff that falls under his pen is imbued with beauty and spiritual energy. In the section entitled "Gaoligongshan goddess" in *He Hei Ye Hou Dui Hua* [*Dialogue with Langurs*], he records his adventures and thoughts with a warm and vivid narrative, his words showing us the landscape, exotic birds and rare plants. The section is interspersed with a story called "Gaoligongshan Goddess," which tells of Professor Li Heng, who has devoted her entire life to botanic research, and who gives children a sense of life. Liu Xianping's message is clear: if you struggle for ideals, you will eventually be happy and you will be respected. Reading each of Liu Xianping's books is like reading an emotional poem, for each chapter is rich with the passion of a poet, the profoundness of a philosopher and the great courage and wit of an explorer.

Fifth, Liu Xianping's work has a profound cultural value. This is why Liu Xianping's great nature writing has durability. This quality is especially evident in *Zou Jin Pa Mi Er Gao Yuan* [*Going into the Pamirs*]. In the section entitled "Painted Pottery," for example, Liu Xianping explores a valley of the Huangshui River, the most important agricultural area in western and northern China, and traces the history of the art of ancient painted pottery and its pottery civilization, and he unveils the mystery of the culture of Qiang nationality more than four thousand years ago. In the section called "Of Water Color and Life Forms," through a study of the Tibetan plateau lakes, particularly Qinghai Lake, Liu Xianping confirms the connections between Western and Chinese civilization when he writes, "the water sources are in the West, the mountains begin in the West. Both the Yellow River culture and Chu culture, even Chinese culture's roots are in the west of China" (8). In "The Humor of the Salt Lake," he shows his unique cultural understanding of the character of the Salt Lake. Such a focus on cultural history allows readers to feel that nature in Liu Xianping's nature writing is not rigid or fixed; he does not merely show the natural scenery, but also how nature has a rich culture and charm, where nature nourishes the human with civilization. This cultural connection, therefore, also adds a great cultural tension to his nature writing. Because of this, Liu Xianping's nature writing has a depth and quality that makes it very different from the more general prose that can be fund, prose that simply describes the travelling scenery or that comes in the form of so-called "cultural essays."

In the preface to his *My Friends in the Wild* series (2007), Liu Xianping once said, "for thirty years, I had actually done only one thing: to enlighten and promote ecological morals, to establish an ecological morality." His every action, and each of his works prove that he is a

writer who has an ecological conscience. It can be said that Liu Xianping's great nature writing series is a new harvest for modern Chinese literature in the new century, and it is also a new chapter in nature. More people must participate in the investigation and exploration of nature, and perhaps also become part of that group of writers who create nature writing. In the context of the ecological crisis, mankind has entered the era of post-industrial society, and nature writing has a value that cannot be neglected. Nature writing can, at the very least, question humankind's ecological morals and awaken our human ecological conscience for, as Donna Lee King observes, "new concepts of nature and humanity must be embraced, concepts that radically reconfigure our social and ecological relations" (119). Liu Xianping's writings are a step along that path.

Notes

1. The term "deep" ecology (and its opposite, "shallow" ecology) comes from Arne Naess's 1973 article, "The Shallow and The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary," published in *Inquiry* 16, no. 1.

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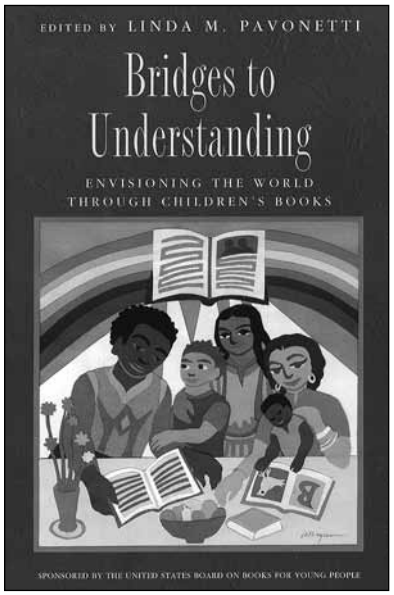
Bridges to Understanding: Envisioning the World through Children´s Books (2011).Ed. Linda M. Pavonetti. Lanham, Toronto and Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press. 521 pages.



Bridges to Understanding: Envisioning the World through Children's Books is the fourth volume of the bibliography of children's books sponsored by the United States Board on Books for Young People (US BBY). Each bibliography is an individual work, but they all aim to introduce international literature for young people to young Americans. The former volumes are C*hildren's Books from Other Countries* (1998), *The World through Children's Books* (2002) and *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books* (2006). With this latest volume, they form an ensemble representing children's books from 1950 to 2004. *Bridges to Understanding* surveys nearly 700 books published between 2000 and 2004 in more than 70 countries. Like its predecessors, it is a valuable tool for librarians, teachers, and anyone seeking information about multicultural literature.

The book is edited by Linda M. Pavonetti, who is the former president of US BBY (2010–2012). The annotated bibliography consists of three parts: International Children's Literature, Bibliography, and Resources. In addition, at the end of the book, there is a comprehensive index of the children's books mentioned in the bibliography. All of these components form a diversified picture of multicultural children's literature.

The first section offers various different perspectives on multicultural children's literature. Andrea Cheng, who is an author, poet, teacher, and illustrator, describes in her article how difficult it is to translate literature into another language. For instance, some puns and other forms of word plays will not come through in translation. In addition, she considers how an author's nationality, language, and cultural background are evident in what or how s/he writes. Barbara Lehman ponders the authors' responsibility for the authenticity of what they write, particularly when they are not insiders to the cultures they are depicting. According to Lehman, readers must also educate themselves to be thoughtfully critical in their responses, especially when those books cover topics that are outside their own experience and knowledge. It is also the teachers' and librarians' responsibility to teach young people to read critically and become

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informed rather than accept texts unquestioningly. In the worst case, reading multicultural themed books can confirm readers' prejudices and stereotypes.

The bibliographic part of the book is organized geographically by world region and country. Before the actual bibliography, the book has a very detailed description of how the selected children's books are classified, how multicultural literature is defined and the basis on which the children's books have been included within the bibliography. This section includes information about the author's cultural background. The plot descriptions of children's books are enjoyable to read and give the reader a picture of the cultural diversity while simultaneously demonstrating the similarity between humans.

Using this kind of bibliography is challenging, in the sense that the books are only classified according to the countries they represent. For example, books appropriate for different age groups are not segregated from each other, presumably because, as Pavonetti notes, age recommendations can be difficult to give. Picture books, for instance, can be suitable for different ages.

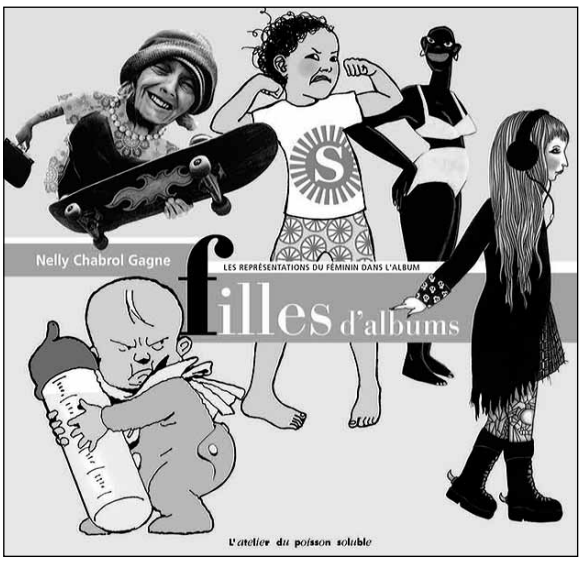
Although *Bridges to Understanding* is intended as a reference source, it provides interesting and entertaining reading in its own right. In addition, the book gives an excellent picture of multicultural literature's various forms of diversity, concerns, and opportunities. One can only hope that US BBY will continue this valuable series of bibliographies.

Juli-Anna Aerila
University of Turku, Finland

Filles d'albums, les représentations du féminin dans l'album **[Girls in Picture Books: Representations of Girls and Women in Picture Books].** Nelly Chabrol-Gagne. Le-Puy-en-Velay: L'Atelier du poisson soluble, 2011. 240 pages.

Nelly Chabrol-Gagne's long anticipated book on the issue of gender in picture books uses a corpus of 250 books published between 1990 and 2009. The works were selected from the annual selections of *La Revue des livres pour enfants* [The Journal of Children's Books]. Chabrol-Gagne paints a picture of women's issues and their representation, which demonstrates that, despite the seemingly sophisticated artistic attire, picture books have a hard time modernizing girls.

Chabrol-Gagne organizes her subject chronologically. The first chapter deals with New-borns. At birth, girls and boys are uniformly designated "infants." In many of the picture books she examined, she found that the baby does not actually



become a girl or a boy until it is a few years old. This first deceptive assessment suggests that initiatives to counter the stereotype of the asexual baby are nonexistent, even among the most enlightened publishers.

The following chapter is dedicated to «les fillettes» ["little girls"]. The study focuses on works produced by the publishing house *Talents hauts*, which claim to address gender issues, but the results do not appear to match the statements of intent. An unexpected revaluation of *Martine à la foire* [Martine at the Fair] (1958) is to be noted; it shows the little girl driving a scooter on a merry-go-round, while the boy is relegated to the back seat.

"Young girls in high heels" are the subject of the third chapter. The girl has grown up; she is not "little" anymore. The girls who are "engaged in a maturing process" appear only in a few picture books (67). Which heroines, asks Chabrol-Gagne, can join the lineage of Antigone, of Juliette, these two figures of young girls willing to die rather than give in to archaic laws imposed on them, or Agnès with a less tragic destiny? It is to be noted that finding rebel heroines or great women lovers in picture books is very difficult. The risk of contesting the adults' power is too high.

As we move further ahead in the ages of female life, we reach the "mothers." They are expansive in the corpus studied: "The mother is the real heroine in picture books", states Chabrol-Gagne in an article published on the Ricochet website. The fourth chapter starts with a presentation of works centered on Adam and Eve with a special mention of *La Famille Adam* [The Adam Family] by Michel Tournier (2003). Chabrol-Gagne then shows that the portrait of the mother is still too often a copy of role models from the nineteenth century—like the model of Mère Barberin [Mother Barberin], the adoptive mother of Rémi in *Sans famille* [Without a Family] by Hector Malot: a loving and reassuring woman who is always present. In fact, as in *Une vraie Maman* [A Real Mother] (2008), the mother in picture books "has 18 pairs of arms and legs" (99). Very few imperfect mothers emerge.

The fifth chapter begins by exclaiming, "After Mom, long live Grandma!" The grandmothers are either young and beautiful, or are "cake" grandmothers: cooks, gardeners and guardians of their grandchildren. The image of old age is typically outdated in the visual images. It is sometimes easier for picture book creators to stage a "physically beat" man rather than a woman (Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake, *Quand je suis triste* [Sad Book], 2005). While Chabrol-Gagne emphasizes the existence of picture books depicting the self-managed, solidarity-based and public-spirited "Babayagas" initiatives,[1] she regrets the absence of grandmothers in love, of lesbian and sexy grannies, or of women who live only for themselves (Sonja Bougaeva, *Deux Sœurs reçoivent de la visite* [Two Sisters Receive a Visit], 2007).

The final chapter is dedicated to the "forgotten" and the "survivors," to girls who appear in the corpus as if by magic. Fiction picture books deal only with a few of the female historical figures, in a very marginal way. The author focuses on *Jeanne*, illustrated by Dedieu, *Frida* (2006) or *Berthe Morisot* (2011). However, all too often these sanitized childhood tales do not fulfill the readers' need for terrible stories.

Published in the *Essay* section of L'Atelier du Poisson Soluble's catalogue, alongside the book *Lire l'album* [To Read the Picture Book] by Sophie Van der Linden, this very informative and beautifully illustrated work alternates between theoretical approaches (including discussions of Michelle Perrot and Simone de Beauvoir amongst others) and book analyses, which focus on the interplay between texts and images. The cited picture books' references appear both in a gray band at the bottom of the page and in an alphabetical index. With this format, the book is like a guide to children's literature accessible to critics, publishers, and artists alike. It contributes a fresh approach in the expanding field of gender studies.

The conclusions drawn by Chabrol-Gagne are not optimistic; she finds a continued lack of gender equality in books for the young. These findings are in line with those of Sylvie Cromer and Adela Turin who, at the very end of the twentieth century, drew attention to the prevalence of sexism in picture books. While it seems unreasonable to expect more in such a short period of time, this reader would have liked to see Chabrol-Gagne produce a list of picture books which include positive role models for girls. At present, only Anne Frank is mentioned (179), but where are the feisty girls of picture books who can match Carroll's Alice, Queneau's Zazie, or la Comtesse de Ségur's Sophie in novels for children?

In the absence of these valuable characters, the mediators of picture books—parents, teachers, and other adults—must bear in mind the list of stereotypes about which they should be vigilant. They should mistrust any picture book depicting

a girl who resembles a sleeping beauty, humbled or restricted in the roles she plays, either literally by playing indoors while the boys play outside, or by accepting a secondary role, aspiring only to become an ideal mother or a dynamic grandmother.

In conclusion, it seems that only part of what a book communicates lies within the image-text interplay. The role of the book's mediator is at least *as* important. It is necessary for us to teach young readers to detect sexist representations, and encourage children to become alert to such messages. Such mediations between children and adults as they read picture books together are the training ground for the future. The journal *Le Français aujourd'hui* [The French Today] recently ran a special issue on *Genre, sexisme et féminisme* [Gender, Sexism and Feminism], which included an article by Isabelle Smadja and Pierre Bruno celebrating the "cold logic" of Hermione, even while it notes sexism in other parts of the *Harry Potter* books. Such developments may indicate that we are no longer prisoners of "sexist clichés," and we may, I hope, see these clichés shattered.

Christa Delahaye, in ***La Revue des livres pour enfants*** [The Journal of Children's Books], n° 265, June 2012. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, CNLJ-JPL. Translated by Hasmig Chahinian, Bibliothèque nationale de France, CNLJ-JPL.

Notes

1. The House of Babayagas is an initiative conducted by elderly people in France, who decided to live together in specially created houses. Their initiative is based on the principles of self-management, solidarity, public-spirit and ecology. Their name is a reference to the famous Russian witch. (Translator's note).

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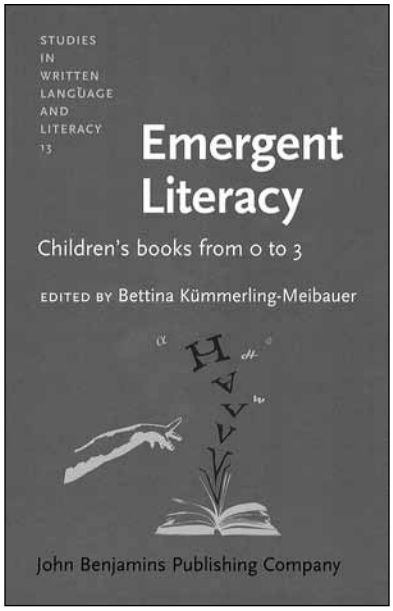
Emergent Literacy: Children's Books from 0 to 3. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (ed.). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 2011. 265 pages.

Assessing what young children, from ages 10 months to three years, learn from picture book experiences—looking at the illustrations, listening to and talking around the story with an adult—is not an easy task. The obvious reason for this difficulty is that young children cannot articulate themselves, or at least not fully, and so it is exceptionally difficult to gather and interpret data from them. But there is another reason as well: historically, children's literature academics have not considered the study of literature for children three years of age and younger to be useful. These books have not been categorized seriously because they have little or no written text, and, as a result, their place in contributing to children's literacy has been greatly overlooked. *Emergent Literacy* remedies this problem.



A pioneer in its field, this book is a compilation of revised papers presented at an international conference that was held at the Picture Book Museum (Burg Wissem) in Troisdorf, Germany in March 2009. The conference brought together a wide range of scholars from various countries and fields, all of whom were looking at the impact of literature on children ages 10 months to three years on literacy, language acquisition, and cognitive, linguistic and aesthetic development. It was also the first conference to focus on multidisciplinary approaches to studying this field.

Emergent Literacy is divided into three sections. Part One explores fundamental issues of early literacy, such as color perception and basic illustration design and layout. Part Two explores the types of picture books that are aimed toward children under three years of age. This wide range of literature includes early-concept books, wimmelbooks, and "teaching" picture books (which expose this age set to behavioral norms.) Finally, Part Three explores the interaction between the adult reader, the child watcher/listener, and the book itself. Linguistic development in bilingual children, the impact of the way mothers interact with a text, and the ways play and talk are woven together with texts are examined here.

The book is a collection of individual papers, each written by a different author, and the quality of the contributions is somewhat uneven, especially in terms of readability. For example, chapter three, "Color Perception in Infants and Young Children," an in-depth study of the development of color vision in young children and the significance of color in picture books, is quite dense and somewhat challenging to follow, while chapter twelve, "Don't Tell Me All About It—Just Read It to Me," a chronicle of the author's daughters' early reading experiences, is anecdotal, informal, and its analysis is clear. Kümmerling-Meibauer offers the following advice on how to navigate the book: "The reader is invited to follow the trail according to her interests." And this is good advice. While the chapters are interconnected, a reader can gain much

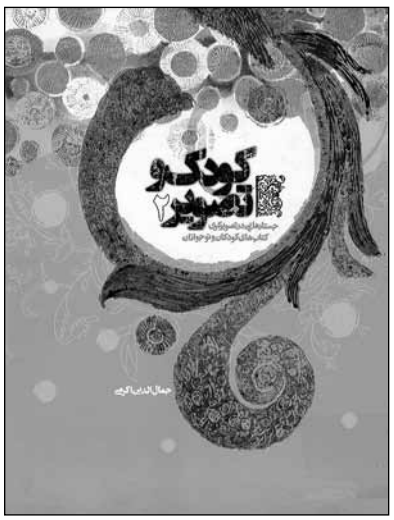
valuable and new information by reading any one of the chapters, or reading them in any order.

That being said, the sum of the book paints a whole and multifaceted view of the importance of young children's literature. Some highlights include an examination of narrative picture books for young children and how to choose the best ones, an in-depth (and somewhat humorous) look at toilet training picture books in Japan, and a thorough analysis of the way picture book metaphors provide young children with a way to understand and express abstract ideas. Ultimately, *Emergent Literacy* is well worth the read. It is a revolutionary study of the many different ways that these picture books are critical to young children's developing literacy and their growing sense of themselves as individuals in the world.

Tamara Smith

Child & Picture: Children's Book Illustration in Iran. Vol. 1. By Jamaledin Akrami. Tehran: Madresse, 2005. 415 p. ISBN: 964-385-511-2.

After a long hiatus in the publishing of theoretical texts on children's literature, Jamaloddin Akrami has written two useful theoretical works focusing on Iranian Illustration in children's books. The text under discussion in this review is *Child & Picture: Children's Book Illustration* in Iran, vol., but Akrami also published a second volume of the book, called *Child & Picture: The Illustration Elements in Children's and YA Books*. Each text dedicates analytical focus on illustrations of children's fiction and nonfiction in varying historical eras. *Child and Picture*, the first volume, discusses the history of illustration in Iranian children's and YA books, as well as the works of Iranian illustrators in national and international festivals.



This first volume consists of ten chapters. The first chapter focuses on illustration as narration and the role of literature in ancient Iran. The second chapter deals with literature and illustration in the Medieval era, specifically fiction, nonfiction, and informational picture books. The third chapter analyzes different illustrative techniques in a specific historical era, from graphics to lithography, and new methods in illustrating books in the constitution era. The section also focuses on the nonfiction books, and the fourth chapter discusses the Ministry of Education's new programming in Iran; the folktale myths and rewriting the Old Persian stories, the art of drawing, and illustrative diversities. Chapter five engages in fiction and nonfiction, respectively, and includes tales, poems, and documentaries. In chapter six, the author explores Iranian publishers of the 1970s, and explores the characteristics of nonfiction books and their illustrations in Iran during the 1970s. Akrami also analyzes the works of prominent illustrators in the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter seven shifts to literary features of present illustrators and those from different eras of illustrating, and compares illustrative features in non-fiction books from the 80s, 90s, and 2000s. Chapter eight analyses textbook illustrations from 1921 to 1981, and also explores illustrated textbooks from 1981 to the present. Chapter nine concentrates on international festivals and Iranian illustration award winners, and also on national illustration in Iran. Lastly, chapter ten discusses literary genres along with comparative analyses of the illustration of nonfiction books in the USA and Europe. Akrami extends his scholarship into another volume of his *Child & Picture* text, called *Child & Picture: The Illustration Elements in the Children's & YA Books*, vol. 2, and this volume delves further into illustrated narratives and artistic techniques. The book outlines the difficulties of research and criticism in children's illustrated books, and tracks the progression from drawing to illustration. Akami focuses extensively on illustrative technique throughout the book, and as the text draws to a close, introduces the works of the world's most celebrated illustrators and their artistic techniques.

Bahar Eshraq, Tehran Reference Library

Child & Picture: The Illustration Elements in Children's & YA Books. Vol. 2. By Jamaledin Akrami. Tehran: Soroush Press, 2010. 452 p. ISBN: 978-964-376-876-8.

The second volume is an introduction to illustrations in books for children and young adults. This volume also analyzes the obstacles in doing research and criticism in Children's book illustration. *Child & Picture: Illustration Elements in Children & YA Books* consists of four sections and eight chapters. In section one the visual components of drawing found in the illustration of children's books has been discussed. The first chapter analyses the process of drawing to illustration. The second chapter discusses the visual elements in illustrating. Third chapter deals with different techniques of illustrating. The fourth chapter considers the artistic techniques in illustrating. In section two, the literary components in illustration has been highlighted and includes chapter five and six. In chapter five the narrative components of illustration has been evaluated and in chapter six picture books are on the focus. In section three the indigenous elements in illustrating have been examined. In section four the works of world's illustrators and their techniques has been introduced.

Bahar Eshraq, Tehran Reference Library

International Children's Book Day in Australia

IBBY Australia is reviving the custom of celebrating International Children's Book Day as an important day for children's literature in Australia. We have chosen the nearest Saturday to Hans Christian Andersen's birthday in order to celebrate this occasion with major events in two states. In NSW, more than seventy people gathered at Santa Maria del Monte school in Strathfield, in a buzz of anticipation to hear speeches from the two Australian nominees for the HCA award, Christobel Mattingley and Bob Graham.

Compiled and edited by
ELIZABETH PAGE

Elizabeth Page is
IBBY's Executive Director

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Wearing a striking Danish silver necklace to complement her beautiful silver hair, and in honour of the day, Christobel told us of her childhood love of reading, her early writing and her work as a librarian, and how she has written full-time since 1974. The topics she deals with are broad, taken from whatever has deeply moved her, including a beloved family dog (*Windmill at Magpie Creek*), and Astra Lacis's story of enduring World War II as a child (*The Angel with a Mouth Organ*). Many of Christobel's stories have also been informed by her deep sense of social justice, as she described the effect of war on children in *No Gun for Asmir*, explored the world of a deaf child in *The Race*, and wrote *Maralinga the Anangu Story* at the request of Aboriginal people who were removed from their land due to British atomic tests. Christobel ended by describing that her work came "from seeds sown in her childhood, nourished by the compost of a rich life".

Next, it was time to enjoy Bob Graham's presentation. He used many images, from his own deceptively simple and gently humorous illustrations, to those sent to him in response to his books. Bob told how his association with the French magazine *Les Belles Histoires* began, and how this relationship led to his monthly story about Charlotte and Henry, which lasted for 17 years. Bob shared his response to a reader who found *Let's Get a Pup* unacceptable, vehemently objecting to the mother sporting a nose-ring and tattoos and a father with an earring. Bob had replied that books could be windows into other people's souls in order to bring about harmony and tolerance, and that he believed it important not to judge people by their appearances. However, he did (reluctantly) make certain changes to *How to Heal a Broken Wing* for release in Iran, making the women's clothing more acceptable in Iranian society. In their inspiring addresses, both speakers emphasised the international nature of their work. It was fitting that they shared the challenge of cutting the Kransikage for HCA's birthday.

Christobel Mattingley and Bob Graham, 2012 Australian nominees for the HCA Award cutting the Kransekake.

The second event included a dinner was held under the canopy of the grape arbour at the Villa Roma restaurant in Fremantle in Western Australia. A new edition of the classic picture book, *Shy the Platypus* by Leslie Rees, was launched, and a number of people shared memories of their own favourite picture books. These favorites comprised an eclectic list, from Lewis Carroll's *Lobster Quadrille* to titles from the forties, including *Digit Dick on the Great Barrier Reef* by Leslie Rees, Dorothy Wall's *Blinky Bill* (memorably the first encounter with the death of a character for its reader), modern classics such as the Ahlbergs' *Each Peach, Pear Plum* (the audience chanting bits of the familiar refrain during the reading), Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman* (difficult to read aloud), poignant *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell, Swedish *Wild Baby* by Barbro Lindgren and Eva Eriksson, and Neil Gaiman's *Crazy Hair,* as well the kitsch hit, a pop-up book of *The Royal Family.*

IBBY Australia also chose this day to announce the winner of the Ena Noel Award: Amy Barker won the award for 2012 with her debut novel *Omega Park*. (For more about this award, see the article in *Bookbird* by John Foster, Vol 45 No 3). Considering the success of the day's events, we hope that future International Children's Book Day's in Australia will gain importance on the national calendar.

Robin Morrow
President
IBBY Australia Inc.

First IBBY Steps in Azerbaijan

The *Republic Children's Library*, named after Firidun bay Kocharli, is the main children's library of Azerbaijan. It is the national depository for literature and scientific as well as reference-bibliographic information, and also acts as a consultation centre for children. The library services nearly 18,000 rural libraries for children.

Founded in 1965, the library moved to the new premises in 2010. Its collection numbers nearly 160,000 books, journals, recordings, and CDs, with the purpose of collecting and preserving the whole repertoire of books for children specifically published in Azerbaijan. More than 18,000 children and specialists in the field of children's literature use the library services annually. *The Republic Children's Library* is also the main centre for children's free time in Baku. There are different interest groups that can freely use the facilities, which include a literary studio and a fairytale drawing room called "Come to the Fairytale".

All visitors, which mostly consist of children from the age of attending preschool to fifteen years old, receive a subscription to the library and can use the common reading rooms. A specialized art department containing corresponding literature and audio-visual material is also popular with readers.

For the convenience of the readers, an electronic catalogue has been available since 2005, but the library also continues the use of the old card catalogue. A bilingual thesaurus designed by library specialists works as a guide to the content of the catalogue, and each one of the special databases is divided into further topics that help to improve and multiply the search possibilities for research.

The library carries out significant publishing work by preparing recommendations and informational bibliographic indexes, as well as methodical teaching materials. With help from the Open Society's International "Renaissance" Foundation, the library issues lists of recommended books, including lists of the best literature in Azerbaijani and Russian, from the library's collection. Each list is accompanied by an illustration that takes into account the child psychology of text perception. Lists of varied topics, such as astronomy, ecology, etc. have already been prepared. Since 2005, the *Republic Children's Library* has been publishing the *Göygurşağı* (Rainbow) journal, which provides information about the library, children's books, and children's literary creativity.

Our first IBBY Steps

The first of any information on IBBY was published in the library's magazine *Göygurşağı* (Rainbow). On 2 April—International Children's Book Day—the section participated in

Leslie Rees, Director of The Literature Centre, Fremantle launching *Shy the Platypus* (Published by The National Library of Australia).

the Azerbaijan Television programme *Cognition*, highlighting the role of the library in the continued support of reading for children, as well as providing recognition for writers of children's literature.

On 2 May 2012 the *Republic Children's Library* organized and held a round table called "*Book. World. Children*". The main purpose of the event was to focus on the problems experienced by writers, artists and the field of contemporary children's literature in general. A further aim was to promote Azerbaijani children's literature, through the International Board on Books for Young People, to the world arena. The head of the printing, advertising and the information department at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Vagif Bahmanli, introduced a number of children's literary publications from the publishing houses of Altun, Turan, Chinar-Chap, Chashyoglu, Education, and Beşik, as well as some children's writers, including Zahid Khalil, Sevinj Nuruqızı, Rafiq Yusifoglu, Alamdar Guluzade, Gasham Isabayli, Gulzar Ibrahimova, Gulara Munis, Solmaz Amanova, and Fizuli Askerli. Well-known writer Oqtay Rza also participated in the event.

The director of the library, Fizura Guliyeva, opened the round table and presented IBBY. The participants discussed the topic of improving available children's literature and confirmed that the youngest children (aged between 3 and 4 years old) needed books, as well as music and spoken word, published especially for them. A twice-yearly round table was suggested in order to encourage the publication of high quality books with good design. A competition was also suggested to coincide with Children's Book Day for the "best children's book author, illustrator and publisher" in hopes to encourage all engaged in the field to achieve even more interesting approaches to writing, illustrating and publishing children's books. The library also involves primary school teachers, and encourages their participation by collecting their ideas, for example, on the preparation of songs written for small children in the form of audio books and CD-ROMs.

Representatives of the mass media (AzerTaj, Culture, Dove) also participated in the round table. On October 6, 2008 the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan had approved the Order No. 3072 of the "library-information sphere in the Republic of Azerbaijan State Programme on development in the years 2008 to 2013". In this order, paragraph 2.4.1 of the Action Plan referred to the information needs of children in children's libraries.

The "*Book. World. Children*" round-table made several suggestions for discussions within this Action Plan:

1. The children's media: quality, content and problems.
2. Modern children's literature: status, publication, and promotion of quality (with teachers).
3. Promotion of children's literature: the form and methods, with libraries and librarians.
4. The young unknown writers: competition of children's works, jury for the competition.
5. Competitions: *The Best Story* and *The Best Poems*.
6. Design issues in children's literature.
7. The best children's books in the library to be used to conduct research on development and evaluation.

8. The best writers and poets of children's books.
9. Children's writers and artists should work on the preparation of materials to promote the best children's books.

The summary of the discussions and proposals made during the "*Book. World. Children*" round-table will be sent to the Department of Education.

From May 15th-31th, the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest was held in Baku. The *Republic Children's Library* held an exhibition called *Eurochildbook-2012* for its visitors. The exhibition displayed 42 publications in order to demonstrate the state of children's literature in Azerbaijan. The exhibition was decorated with the national emblems, dolls and symbols of IBBY countries. Every day many children from city schools and kindergartens visited the exhibition. People working in the field of anthropology attended the opening ceremony.

Visitors at the Eurochildbook-2012 Exhibition

Through the IBBY network, IBBY Azerbaijan would like to accomplish a number of things, including establishing partnerships with similar organizations from different parts of the world, obtaining appropriate information and guidance about participation in international events connected with children's books (congresses, conferences, seminars, book fairs and festivals, exhibitions, writing and book illustration contests etc.), finding international experts on issues connected with writing, publishing and promoting books and reading, promoting children's books from Azerbaijan in other countries, and nominating children's writers, illustrators, translators, and reading promoters for different awards and distinctions.

July 2012, Zahira Dadashova
IBBY Azerbaijan

IBBY Honour List 2012

The IBBY Honour List is a biennial selection of outstanding, recently published books, which honours writers, illustrators, and translators from IBBY member countries. The first Honour List in 1956 was a selection of 15 entries from 12 countries. For the 2012 Honour List, 58 countries have sent 169 nominations in 44 different languages. Selected for the 2012 list are 65 entries in the category of Writing; 54 in the category Illustration; and 50 in the category Translation. Included for the first time is a book in Ojibwe from Canada, as well as two titles in Khmer from Cambodia, and three new books in Arabic from the United Arab Emirates. This steady increase of international submissions demonstrates the growth of IBBY, and the continuing effort it puts forth in order

to share good books across the world.

The titles are selected by the National Sections of IBBY, who are invited to nominate books characteristic of their country, and suitable to recommend for publication in different languages. The limit on the number of books that can be nominated for writing and translation has been lifted, and IBBY now welcomes multiple titles from countries with many languages. In terms of illustrations, IBBY continues to accept only one title from each National Section.

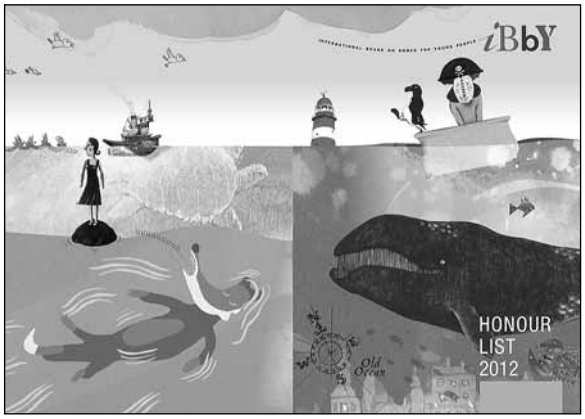
The Honour List has become one of the most important activities of IBBY. For many National Sections, the selection process presents a welcome opportunity to study and review the production of children and young adult books in their country on a continuing basis. Moreover, it offers a unique opportunity to the member countries, especially those with less well-known languages, to present their best books to an international audience. The exhibition of Honour List Books is presented at conferences and fairs around the world, and the catalogue is translated into different languages, which allows it to reach a vast number of people. Each Honour List catalogue from 1980 onwards is also available through IBBY's web page, making it even more accessible throughout the world. This activity is one of the most effective ways of furthering IBBY's objective of encouraging international understanding and cooperation through children's literature.

An IBBY Honour List has been published every two years since 1956. Originally this list was called 'The Hans Christian Andersen Honour List', because the same jury that selected the recipients of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards identified the books selected for the Honour List. Until 1974, there was only one general category for an Honour Book, i.e. 'a good book'. However, that year the category for Illustration was added, soon followed by the category for Translation in 1978. These additions broadened the base of available candidates for the National Sections, who now took on the role of the selection jury, although it was not until 1980 that the name **IBBY Honour List** was first used and the annotated catalogue that we see today was published.

Great care is taken to provide up-to-date information about the authors, illustrators, translators, and their publishers, including the subject and language indexes for every nominee on the Honour List. Even though space and funds are often limited, it is our wish to provide as much concise information as possible regarding the list in order to promote access to the books that may be lesser known in the eyes of an international audience.

The co-operation and support given by the staff of the International Youth Library in Munich is very important and much appreciated. The staff study and classify the books, and give valuable advice concerning bibliographical practice, transliteration of scripts that are not in Latin letters, as well as subject indexing.

The IBBY Honour List 2012 is the result of excellent cooperation between the IBBY Secretariat, the participating National Sections who selected the entries and prepared the nominations, and the publishers of



IBBY Honour List 2012, cover design
by VischerVettiger, Basel

the nominated books who donated seven copies of each title for exhibitions and to be placed in permanent collections. For the 2012 catalogue, IBBY gratefully acknowledges the support of *Cerdik Publications* Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for sponsoring the printing and donating the paper.

The travelling exhibitions can be booked through the IBBY Secretariat and will be available until 2014. The 2012 books will be deposited in Zurich at the Swiss Institute for Children and Youth Media, Bibiana in Bratislava, Northwestern University Library in Evanston, IL, JBBY the Japanese Section of IBBY in Tokyo, the Russian Section of IBBY in the St Petersburg's Central Children's Library, the Centre for Teaching through Children's Books, National-Louis University, Skokie IL, and the International Youth Library in Munich. The catalogues are available through the IBBY Secretariat.

Liz Page, adapted from the 2012 IBBY Honour List catalogue

Report from the IBBY UK 2011 Annual Conference

This year, the IBBY UK Annual conference was held at Roehampton University, London, on Saturday, 12 November 2011, along with the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL), which is part of the university. The 18th annual IBBY UK/NCRCL MA conference was fully booked, which was encouraging to see—we hope the conference's popularity this year is not only a reflection of the prestigious keynote speakers, but also of what seems to be a resurgence of interest in poetry written for and by children, as the theme this year was *It Doesn't Have to Rhyme: Children and Poetry*.

The programme started with Morag Styles, Professor of Children's Poetry at Cambridge University, with a presentation entitled "A Lifetime in Poetry for Children," in which she journeyed from her first day as a primary-school teacher to the present. She spoke with humour and did not gloss over her errors in the classroom—from her presentation and stories of her many travels, the audience was able to learn about both poetry and children. Her current work includes a joint project on Caribbean poetry with the University of the West Indies.

A panel of publishers, chaired by Nicholas Tucker and comprised of Gaby Morgan from Macmillan publishers, Janetta Otter-Barry from Frances Lincoln publishers, and Fiona Waters from Troubadour publishing, attended the conference. Gaby Morgan announced that Macmillan had nine new poetry collections for children to be released in 2012, including three single-poet collections. Fiona Waters's message was that poetry is alive and well in schools, as evidenced by her book-fair company Troubadour. Waters also spoke about compiling anthologies, and the common misconception that it is merely a case of throwing a few poems together. Janetta Otter-Barry spoke about her new poetry list under the imprint Janetta Otter-Barry Books. Starting in 2012, Otter-Barry is publishing four single-poet collections each May and August. These collections are paperbacks with a lively coloured cover and black and white illustrations, and each year a debut collection will be published. The first release—Rachel Rooney's *The Language of Cat*—is selling very well.

IBBY UK Board member Pam Dix presented a paper written by Joelle Taylor, the coordinator of the Poetry Society's SLAMbassadors UK—a slam championship for 12–18 year olds aimed at involving young people in reading, writing and

performing poetry—who was unable to attend. Pam also introduced a video of a young poet from high school, who took the oft-heard "mind the gap" on the London Underground to explain by way of a common saying her point of view on racism. To see the poet recite her winning poem visit http://thepoetrychannel.org.uk/poems/please-mind-the-gap/.

Michael Rosen, former UK Children's Laureate, did not mince his words when giving his views on the current state of poetry in UK schools. Throughout the year, Rosen visits a number of schools, where he encourages pupils to speak, write and perform poetry. His mantra includes answering any question he receives with "I don't know," because he believes that children are experts, capable of answering all of their questions on their own. Rosen demonstrated this convention by attempting to answer the question that he is asked by pupils most often, how do you start a poem?, by inviting participants to help as he started creating a poem. The audience felt very involved and thoroughly enjoyed the session. It ended with everyone chanting our new poem, which used the word "Froebel" (Froebel College is the part of the university where the conference took place).

A wide range of workshops followed the lunch break, which included poetry written by children, performed poetry, the question "Can A Love of Poetry be Taught?", poetry education, translating poetry, dealing with death via poetry, language, riddles, multicultural British poetry and oral poetry.

Susan Bassnett, the author of over 20 books on aspects of comparative literature and translation, and jury chair of the *Times Stephen Spender Trust Poetry Prize,* spoke of the problems involved in comparing poetry by young people under the age of 14 and under the age of 18. She particularly focused on the group under 14 years of age, because children mature and change so quickly. The unique aspect of the Stephen Spender Poetry award is that all entrants for the prize are required to include a 300-word commentary on how they had come to choose their particular poem, as well as how they had set about translating it. Susan gave her view on the perennial argument, the source of much heated debate, around questions of "faithfulness" and "unfaithfulness" in translation, quoting Vladimir Nabokov, who saw translation as a betrayal of the original, a travesty, a profanation.

Philip Gross, winner of the 2011 CLPE Poetry Award for his *Off Road to Everywhere*, is a novelist, poet, playwright, broadcaster and Professor of Creative Writing at Glamorgan University, Wales. Gross presented evocative readings of poems, explaining their motivation in the context of his workshops in schools and his own philosophy.

It was surely politic to leave Jacqueline Wilson's talk to the end of the day. Jacqueline Wilson is a best-selling children's book author and a former UK Children's Laureate. A lively speaker, Wilson's talk was on how she had chosen the poems for her 2011 anthology *Green Glass Beads*. She quoted many of the poems she had learned and loved as a child, and then those she had later read to her daughter. Her final list for the anthology was then pruned by the cost of copyright permissions, and by her editor Gaby Morgan.

The book of conference proceedings of *It Doesn't Have to Rhyme: Children and Poetry* is due to be published in October 2012 by Pied Piper Publishing, and is edited by Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding.

Jennifer Harding

Correction: issue 50/3, July 2012. The 2012 Conference on Book Therapy was organized by IndBBY and not INABBY as written. Many apologies to IBBY Indonesia and IBBY India.

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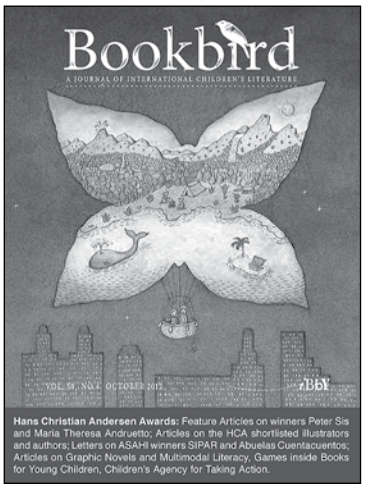

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Bookbird publishes articles on children's literature with an international perspective four times a year (in January, April, July and October). Articles that compare literatures of different countries are of interest, as are papers on translation studies 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

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Call for Papers: Queerness and Children's Literature

Bookbird invites submissions for a Special Issue on queerness and children's literature. Over the past two decades in particular, interest in the intersection between the representation of children and queerness has been steadily growing. In the past several years, several volumes have stimulated this growth: *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* edited by Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley (2004), *The Queer Child* by Kathryn Bond Stockton (2009), *Over the Rainbow* edited by Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd (2011), and *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature* by Tison Pugh (2011). The editor and guest editor invite proposals for articles of 4000 words which explore queerness and children's literature.

Suggested topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Nation, empire, queerness
- Queerness and cultural difference
- National children's literature and queerness
- Translation and queerness
- Homophobia, violence, and/or bullying
- "Innocence" and queerness
- Gender, nation, queerness
- Censorship and sexuality

Titles and abstracts of 250 words should be sent to both editors by **15 JANUARY 2013**: Roxanne Harde (rharde@ualberta.ca) and guest editor, Laura Robinson (Laura.Robinson@rmc.ca). Final articles will be expected by **15 MAY 2013**. Papers which are not accepted for this issue will be considered for later issues of *Bookbird*.

Our Forthcoming Issues:

- January 2013, Literature from the British Commonwealth
- April 2013, Open Themed
- July 2013, Multilingual Literature
- October 2013, Open Themed
- January 2014, GLBTQ
- April 2014, HCA Award Nominees

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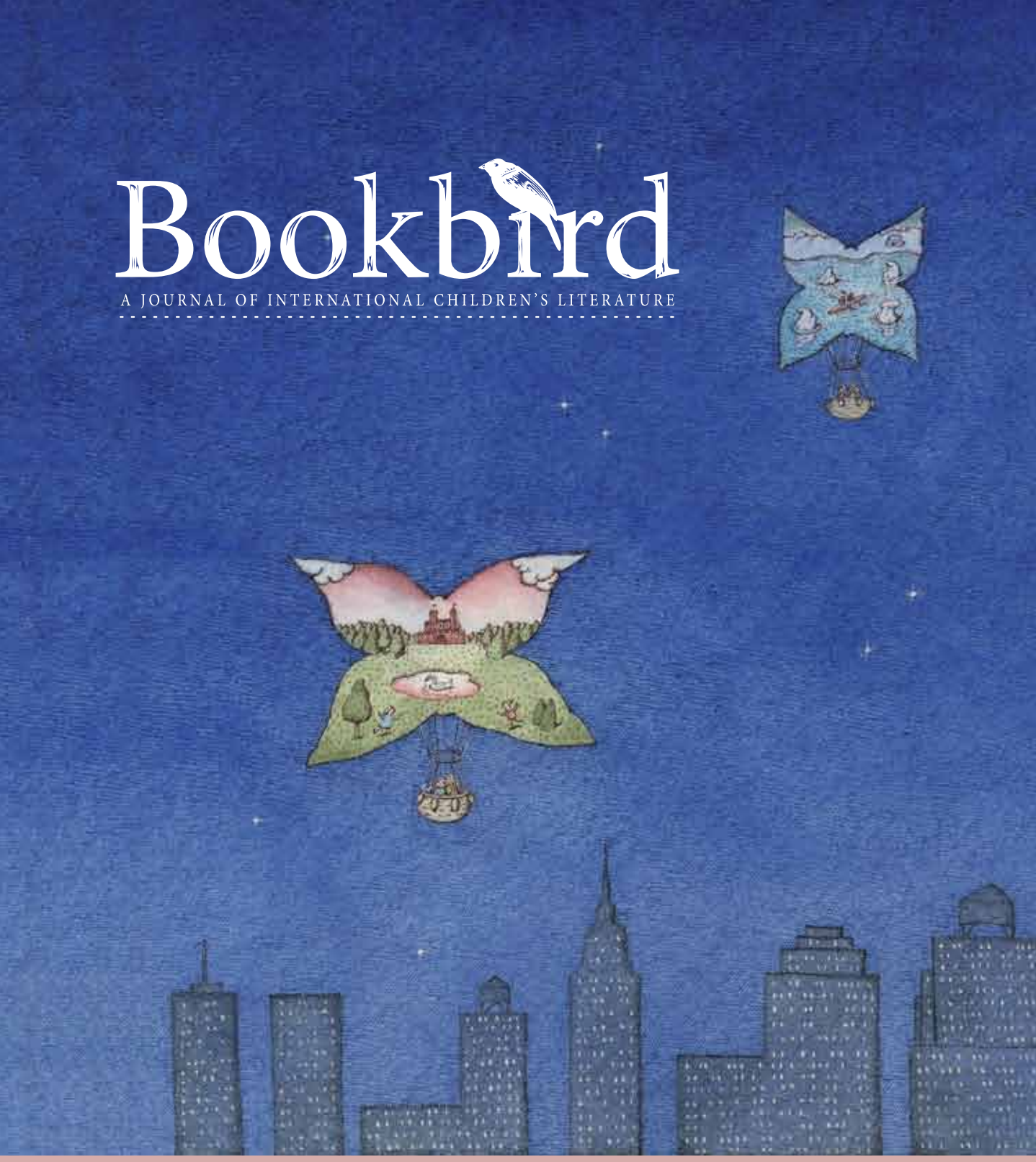

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