Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

51.4 (2013)

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IBBY

Feature Articles: Death and the Empathic Embrace in Four Contemporary Picture Books • Picturing Difference: Three Recent Picture Books Portray the Black Nova Scotian Community • Images of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Class Struggle in Communist Albanian Children's Literature and Media • Exploring the Text/Image Wilderness • Teacher Authored Supplementary Reading Materials in South Africa • Immigrants and Immigration in Portuguese Children's Literature • Children & Their Books • Letters • Reviews

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

Production: Design and layout by Bill Benson, Texas, USA
Printed by The Sheridan Press, Hanover, Pennsylvania, USA

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

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

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

Subscriptions to *Bookbird*: See last page.

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

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

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Reviews of Secondary Literature

Postcards

Our Forthcoming Issues:

52.1 (2014) The Queer Issue
52.2 (2014) HCA Award Nominees
52.3 (2014) Mexico City Congress Issue: Children's Literature in Latin America
52.4 (2014) HCA Awards and Open Themed

With vivid and emotionally evocative illustrations, *"No!", said the Little Monster* brings to life the struggle between staying silent when a friend does something wrong, or speaking up and risking the friendship. When the big monster comes over to play, the little monster runs through a list of all the times in the past when his friend has caused damage or hurt others' feelings and the little monster hadn't dared to say anything. The litany of past frustrations gives him the courage to say "No!" this time, prompting an unexpected reaction from his friend. The importance of speaking up is portrayed with just the right mix of humor and seriousness, in a way that both children and adults can enjoy. As a part of a larger series, including a companion book called *Big Monsters Don't Cry*, it also shows the different perspectives inside a friendship and how one situation can be perceived very differently. This book can be a starting place for a conversation about why friends might do things that feel hurtful and how important it is to speak up for core values, reinforcing that conflict can even strengthen friendships.

Deena Hinshaw

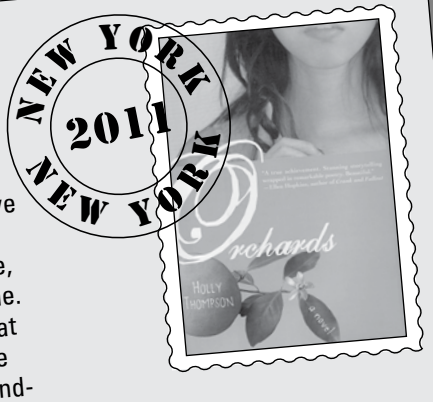
Kalle Güettler and Rakel Heimisdal

¡No!, dijo el pequeño monstruo
["No!", said the Little Monster]

Illus. Áslaug Jónsdóttir
Barcelona: Beascoa, Random House, 2010.
36 p.
ISBN: 978-84-488-3002-1
(Picture Book, 3+)

When a young girl takes her own life and her circle of peers is complicit, Kana is sent to her mother's childhood home, a small village in Japan, to visit with her extended family. She reflects on her role and her own identity in the powerful novel in verse, *Orchards*, by Holly Thompson. The story unfolds as Kana addresses each chapter to the dead girl, Ruth, as if she were alive and still with her. Feelings of guilt and isolation mix as Kana struggles to fit in with her Japanese family's unfamiliar routine, while coming to terms with her own role in the suicide at home. Through flashbacks we come to understand what happened at school and how the "popular" girls treated the outsider, while Kana herself feels like an outsider in her own family. This blending of social, cultural, and familial issues is deftly portrayed in a story that is full of vivid sensory details of foods and farming, as well as engaging and sensitive characterizations. The verse novel format reads quickly, and the story builds to an emotionally satisfying conclusion as Kana finds her voice and bonds with her Baachan. Thompson lives and teaches in Japan, and worked on a local mikan [orange] orchard for a year to learn the process and describe it authentically.

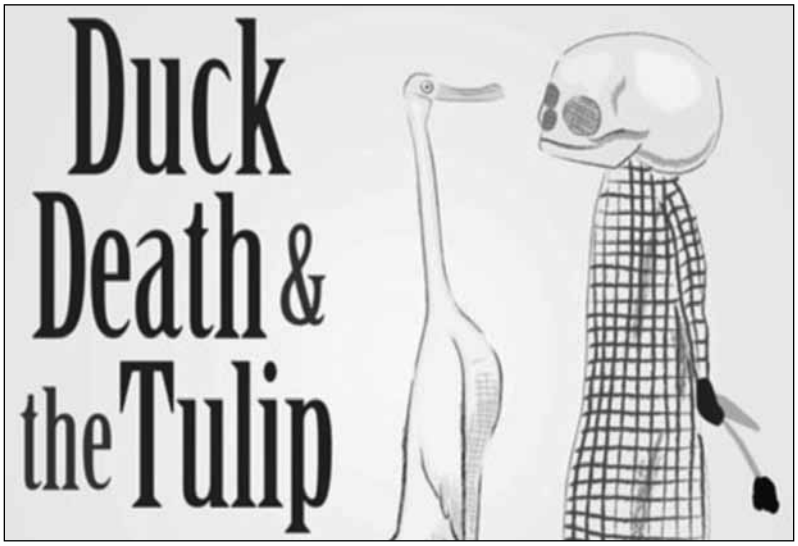
Sylvia Vardell



Holly Thompson

Orchards

New York: Random House, 2011.
336 p.
ISBN: 0385739788
(Fiction, 12+)



Editorial

Dear *Bookbird* Readers,

While it's true that there is something immensely satisfying about *Bookbird's* themed issues, about the way issues such as the recent Multilingual Issue and the upcoming Queer Issue form a cogent "whole" in the manner of a solid collection of critical essays, I have to say that I also enjoy our "open" issues. They may end up with an eclectic mix of articles and columns, and even of reviews, but they also have that "something for everyone" aspect. In this issue, I was happy to revisit some of my favourite books for children through new critical analyses of them, and to learn about children's books I now want to read (and read to my granddaughter) and/or to study. In the case of the former, this issue's lead article by Lesley Clement asks questions about how books can help children move past the familiar and deal with those boundaries that the fear of the unknown imposes, particularly the boundary between life and death. One of the books Clement analyzes is Wolf Erlbruch's *Duck, Death, and the Tulip*, a book that I have used for years to help family members, children and grownups, deal with death. In the case of the latter, Vivian Howard introduces us to three recent Canadian picture books that offer insights into community, power, prejudice, and identity within Nova Scotia's African-Canadian community. Similarly, Enkelena Qafleshi discusses a body of books for children produced in Albania during the Communist regime, and William Boerman-Cornell offers a compelling reading of various types of irony in George O'Connor's graphic novel adaptation of Harmen Van den Bogaert's *Journey into Mohawk Country*. The final two articles offer overviews of a fascinating South African project in which classroom teachers wrote stories for children in order to achieve their pedagogical (and citizenship) goals, and of the theme of migration in contemporary Portuguese children's literature.

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*.

This issue's columns are also an eclectic and satisfying mix. In the Children & Their Books section, Yara Miguel discusses reading programs in Brazilian schools that foster a family-based reading culture, allowing children to make connections through literary experience. Joanne Hillhouse discusses her experiences as an author of fiction, and the influences of aspiring authors on her writing career. In 2004, she began the Wadadli Youth Pen Prize for young Caribbean writers, which recognizes young authors' fiction grounded in Caribbean culture, geography, and history. In the final Children & Their Books column, Fieke Van der Gucht discusses "The Challenge," a reader-centered programme run by Stichting Lezen Vlaanderen (the Flemish Reading Association), in partnership with a broad network of teachers and librarians, that aims at reluctant readers of fifteen years and older in vocational schools.

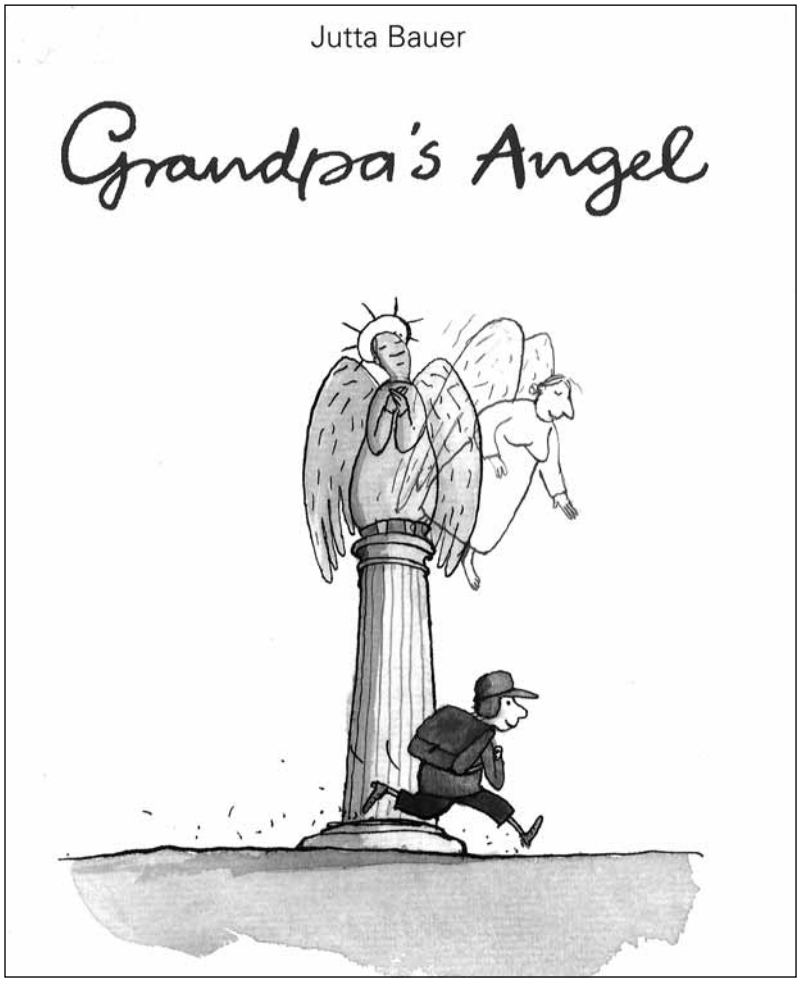
The Letters columns in this issue begin with Heidi Boiesen's overview of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, now housed in the North York Central Branch of the Toronto Public Library. Then Crystal Hurdle offers a discussion of Massachusetts author Jane Langton, and laments the fact that Langton's classic novels for children are not more widely available to the public. In the final Letter, Rachel Johnson discusses her experiences with the International Forum for Research into Children's Literature at the University of Worcester, and outlines the challenges of developing the forum with little-to-no funding.

Reviewers of secondary literature in this issue look at books on children's literature from France, Belgium, England, and the USA, featuring textual analyses of Tintin and other comic strips, of national identity in a variety of texts and British identity in texts from England, and of the pedagogical uses of historical children's fiction in the USA. There are also postcard reviews of books for children from China, Iceland, Spain, Germany, Iran, Italy, Turkey, and the USA.

Our final two columns offer something new to our closing standard. The first is our inaugural column from the International Youth Library. Director Christiane Raabe and her staff will update Bookbird's readers on the IYL, its activities and programs, on a regular basis, and they will continue to provide us with their Books on Books column. The issue concludes with Liz Page's regular Focus IBBY, which offers updates on the upcoming 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Awards and the 2014 IBBY Congress to be held in beautiful Mexico City. Liz also gives us reports on the 2013 selection of books for the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, also discussed in the Letters, and on the first IBBY regional conference held by the Region of Central Asia and North Africa (CANA), and hosted in Sharjah under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi. The column includes reports on the birthday parties held for Sergei Mikhalkov (IBBY Russia) and Dušan Roll (IBBY Slovakia). You will also find in the issue information about forthcoming issues and the call for papers for the 2014 Congress. Enjoy!

Death and the Empathic Embrace in Four Contemporary Picture Books

by LESLEY CLEMENT



How can children transcend the tendency to empathize with those similar to themselves over those who are different, and so begin the journey to cross those boundaries that the fear of the unknown imposes? This paper examines the strategies within the visual and verbal narratives of four picture books by recent recipients of IBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration in their confrontation of the most formidable of all unknowns—death.

In *New Meanings of Death*, psychologist Herman Feifel reminds us that, like any concept, death is a social construct (4-5). Nowhere is this more evident than in children's literature of the western world. From the emergence of children's literature in the seventeenth century to the final decades of the twentieth century, death was included as either an end or a beginning and therefore relegated

Lesley D. Clement has published on Mavis Gallant, L.M. Montgomery, and children's picture books. Her current research explores visual imagination, visual literacy, empathy, and death in children's literature. She has held administrative and teaching positions at a number of Canadian colleges and universities and presently teaches at Lakehead-Orillia.

to the last or first pages of the text. In the earlier literature, death was something for children to fear unless they were angelically good: the ultimate punishment for rebellious bad behavior or the well-earned reward for servile good behavior. Maria Tatar describes this pervasive "pedagogy of fear" in fairytales, which were prone to "celebrating docility and conformity while discouraging curiosity and willfulness" (30). Since these goals were impossible to achieve, early children's texts are littered with the small corpses of young people who have suffered gruesome ends. In the later literature, beginning in the final decades of the nineteenth century, death moved from the last to the opening pages to serve as a mechanism "to dispose of inconvenient parents" so the child protagonist could gain independence and undergo a journey toward adulthood without interfering socializing encumbrances (Hollindale and Sutherland 259). From Mark Twain's Huck Finn and L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables, to Roald Dahl's James Henry Trotter and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter, the orphaned child seems to dig deep inside to unearth an authentic self, what Kenneth Gergen refers to as the "bounded being"—separate, integrated, harmonious, coherent (137)—discovered best (so these narratives might suggest) in isolation. "Readers and protagonists alike," concludes Tatar, "must all march relentlessly down the royal road that leads to autonomy" (79). With a few notable precursors such as Margaret Wise Brown's *The Dead Bird* (1938) and E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), it was not until the final decades of the twentieth century that death moved from being a means—a tool to achieve a didactic or narrative agenda—to being legitimate subject matter. In the 1970s and 1980s, publishers began to take chances with children's books that focused on the traditionally taboo subject of death as a physical reality and philosophical concept.

As a social construct, the perception of death is firmly rooted in changing concepts of self and identity. In contrast to the "bounded being," a hallmark of the individualism of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, Gergen theorizes, is the emerging concept of self as "multi-" or "relational being," a "vision…[which] seeks to recognize a world that is not within persons but within their relationships, and that ultimately erases the traditional boundaries of separation" (5). "[E]very individual is formed out of a relationship with others," asserts Jeremy Rifkin, "rather than the long-held view that relationships are entered into by already formed individuals" (107). The changing concepts of death and self—and the connections between the two—are evident in the visual and verbal narratives of four picture books by four recent recipients of IBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration: Germany's Jutta Bauer and Wolf Erlbruch (who earned the award in 2010 and 2006, respectively), Italy's Roberto Innocenti (recipient of the award in 2008), and the Netherlands's Max Velthuijs (the 2004 award recipient). While other picture books by these four writer-illustrators address the topics of difference and discrimination more directly, Innocenti's *Rose Blanche* (1985), Velthuijs's *Frog and the Birdsong* (1991), Bauer's *Grandpa's Angel* (2001), and Erlbruch's *Duck, Death, and the*

Tulip (2007) confront, through text and image, the most formidable of all unknowns—death. These picture books challenge the concept of the "bounded self" by providing their characters—and ultimately their readers—with the opportunity to develop empathy through discovering their fellowship as "relational beings" as they encounter death and transcend their fear.

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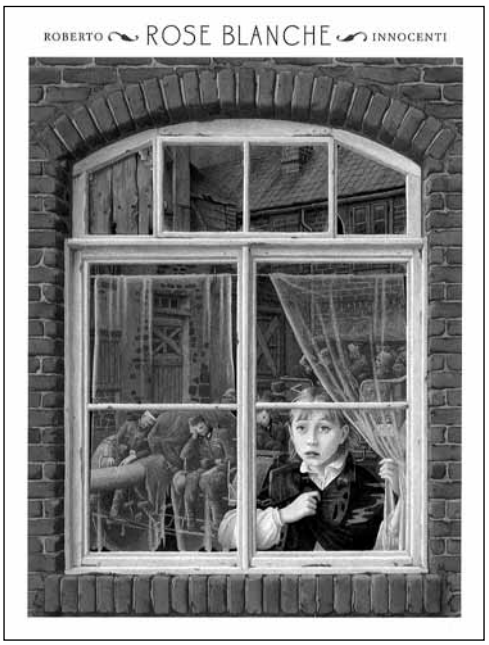
In *Empathy and Moral Development*, Martin Hoffman identifies "five distinctly different modes of empathic arousal" that develop during childhood. The first three of these five modes are not as relevant for this discussion as the final two because they are, Hoffman notes, "preverbal, automatic, and essentially involuntary" and the empathy aroused by them is "based on the pull of surface cues, and requires the shallowest level of cognitive processing." These earliest modes of empathy cannot be dismissed entirely, however, because they build a foundation for more mature empathic experiences (5). While dependent on external contingencies for its myriad permutations, the perception of death similarly emerges during childhood in maturational patterns. "To take up a developmental point of view is not to abandon but to complement the social, cultural, and historical contexts," observe the authors of *Death & Dying, Life & Living* (Corr, Nabe, and Corr 299). In the first two years of life, these earliest modes of empathic arousal correspond to the earliest stages of a child's perception of death. Studies reveal that, before age five, children see death as temporary and reversible—perhaps sleep from which a person will wake, a trip from which the traveller will return, or sickness from which the patient will recover (Corr, Nabe, and Corr 312-15; Speece and Brent 1671-77; Barrett and Behne 98, 103-06; Goodwin and Davidson 22; Kastenbaum 28-29). Therefore, very young children respond more passively with sympathy than actively with empathy to someone witnessed in distress. The first reaction of Velthuijs's Pig to the inert blackbird is to diagnose the bird as "asleep." Duck too fails to recognize death and thinks that the bird looks "ill." Moreover, children under the age of five lack a sense of the universality of death. Velthuijs's Hare, who understands that the bird is dead, not just sleeping or sick, is unsure whether death will affect himself and his friends. But he is not concerned as the young are immune from death: only the old die. This sense of immunity partially explains the celebratory mood of the mourners after they have buried the bird. But the celebratory mood may also be explained by what Hoffman refers to as the "familiarity bias," whereby empathy is often more readily extended to those who are similar in terms of gender, race, and age (206-08). The memory of the dead old blackbird has already faded.

Velthuijs's characters lack what Hoffman identifies as the "higher-order cognitive modes" (5) of empathy: as children move beyond the

automatic empathic gestures that can be noted even during infancy, an awareness begins to emerge late in their second year "that others have inner states (thoughts, feelings, wants) and that another's inner states may at times differ from [their] own" (71; cf. 6). It is not, however, until between the ages of five and eight that children develop more conscious forms of empathy generated from "a sense of others as having a history, an identity, and a life" different from their own (Hoffman 84). By age nine, most children have also made the transition to seeing death as permanent, irreversible, inevitable, and universal, a state from which no one is immune. During this transition—in terms of both empathy and an emerging perception of death—children often channel their fear of death through a personification of death as a shadowy figure, a skeleton, or a clown.[1] Now that death has a concrete form, the child can devise strategies to outwit death and protect him- or herself as well as family and friends through charms, cleverness, or just sheer luck (Corr, Nabe, and Corr 312-15; Speece and Brent 1676; Goodwin and Davidson 22; Kastenbaum 28-29). This might seem to be the message of Bauer's *Grandpa's Angel* as the intervention of a guardian angel is what has preserved the grandfather from an untimely end throughout his lifetime and is the legacy that the grandfather passes on to his grandson at the end. However, Bauer includes several verbal and textual backstories suggesting that the grandfather has empathy for those who do not have a guardian angel to protect them from the ravages of war, hunger, or the other guises that death may assume. In one opening, for example, the grandfather confesses that, as a young boy taunting a soldier in a Nazi uniform, he did not "know how dangerous times were back then," but his friend Joseph, with a yellow star affixed to his jacket, had not the same brazen disregard for danger: "He was frightened. One day, he disappeared. I never saw him again, which made me very sad." This too is the legacy that the grandfather passes on to his grandson and to the child reader, a legacy that can build a cultural memory of the breadth necessary to break through and break down any familiarity biases, which may have emerged between self and other, once the all-inconclusiveness, inevitability, and unpredictability of death are comprehended (Corr, Nabe, and Corr 313-15).



Bauer's young protagonist, the grandson, is at the age to understand this legacy. By age nine or ten, children enter Hoffman's fifth stage: "empathy for another's experience beyond the immediate situation (e.g., chronic illness, economic hardship, deprivation)," which may result in a subcategory of this final and "most advanced" stage of empathy, empathy "with an entire group" (Hoffman 6-7, 75). Innocenti's Rose Blanche displays this kind of advanced empathy. Although Rose is obviously ignorant of the historical context—the text never uses the words "Jewish" or "concentration camp"—Innocenti's images convey that Rose is not simply responding intuitively but rather processing visual clues in her environment about civilian apathy and the mysterious military maneuvers after which townspeople disappear into the death camps. This is most evident in the scene when a young boy, who has escaped from a military truck, is caught and handed over to the soldiers by the corpulent mayor. Rose, in profile and with a contemplative pose, observes the scene from the left foreground of the picture and directs the viewer's perspective rightward through the scene

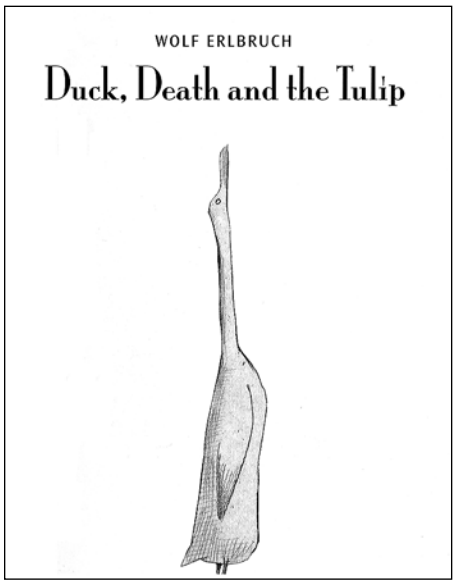
to the doors of the truck closing on the boy.[2] Rose's empathy is so strong that she foregoes her own sustenance to feed those she identifies as more in need than herself. After the narrative switches from first to third person, in anticipation of Rose's death, the narrator describes Rose "getting thinner" even though her "appetite surprised her mother: she took more to school than she ate at home." The single scene in which Rose interacts with any of the many characters who spill out of the pages of this book depicts her passing food she has hoarded to those behind the barbed wire fence. Rose literally embodies the suffering of the camp's victims and, in so doing, participates in their fate—first emaciation and then death when, at the end, she is shot. Rifkin, applying Hoffman's conclusions about empathy to his own argument, believes that "[t]he universalizing of empathy to include whole groups and categories of beings approaches the notion of a universal consciousness" (128). While Rose's death is marked by her absence in the final pages of the book, her presence is felt through the duplication of the landscape in which she once stood. Read through the lens of empathy then, death becomes one of those truths that, Rifkin theorizes, "exist in the interstitial realm where the 'I' and 'thou' come together to create a common experiential ground" (155). The celebration of communal or natural renewal depicted at the end of Velthuijs's, Bauer's, and Innocenti's picture books can thus be understood as an empathic moment when the body of the deceased has entered a space affecting the possibility of Rifkin's biospheric consciousness and universal empathy. Rifkin argues that empathy "transcends death…not by repressing the temporary nature of embodied experience but by acknowledging it, in all of its fragility, and then living life to its fullest" and that "where empathic consciousness flourishes, fear of death withers…" (167-168).

The celebration of communal or natural renewal depicted at the end of Velthuijs's, Bauer's, and Innocenti's picture books can thus be understood as an empathic moment when the body of the deceased has entered a space affecting the possibility of Rifkin's biospheric consciousness and universal empathy.

Psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton identifies three innate fears that become attached to images of death as the child matures: separation, disintegration, and stasis. Opposing these, from birth, are physiological and psychological pushes toward connection, integrity, and movement. "The quest," Lifton contends, "is always for images and forms more malleable and inwardly acceptable at this historical moment than those available from the past" (281-82). Erlbruch's *Duck, Death, and the Tulip* provides images and forms appropriate for what primatologist Frans de Waal refers to as the "Age of Empathy," "a seismic shift" in values during the first decade of the twenty-first century (ix), whereby self is understood not in isolation but in the context of relationships.

In the first opening, Duck and Death confront one another from the far sides of their opposing pages. Duck's first reaction is fear—she is "scared stiff," which her rigid, linear posture confirms—but, as the text enquires, "who could blame her?" Then Duck, curious, bends in toward Death and eases into a more relaxed, rounded shape. Inch by inch, a relationship forms between the two as Duck realizes that Death is essentially powerless and depends on Life for "'the coughs and colds and all the other things that happen to you ducks. *Fox*, for example.'" As Duck warms to Death, Duck invites Death home to the pond, exposing the vulnerability of Death, who has his own fears, ostensibly of the damp and cold, but perhaps more pertinently of completing his business in Duck's natural habitat. The exotic black tulip, which is never mentioned in the text but is carried by Death in the earlier images, disappears in the fourth opening, replaced by the prominent dark hand of Death. The black tulip is a hybrid created from other colors of tulips and an emblem of farewell to someone dearly loved. Discussing the trend towards "[g]lobal cultural

diasporas," Rifkin avers that "[l]iving with hybrid identities and multiple cultural affiliations breeds a bottom-up cosmopolitanism and empathic extension" (437-38). At the most mature stages of empathy, he observes, empathy extends to "even other species," whereby "the notion of a universal consciousness" embraces "our fellow mammals" (127-28). Although Rifkin does not allege that death is another species, Erlbruch's images suggest that Duck and Death are breaking down the boundaries between species, generating their own hybrid and malleable shapes. First Duck drapes and moulds her body on top of that of Death in an attempt to warm him: "Nobody had ever offered to do that for Death," and Death's contented smile hints at the transformation that he is undergoing. Death's contented expression is sustained throughout the next six openings as the text records their conversations about death, generally and specifically of Duck. The images depict the friends often touching, the line drawings of their figures sometimes overlapping as they shape and reshape themselves. The crosshatching of Duck's body is reflected in Death's smock. The spare coloring, mainly red with an occasional blue, breaks up the subdued palette to outline the shapes on the ecru background. Duck rejects the idea of death as sleep and questions death as a place, hell for some and heaven for others. As Duck passes through a stage of feeling invulnerable, immune from the touch of Death (their positions are reversed from the first opening, but the confrontational pose has been resumed), she achieves the cognitive distance required to understand the effect that her own death will have on her environment: "That's what it will be like when I'm dead … The pond alone, without me." Just as in Erlbruch's *Leonard*, when the young protagonist overcomes his fear of dogs by becoming a dog and feeling the fear that dogs have of "ferocious little boys," Death and Duck overcome their fear of one another by physically and psychologically experiencing each other's vulnerability, which is only possible when the sense of sovereign selfhood is displaced by a perception that profiles the conditional properties of being.



While unavoidable, death is, in Erlbruch's picture book, a warming that offsets the chill of dying: "Summer was ending and they went less and less often to the pond. … When a cool wind ruffled her feathers, Duck felt its chill for the first time. 'I'm cold,' she said one evening. 'Will you warm me a little?'" Duck has no fear. The text and images of the final four openings convey that death is connection, not separation; integrity, not disintegration; movement, not stasis. The first of these openings, with the text positioned at the bottom of an otherwise empty page, might suggest the kind of images that Lifton identifies as related to fear:

> Snowflakes drifted down.
> Something had happened. Death looked at the duck.
> She'd stopped breathing. She lay quite still.

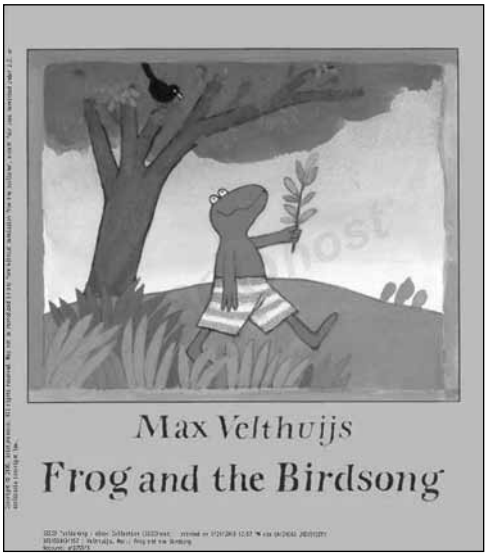
On the facing page (recto), however, a teal-blue background replaces the off-white space of all the other pages in this book. In a mirror-like image of these three lines of text, the three figures fill the bottom half of the page. A grieving Death looks downward, following the drift of the snowflakes, to Duck and the lower left corner of the picture and hence into the eyes of the viewer.[3] The lop-sided M-shape of the figure Death is made less rigid as he leans toward Duck with his left arm resting on his knees. There is an intimacy in their positioning as the tenderness of Death and his touch offsets the rigid horizontal figure of Duck, with her head pointing left toward the text on the verso. In the bottom right corner, the black tulip, which has reappeared, points toward the next opening, which reads, "Death stroked a few rumpled feathers back into place, then he carried her to the great river." In contrast to the sharper rigid lines particularly of Duck and the tulip in the previous opening, the image on this page accentuates the curves of Death's eyes and mouth, in which he holds the drooping tulip, and the limp form of Duck. In the recto of this opening, Death has waded into the river, reminiscent of the earlier scene in the pond, and touches Duck as he lays "her gently on the water and nudge[s] her on her way." The teal-blue of the river flows in from the lower left of the final opening, into the recto, and out the upper right corner. The great river diminishes as it flows off the page into the unknown. "Perhaps a person does not become fully adult until death has been recognized as an authentic companion to life" (19), writes Robert Kastenbaum, a psychologist renowned for his work on death education. The final page of Erlbruch's picture book suggests a new cycle for Death and Life as the figure of Death trudges in a rightward direction out of the book, encircled by a fox in pursuit of a hare.

The final page of Erlbruch's picture book suggests a new cycle for Death and Life as the figure of Death trudges in a rightward direction out of the book, encircled by a fox in pursuit of a hare.

Rifkin maintains that "[r]ethinking human nature…calls for rethinking the very meaning of the human journey" (136). For centuries, death was perceived as a gateway, door, or window to another realm for those concerned with their own "personal immortality," "the possibility of atonement and salvation" (Feifel 4). In 1977, Feifel, editor of *New Meanings of Death*, observed that "with the waning of traditional belief" and the fear that the planet would not survive, "Death [wa]s becoming a wall" with "the prospect of no future at all and loss of identity" (4-5). By the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, empathy enables us to see death as the finale that collapses the residual walls between self and other. However imagined—as Velthuijs's birdsong, Bauer's guardian angel, Innocenti's return of spring in a war-torn landscape, or Erlbruch's great river into the unknown—there are no doors marked "damned" and "saved," no walls separating the embodied from the disembodied.

From his "comparative review of the beliefs and attitudes that cluster around mortality," psychologist David Gutmann extrapolates a "persistent theme": "Humans readily concede the end of their corporeal

existence; but they will not admit the cessation of communal, collective, existence" (337). *Frog and the Birdsong* begins with the most home-loving of the characters, Pig, picking apples—sustenance for the body and "a symbol for life, for health, happiness," suggested Velthuijs in a 2004 interview.[4] After the blackbird is buried, Pig becomes "IT," a personification of death, according to Iona and Peter Opie in their research on children's games (105-08); Pig thus assumes the role of death to enable his companions to recreate the birdsong in life—sustenance for the community's soul. "Framing makes a special world, apart, so I can cut off the world around the animals," Velthuijs declared of his usual practice (de Rijke and Hollands 190). Near the end, Frog makes a leap to the right as he rejoins life's journey; frames, which isolate most of the pictures from the text, then disappear as he and his friends fill the void with their laughter. In this moment, when the page's frame vanishes, the fictional world of Velthuijs's animals and the actual world of the spectator have no divisive boundaries. Returning to their enclosed and protected world in the final frame, Velthuijs's characters hear a blackbird sing—"as always." Bauer's grandfather and grandson also continue their journey by moving in rightward directions: a final image of grandfather is one surrounded by white space as he sits in his rocking chair looking out a darkened window with snow swirling outside; the final image of the grandson (and the book) is a double-spread opening set in a sunny and busy square, where he runs through the shadows cast by trees, buildings, and his own body, an image captioned with "What a beautiful day!" For grandfather, it is the final journey into the cold, dark unknown; for his grandson, the journey continues with his grandfather's legacy enabling him to maneuver around and through life's shadows. Erlbruch's Duck begins by turning away from the wall (literally in the first image) separating past and present to negotiate her future with the odd but alluring figure of Death. She cannot change the nature of death even though, when Duck makes her rightward journey into the unknown, Death is "almost a little moved." As Life and Death journey together, Life will always be an ally of Death, providing Death with the illnesses, accidents, and predators that Death needs to continue their journey.



Only Innocenti's Rose Blanche dies in a disconnected, disintegrated, and static landscape. In a picture book full of "paths, roads, rivers, steps or train tracks which carry the protagonist and the reader along" (Myers 36), the landscape in which she dies is eerily detached and still. In the opening that intervenes between that of the landscape where the camp once stood (and where guns point menacingly leftward toward Rose) and the same landscape two openings later, when spring once again sings, the images are of tired and wounded men speaking a different language and wearing uniforms of a different color from what Rose has experienced previously, of roads clogged with tanks, and of bombed-out houses, the one identifiable household item being a cuckoo clock askew on the collapsing brick wall at the far right. When a species turns upon itself, it risks annihilating itself and its habitat, but time endures. De Waal argues that warfare "conflicts at the deepest level with our humanity" (220) and that the most important lesson nature can teach us is empathy. As Rose becomes part of the natural world that can renew itself, and as the memory of the empathic sacrifices made by Rose and others like her becomes part of our historical consciousness, time and place collapse into one

another. "When we empathize with another," writes Rifkin, "it's because we recognize her fragile finite nature, her vulnerability, and her one and only life. We experience her existential aloneness and her personal plight and her struggle to be and succeed as if it were our own. Our empathic embrace is our way of rooting for her and celebrating her life" (575). With translations and publications in at least a dozen countries, *Rose Blanche* joins these other picture books that fearlessly address the topic of death and expand the "empathic embrace" of their readers by inspiring them to recognize themselves as relational beings. Innocenti concluded his 2008 Hans Christian Andersen Award acceptance speech with, "I am very happy to be a part of this world of yours, a world without frontiers." Understanding themselves through their empathy with others whose experiences are very different from their own, readers can affirm with Innocenti that, inspired by fictional worlds without frontiers, they too have passed through many windows and scaled many walls between self and other, whatever form that other may assume.

With translations and publications in at least a dozen countries, Rose Blanche joins these other picture books that fearlessly address the topic of death and expand the "empathic embrace" of their readers by inspiring them to recognize themselves as relational beings.

Notes

1. In Erlbruch's *The Big Question*, the figure of Death, whose contribution to "the big question" (which is never directly asked) is that "[y]ou are here to love life," is dressed in a clown-like yellow-polka-dot smock with a large ruff.
2. In *How Picturebooks Work*, Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott observe that "the 'natural' way to decode movement is left to right, the way we read words. … Most picturebook authors seem to have accepted this convention when they arrange the book in a single movement from left to right" (153).
3. The conventional positioning of a painting's viewer is in the lower left (see note 2 above).
4. Velthuijs is responding to his interviewers' suggestion that the apple is "a symbol of communal life" because "[t]he sharing of food is a fundamental element running through all of [Velthuijs's] stories" (de Rijke and Hollands 188).

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Picturing Difference: Three Recent Picture Books Portray the Black Nova Scotian Community

by VIVIAN HOWARD

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The image of Canada as a multicultural and diverse country has profoundly influenced Canadian children's literature. Three recent picture books from Nova Scotia provide counter-stories to the usual narrative depicting Canada as a universally tolerant and welcoming multicultural society, offering insights into community, power, prejudice, and identity within the Nova Scotia Black community, and depicting the complex relationship of this historic community with the Canadian mainstream.

Unlike the United States, which uses the metaphor of the "melting pot" to describe a social context in which immigrants are expected to assimilate, Canada articulates a clear vision of itself as a multicultural and diverse country, a mosaic in which ethnic groups are encouraged to retain their identity and heritage: The Canadian Multicultural Act of 1988, which made Canada the first country to adopt a national policy of multiculturalism, presents "an official vision of Canada in which immigrants… are encouraged to retain their heritage languages and ethnocultural

traditions…[This image of Canada] as a vertical mosaic in which ethnocultural groups collaborate in Canadian society while simultaneously preserving their distinctive cultural characteristics has deeply influenced Canadian children's literature" (Edwards and Saltman 192). However, the metaphor of the mosaic, which suggests that different races and cultures co-exist harmoniously and equally, does not always reflect the reality of life in Canada for members of ethnic minorities, as Louise Saldanha comments:

Yet, despite its widely publicized and self-acclaimed commitment to cultural plurality, Canadian multiculturalism does not live up to what some claim to be its original ideals of recognition and acceptance. Instead, it has functioned to neutralize-rather than seriously engage-the cultural and racial diversity it permits to take shape in Canada. (13)

Legal scholar Carol Aylward asserts that while it is widely accepted that the United States has struggled to overcome racism, in Canada there is "pervasive denial of the very existence of racism" (40) as Canada views itself as a society defined by "racial and cultural tolerance. . .[and as] a mecca for the oppressed of the world" (40). Constance Backhouse similarly notes that Canada's national mythology is that it is not a racist country, "or at least is much less so than our southern neighbour, the United States" (14).

The Nova Scotia Context

In comparison to other Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia's population is relatively homogenous in ethnic origin, with the vast majority of residents claiming Anglo-Celtic ancestry. Only 4.1% of the provincial population self-identifies as a visible minority, roughly one-quarter the national average of 16%. Black Nova Scotians are the largest visible minority group, with an overall population of 19,230 or 2.1% of the total provincial population. The main metropolitan centre, Halifax, is somewhat more ethnically diverse than the provincial average, with 7.5% of Halifax residents claiming visible minority membership. Black Nova Scotians are the largest single minority group, making up 3.6% of Halifax's total population and 48% of Halifax's visible minority population. Overall, Nova Scotia has a very small immigrant population: in 2006, only 5% of the province's residents (and 7.4% of Halifax residents) were immigrants in contrast to 18% of the overall Canadian population. Thus, in summary, with the exception of the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia has a relatively homogenous, English-speaking population. It is far less multicultural and linguistically or ethnically diverse than most other regions of Canada.

Perhaps because of its homogenous, largely Anglo-Celtic and English-speaking population, multicultural picture books have been slow to appear in Nova Scotia, despite the fact that the province has a long-established Black community. Blacks first arrived in Nova Scotia in the early 1780s, with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. A second wave of Black settlers, the Jamaican Maroons, arrived in 1796. A third wave arrived as refugees from the War of 1812; in return for supporting the British, these settlers were given 1800 acres of land in North Preston, making it the largest Black settlement in Canada. Other Black refugees from the War of 1812 were given land in the North End of Halifax and established the self-sufficient community of Africville, which persisted until residents were evicted and relocated in the late 1960s, when the Africville land was needed for the construction of a new bridge (Nelson). However, notwithstanding its long history, until very recently the Nova Scotian Black community has not been represented in picture books.

Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Picture Books

Elizabeth Waterston observes that multiculturalism is a key aspect of Canada's self-defined national identity, and, as such, Canadian picture books have a significant role to play in constructing children's perceptions of multiculturalism. Taking a more critical stance, Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman analyze several generations of Canadian multicultural picture books and conclude that the vast majority of these books support the notion of multiculturalism as

an "unproblematic social good in which intercultural tensions can be resolved by the majority being tolerant of minority groups" (196-97) but without any significant shifting of power relations. Intercultural tensions, if they are acknowledged, are always resolved and members of diverse communities are integrated into the larger social fabric, thus preserving the myth of Canada as an inclusive society, proud of its diverse population.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) arose in the United States from analyses of the roles that race and racism have played in politics and the legal system. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic note that the goal of CRT is not just theoretical understanding but also reform: "Unlike some academic theories…critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better" (Delgado and Stefancic 3). Critical Race Theory has recently been used as a tool for literary analysis by Wanda Brooks in her analysis of Mildred Taylor's *The Land*, a Coretta Scott King Award Book, and by Carolyn Kim in her extensive analysis of Korean-Canadian children's books. Brooks argues that CRT provides a lens to help readers understand racism particularly through the strategy of counter-storytelling, which Delgado and Stefancic define as "writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (144). Brooks notes that "counter-stories respond to racism and its dominant ideology by calling into question normative depictions of everyday living that ignore or discount structural barriers to equality faced by people of color" (Brooks 38). CRT also helps readers to understand the historic antecedents of contemporary prejudices (Brooks 39; Kim 59).

Mavis Reimer analyzes Canadian children's literature in order to determine the meaning of "home," noting that in many mainstream Canadian children's books, children resolve states of homelessness and establish new Canadian identities, usually in opposition to concepts of "away." However, Canadian identity and the notion of "home" have different meanings for different groups. Applying Reimer's concepts to multicultural Canadian children's books, Saldanha inverts the dichotomy: for a child whose "home" is in a secure and familiar multicultural community, it is mainstream Canadian society which represents "away" and its attendant strangeness and insecurity whereas for mainstream white Canadians, the opposite is true, as Saldanha notes: "As non-whites, [multicultural Canadians] are typically taken, in Canada, to represent 'away'" (129). The very terms "multicultural" and "mainstream" are problematic in achieving true equality and inclusion of all racial and ethnic groups in Canada. The term "multicultural," representing the minority groups here in Canada, distinctly separates them from what is considered "mainstream." Hence, minority groups will always be seen to represent "away" while never feeling at "home" in Canada. (Kim 48)

This dichotomy of "home" and "away" is a powerful metaphor to describe non-white Canadians' experiences of alienation, and in her analysis of multicultural Canadian children's books, Saldanha demonstrates how books which superficially seem to celebrate diversity may in actuality reinforce multicultural children's sense of being "away" from the Canadian mainstream, ultimately outsiders in their chosen "home." Notions of "home" and "away" are particularly problematized when applied to Nova Scotia's indigenous Black community, with long-established roots and history in the province.

Kim notes that in Black-Canadian history, "the legend of the Underground Railroad and the image of Canada as a promised land for American slaves have been pervasive in the Canadian imagination" (63). Canada is usually depicted as a refuge for runaway slaves, but as Kim observes, "the discrimination [former slaves] faced in their daily lives and their exclusion from [Canadian] social institutions such as churches and schools" has been ignored and misrepresented. Three recent Nova Scotian picture books, *Up Home* (written by Shauntay Grant and illustrated by Susan Tooke, 2008), *The City Speaks in Drums* (also by Grant and Tooke, 2010), and

Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged (written by Jody Nyasha Warner and illustrated by Richard Rudnicki, 2010), address these concerns while taking significantly different approaches to the theme of multiculturalism and to interpreting the unique cultural heritage of Nova Scotia's Black community. The notion of the counter-story and the dual concepts of "home" and "away" elucidate the meaning and significance of these three picture books.

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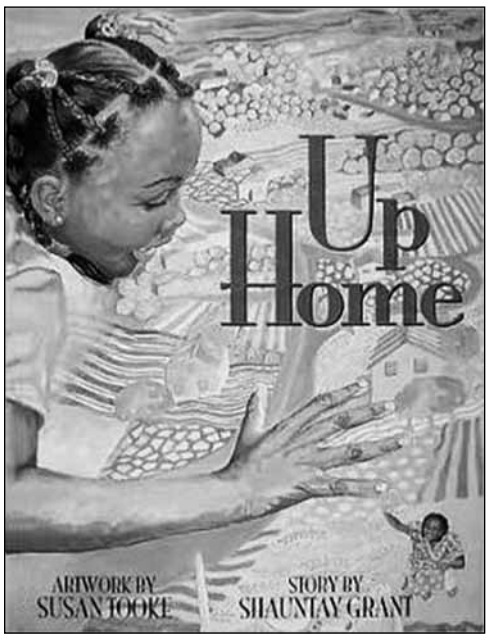
Up Home was written by Shauntay Grant, a Nova Scotian writer, spoken word performer, broadcast journalist, musician, and former poet laureate of the city of Halifax (2009-2011). Grant donated proceeds from sales of *Up Home* towards the purchase of children's books for the Nelson Whynder Elementary School in North Preston. *Up Home* won two prestigious Atlantic Book Awards in 2009: the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration and the Best Atlantic Published Book Award. As a Black Nova Scotian, Grant writes as an insider about the Black Nova Scotian community of North Preston, as she reflects on her childhood travels to visit extended family. The book begins with an image of the adult Grant, thoughtfully hanging laundry on a clothesline, lost in recollections of her childhood:

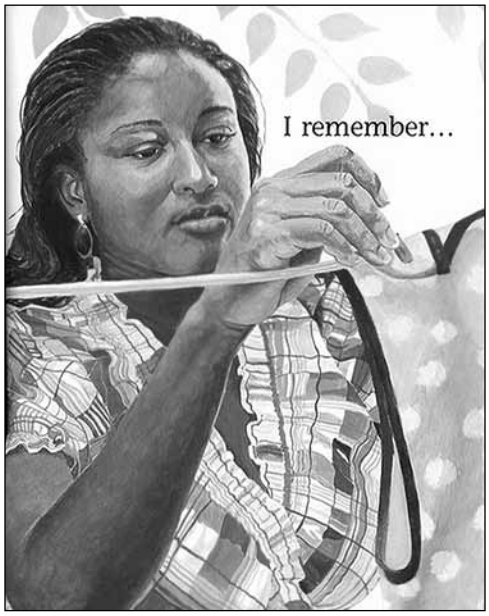


> "I remember…
> Long hot days of summer/layin' on grass/suckin' on freezies/playin' with cousins/friends/and soakin' up sun."

A sense of nostalgia permeates the book as Grant takes the reader on an imaginative tour of the people, places, and activities she remembers from her childhood visits: many children, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, can identify with Grant's childhood experiences. The language of the book gently captures the rhythm and cadences of Grant's spoken word performances. Halifax artist Susan Tooke's representational illustrations complement Grant's joyful language: members of the North Preston community are depicted in her vibrant and richly detailed illustrations which affirm the closeness and affection Grant feels for her community. These are clearly portraits of specific individuals and, in an endnote, Tooke thanks by name members of the North Preston community who posed for her in the creation of this book. Tooke's illustrations depict childhood and the Nova Scotian landscape with nostalgia. The contemporary urban bustle of Halifax, in reality only a few minutes'

drive away, is nowhere to be seen and the community of North Preston is depicted as timeless and ahistorical, reinforcing the theme of connectivity between past and present.

However, *Up Home* can be read as a counter-story in which Grant's experiential knowledge of North Preston conveys key information about this community and about the relationship of residents to mainstream Canadian society. Her emphasis on North Preston as "home" foregrounds not only her personal family roots in the village but also the historic role of North Preston as the first "home" and the first opportunity for the Black Loyalists to own property and establish their own community. The connection between past and present is subtly evoked by Grant's personal memories which simultaneously affirm the proud history of her family and of her community:



"I remember Nana's stories/about Maroons, Loyalists & Refugees/learnin' about my history/and about a people who worked hard/day and night/raising families/and surviving the barren lands of North Preston."

A factual endnote provides additional historical information about the unique town of North Preston, Nova Scotia, concluding with a description of the ongoing hardships faced by the residents of this often troubled community, yet Grant's book does not directly reference the isolation, deprivation and marginalization which the people of the North Preston area have experienced in relation to external, mainstream Canadian society. Rather, *Up Home* is a positive counter-story, recounting the strength of her community to survive and prosper because of its strong internal bonds of love, faith and determination. The book concludes with a statement of her community's enduring strength in the face of adversity and racism:

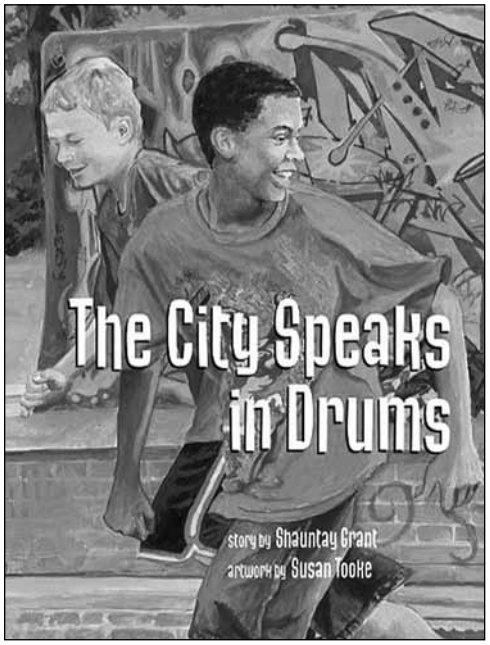
…and this beauty/this love I see reflected in the faces of my people/our people/reflect the soils that gave birth to Preston/and the seeds that have been sown

Now you may take me out of Preston/but you can't shake Preston out of me/'cause Preston is/my home.

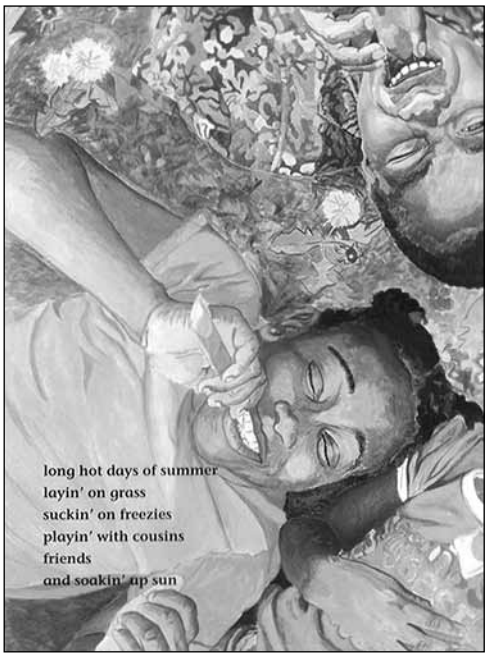
…Up Home is a positive counter-story, recounting the strength of her community to survive and prosper because of its strong internal bonds of love, faith and determination.

Thus, the book simultaneously normalizes the experience of the multicultural narrator, linking her childhood experiences to those shared by children everywhere, while the reference to the particular history of North Preston and the specific portraits of individual residents "underlines the racial and cultural specificities of the '[heroine]' and

[her] stor[y]" (Saldanha 134-35). The very title of the book, *Up Home*, evokes Saldanha's pointed questions about the place of home in multicultural Canadian children's books: clearly, North Preston is "home," a familiar and secure place for the narrator and her family and a symbol of the Black Nova Scotian community's endurance, but for mainstream Canadian readers, it is "away," an unfamiliar place few will ever visit or even learn about. Despite its long history, the Black Nova Scotian community of North Preston is depicted as separate and "away" from mainstream society.



A second collaboration by Grant and Tooke, *The City Speaks in Drums*, takes on a more challenging subject. Rather than the nostalgic reminiscence of a young girl's gentle childhood in the monoculture of North Preston, this more recent book follows two boys, one Black and one White, from Halifax's North End, as they explore the urban environment of contemporary Halifax on a summer day. Though written in the same spoken-word style as *Up Home*, *The City Speaks in Drums* is rougher and edgier in its cadence and much more overt in its use of vernacular "hip hop" street language; the text of this book imitates the staccato rhythm and voices of the city, music which the boys hear all around them, everywhere they go. Music also channels and redirects the restless energy and aggression of the youth themselves:



> schoolyard kids scuffin' earth with they kicks/playin' tricks, gamin'games/ runnin'up and down the block/whip water pistols 'round/drenchin' each other up to they necks/trigger release them water jets/press on arms/waist to legs/ water beats drums 'cross they chest/no room to rest.

The two boys travel from Halifax's North End, traditionally home to the city's Black community as well as a neighbourhood inhabited by poor and working class White families, across the Halifax Commons, and enter the South End, where they pass by familiar landmarks such as the Public Gardens, Spring Garden Road and its old public library, and the Halifax Waterfront, encountering music everywhere they go. The picture book presents a superficially positive view of multiculturalism, with music and dance functioning as metaphors for diversity. Furthermore, as Brooks points out, "residential segregation … play[s] a role in reinscribing the racial and class-based stratification present in parts of today's urban and suburban area" (43). The two boys present

a counter-story to this segregation, leaving the North End, home of the Black and working class Halifax neighbourhoods (and former location of the historic Black community of Africville) to explore the city. In addition to recognizable places in the urban landscape, Tooke's detailed illustrations include familiar "regulars" on the Halifax streetscape representing a plurality of different cultures, thus reinforcing the multicultural theme, depicting a variety of races, ages, and cultures, all interacting harmoniously and sharing a universal love of music.

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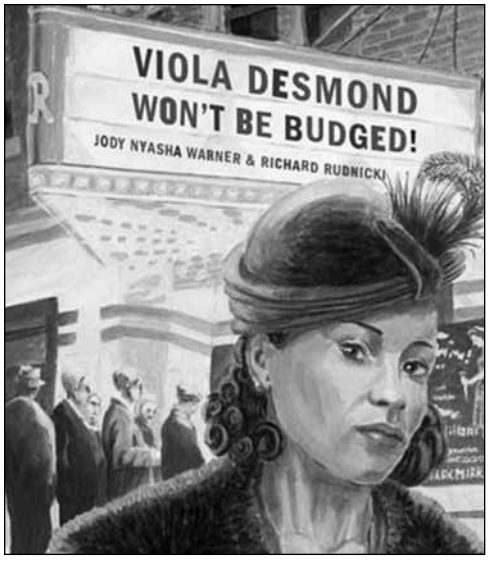
This book differs in several ways from the earlier *Up Home*: there are fewer intimate close-ups in domestic settings; rather the focus is on diverse urban streetscapes and public spaces, bustling with traffic and activity. *The City Speaks in Drums* also offers a more complex reading of "home" and "away" than does *Up Home*, evoking Saldanha's observation that multicultural Canadians are often depicted as outside to and apart from the living of life within the "home" of the Canadian nation:

> The participation of non-white cultures [in the Canadian mainstream] is encouraged and financially supported mainly within the cultural and symbolic sphere rather than within the social and economic sphere. …From "out there," as outsiders, we are then accepted in by multiculturalism's diversity rhetoric, but our residency is largely inconsequential to the Canadian space. (131)

Do the two boys consider the entirety of Halifax to be their "home" or are they merely visitors to an unfamiliar "away" once they leave the familiar neighbourhoods of the North End? One clue may be the fact that they remain in outdoor public spaces, watching and even participating with street performers, seemingly experiencing a miniature multicultural festival, but not entering any commercial or domestic spaces. They do not even enter the gates of the Public Gardens or doors of the Public Library, though both are clearly depicted and they linger on the outside of each. Race and class encourage these boys to move through their city neighbourhoods like tourists from "away," and their initial restless, aggressive energy is ultimately neutralized and redirected.

Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged, by Ontario writer and librarian Jody Nyasha Warner (a member of the Black Canadian community though not a resident of Nova Scotia) and Halifax artist Richard Rudnicki, tells the story of Halifax hairdresser Viola Desmond, whose refusal in 1946 to obey a discriminatory law predated Rosa Parks's famous refusal to give up her bus seat by almost a decade. Unlike Rosa Parks, however, Viola Desmond's story is little known outside of the Black Nova Scotian community. This picture book is an attempt to redress that balance and to tell the story of a turning point in Black Canadian history.

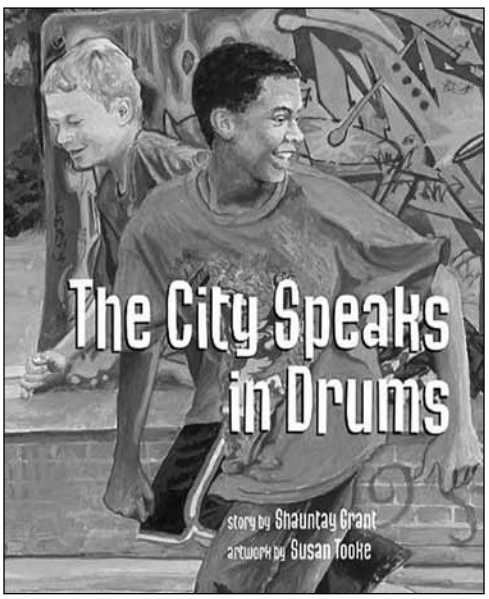
Like Shauntay Grant's two picture books, Warner's story replicates the rhythms and cadences of informal speech; this, too, is a book meant to be read aloud, though it is less overt in its use of vernacular language, blank verse, or



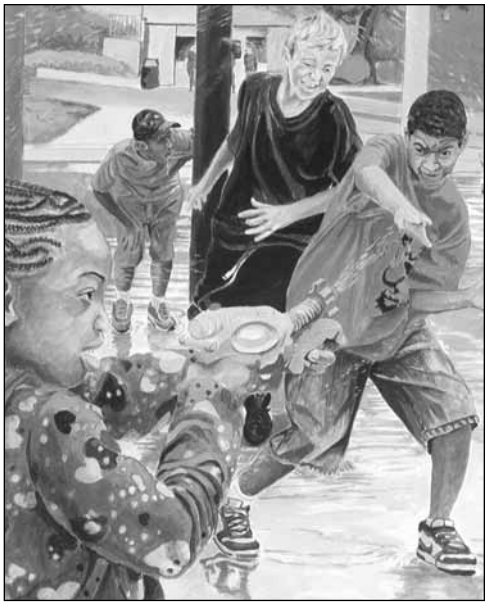
sound devices than Grant's texts. The book begins with a full-page illustration of Viola Desmond at work in her North End Halifax hair salon, bathed in yellow sunlight, accompanied by the text: "Viola Desmond was one brave woman! Now come on here, listen in close and I'll tell you why." A shaft of sunlight illuminates Desmond like a spotlight, prefiguring the beam of the theatre manager's flashlight and the light beams shining into her cell when she is imprisoned.

What follows is the story of Desmond's car trip from Halifax to New Glasgow, Nova Scotia in 1946. While in New Glasgow, she went to the Roseland Movie Theatre, but she could only buy a balcony ticket, since the theatre was segregated. However, Desmond took a seat on the main floor and, when an usher insisted she move to the balcony, Desmond refused, "So the manager and the policeman dragged her out of the theater in a real rough way." Since the balcony ticket cost one cent less in tax than a main floor ticket, Desmond was charged and found guilty of tax evasion and was fined $20 plus court costs of $6. When she returned to Halifax, she appealed her conviction to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court in 1947, but her appeal was rejected. However, despite her lack of success in court, Desmond had a positive impact on the Black Nova Scotian community, as the book concludes: "Still, Viola's bravery made a big difference. She inspired all kinds of people to fight against segregation, and by the late 1950s, it was made against the law. So come on and join me in saying thank you to Viola Desmond, a real hero, who sat down for her rights."

Rudnicki's bold illustrations have a dramatic, theatrical quality, which vividly captures the feel of the historical era as well as the emotions of the characters. His use of colour to reinforce emotion is particularly effective. Yellow light is used to spotlight Desmond, highlighting her facial expressions and firmly placing her at the centre of the drama. The intense red of the interior of the Roseland Theatre makes it seem a strange and unfamiliar space, an alien "away" that stands in stark contrast to the cheerful warm light of Desmond's "home" in North End Halifax. Red also reflects the hostility of the usher and the anger of the manager; in the illustration depicted above, the usher's red jacketed arm, pointing emphatically towards the theatre exit and the deep red of the theatre seats underscore the drama of the scene, while the white audience members sit passively, observing but not interceding, as if they are watching a real-life drama unfold before them. Desmond herself appears on all but one page in the book, always associated with bright green, the colour of hope and new life, her face illuminated by light, determined



but composed. Her strength of character and dignity are clearly conveyed by the interaction of illustrations and text. The illustration below shows Desmond as she appears before the Supreme Court, a study in composure and determination, her stare directed at the future rather than at the judge who is represented only by his gavel, her clenched fists clearly communicating contained anger at the injustice of the outcome. Through the counter-story of Desmond's first-hand experience of injustice, this book powerfully captures the historic estrangement and segregation of Black Nova Scotians from mainstream Canadian society.



Conclusion

While Nova Scotia has a rich tradition of children's books and a vibrant community of authors and illustrators, until recently, few of these books have explored multicultural themes. However, the recent publication of titles such as *Up Home*, *The City Speaks in Drums*, and *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged* is an indication that new voices are emerging in Nova Scotia picture books. These three books, written by cultural insiders, perform important cultural work and sensitively tackle challenging subjects, yet take quite different perspectives on their subjects. Most importantly, all three—either subtly or overtly—provide counter-stories to the usual narrative depicting Canada as a universally tolerant and welcoming multicultural society.

Through the counter-story of Desmond's first-hand experience of injustice, this book powerfully captures the historic estrangement and segregation of Black Nova Scotians from mainstream Canadian society.

Reimer's notion of "home" in Canadian children's books is a useful approach to understanding and interpreting these picture books. While *Up Home* clearly defines "home" as the Black community of North Preston, depicting it as the nostalgic childhood place of security in opposition to the invisible "away" of the cultural mainstream, the use of specific historic references, the vernacular of the text, and the portrait of the residents as living in an apparent monoculture distances mainstream readers, encouraging them to view North Preston as an unfamiliar "away." In contrast, *The City Speaks in Drums* takes two boys, one Black and one White, out of the North End of Halifax, traditionally the home of the Black and the poor and working class White communities, and follows them as they explore other parts of the city like tourists from "away." Lastly, *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged* offers an historically situated view of the struggle of the multicultural Other to find equality and acceptance, as Desmond travels from the security of her "home" in North End Halifax to a

hostile "away" in the small town of New Glasgow and, later, in the Canadian judicial system. This picture book clearly describes Desmond's struggle against segregation and discrimination, and her estrangement from mainstream Canadian society.

As Edwards and Saltman note, "Picturebooks […] are a particularly rich source for the exploration of national identity formation in which the hegemonic commonplaces and myths about history, ethnocultural identity, landscape and region, and definitions of community are articulated and contested" (193). These three picture books offer insights into community, power, prejudice, and identity within the Nova Scotia Black community and depict the complex relationship of this historic community with the Canadian mainstream. While celebrating the internal strength and endurance of the Black Nova Scotian community, they also, either directly or indirectly, reference the historic isolation and discrimination experienced by Black Nova Scotians.

Note

Permission to use illustrations from *Up Home* and *The City Speaks in Drums* was granted by Susan Tooke. Illustrations from these books are copyrighted and cannot be reproduced without written permission from the illustrator. Permission to use illustrations from *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged* was granted by House of Anansi/Groundwood Books.

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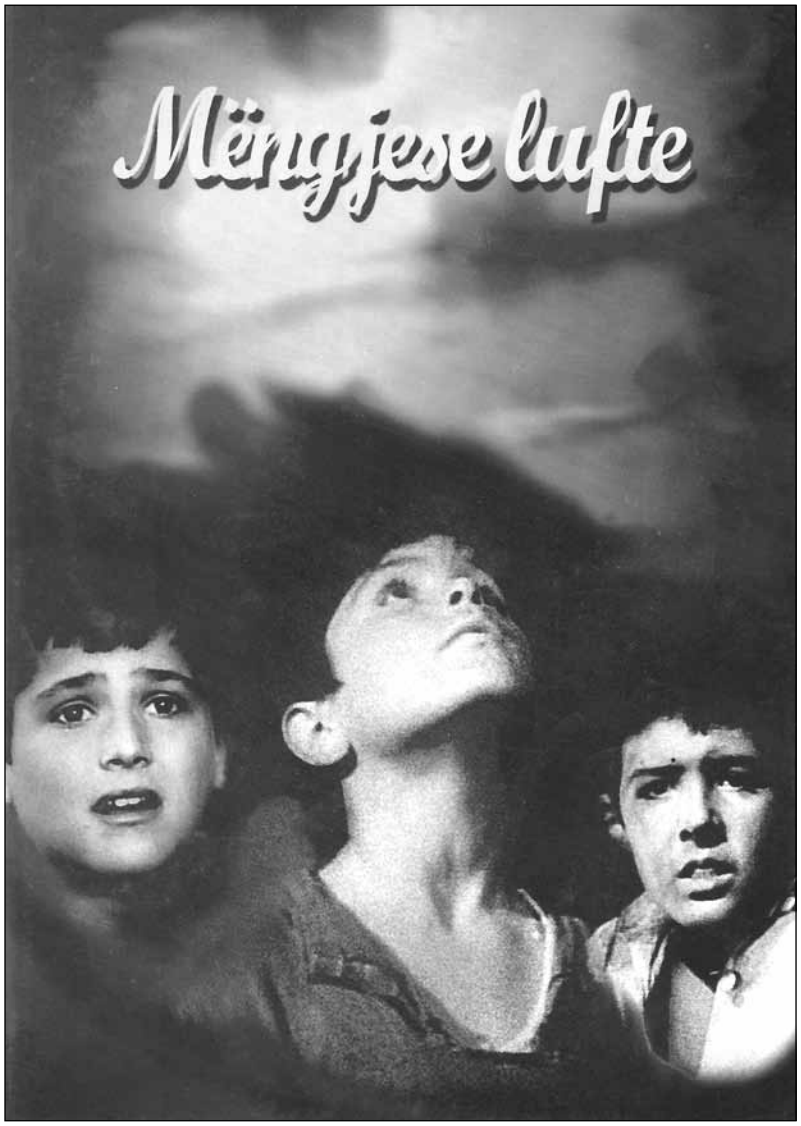


Images of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Class Struggle in Communist Albanian Children's Literature and Media

by ENKELENA SHOCKETT QAFLESHI

This paper analyzes the portrayal of the non-communist other in Albanian children's literature published during the communist era and examines how Communist-era children's literature idealizes Albanian ethnicity and links it to valorized notions of socialist class struggle. Combining analysis of images of the other juxtaposed with images of the idealized Albanian, I conclude that Communist-era Albanian children's literature served as propaganda for Communist political intentions to construct the socialist "new man."

Enkelena Shockett Qafleshi holds a doctorate in Literature from the University of Tirana in Albania, specializing in children's literature. She is currently on leave from the University of Elbasan in Albania and is researching in New York. She has published articles in collections on children's literature, as well as in a number of scholarly journals.

At its best, socialist realist children's literature in Communist Albania reflects socialist society by depicting significant cultural norms and values, issues of class struggle, representations of historical events, and heavy communist didacticism. Moreover, it attempts to shape and control a socialist society by presenting traditional Albanian social and economic customs from a communist perspective. Through this spectrum of socialist realist children's literature, I argue that children's literature narrated from a communist viewpoint uses images of Albanian nationalism to influence and shape children's national and ethnic identities, and these identities ultimately reflect communist philosophies. Images of class struggle are relatively new aspects in Albanian literature, emerging with the rise of socialist realism, and these new communist literary techniques stimulate class conflicts. Issues of nationalism and ethnicity in Albanian children's literature can be traced back to folklore and fairytales, which foreground many Albanian myths and legends. Socialist realism in art and literature has been a pervasive aesthetic technique in Eastern European countries since the rise of totalitarian communism and Bolshevism after World War II, and these texts point to issues of class struggle and economic despair. Since its beginnings, the literature of socialist realism has established a self-reflexive trend that never dismisses other modes of understanding the contradictions and conflicts it describes in literary narratives (Homer 17). This literature moves national identity into a network of relations with the object of its intentions: children (Homer 17). This shift propels readers to a higher level of consciousness and constructs them as commodities—as objects to be consumed. The ideal Communist—the "new man"—is a tendentious proletarian and an uncompromising patriot.

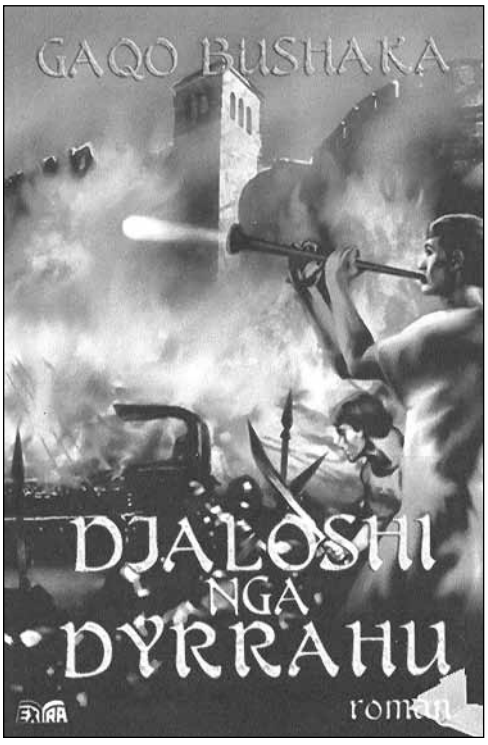
…children's literature narrated from a communist viewpoint uses images of Albanian nationalism to influence and shape children's national and ethnic identities, and these identities ultimately reflect communist philosophies.

Images of Ethnicity and Nationality: *Othering*

Images of ethnicity and nationality, filtered through communist ideology, resonate within the mind of the reader and work to develop cultural stereotypes and identities (O'Sullivan 1-14). Didactic literary techniques help to conceal overtly visible communist dogma, and convey socialist doctrine through the figure of the new man—the ideal character who condemns non-patriots through rituals of othering. This phenomenon of othering through recognizable images, according to Leerssen's study of imagology,[1] occurs due to the fact that images work well "primarily because of their inter-textual topicality, the primary reference is not to empirical reality but to an inter-text, a sounding-board of other related textual instances" (26). National stereotypes are created initially in the field of literature—both Albanian folklore and literature. Mid-twentieth-century socialist realism creates a foundation for new understandings of national identity steeped in communist ideology, and the evocation of socialist ideals becomes a sort of precursor for canonical children's literature. As Leerssen has also pointed out, good literature "often works on the presupposition of a 'suspension of disbelief' and some (at least aesthetic) appreciative credit among the audience" (26). The images of ethnicity and nationalism employed in children's books promotes communist national consciousness as well as virtues of communist emancipation, citizenship, and economy. Both images acknowledge a unique aesthetic and poetic potentiality. Socialist realist literary tropes regarding nationalism and ethnicity provide a backdrop for children's writers in Albania, and communist subject matter in these texts help shape children into ideally communist citizens.

Ideal communist prototypes are conditioned for extreme patriotism, and are taught to value and protect Albanian material goods and resources.

There are dozens of texts that exhibit such deep Albanian patriotism, such as *Mëngjeze lufte* [The Struggling Mornings] by Dh. *Xhuvani, Djaloshi nga Dyrrahu* [The Pal from Dyrrahu] by G. *Bushaka,* and *Kalorësit dardanë* [The Dardanian Knights] by M. Zeqo. These texts present both male and female young characters, and many books deal with the Illyrian War in Dyrrahu, particularly in the Albanian city of Durrës, where children witness events and report on their experiences. In G. Bushaka's novel, *Djaloshi nga Dyrrahu* [The Pal from Dyrrahu], old man Asni and his nephew Trimi narrate their experiences as they travel throughout Albanian cities during the war in Dyrrahu. The struggles they face, along with the sufferings they witness in the war-torn city of Dyrrahu, affect them viscerally, and offer insight into the horrors experienced by Albania during wartime. In Rifat Kukaj's novel, entitled *Lepuri me pesë këmbë* [The rabbit with five legs], the reader is introduced to a newspaper delivery boy who holds guerrilla warfare meetings, and partakes in war tactics in the interests of Albania. At this point in history, World War II is breaking out, yet at the same time the National Liberation War in Albania is gaining momentum. Similar narrative styles are adapted in *Në muzeun e armëve* [At the museum of weapons], written by I. Kadare, but in this text, readers become familiar with particular weaponry and artillery commonly used in historical Albanian wartime. These texts offer their readers an in-depth understanding of the difficult Albanian past.



These texts help to shape young readers into historically conscious subjects, and at the same time foster artistic and imaginative development. Children are able to relate to protagonists on a personal and realistic level, and in turn become prototypes of protagonists, adopting techniques of Othering in the process. The Othering has nothing to do with the concept and vision of the New Man in communist ideology, philosophy, literature, and arts. Organizing the analysis on solid basis, I think it remains important to categorize narrowly Othering in the children's books. For purposes of facility I necessarily categorize its distinctions: Othering seeks to swallow, digest, appropriate, and adapt Communist constructions of reality so as to show signs of emancipation and collaboration. The first method of Othering is New Man ideology, attempting to construct the image of the ideal Communist citizen. The second method is to construct a foil to the New Man (social class enemy) requiring social punishment of varying degrees—up to and including incarceration. Othering is clearly conceived within the application of the concept of social class struggle and framed in terms of contradictions requiring resolutions. The final method of Othering (strangeness/ foreignness) explored in those books for children is the exploitation of foreign contexts. This method of the Othering, quite different from the first two, is explored in the following works: *Kënga e një nëne zezake* [The Song of A Black Mother] (V. Kikaj) and *Rrasa e zogut* [The Stone of the Bird] (R. Kukaj). In these accounts, other ethnic groups and nationalities (non-Albanian) are represented—Black Americans in the USA and the Germans of Europe during WWII, respectively. At this point, it is clear that children's literature in Albania has never been considered in complete isolation

from *Weltliteratur* (World Literature) in general, but rather in connection with other literatures. Furthermore, it likely illustrates shifts in relative perspectives of national statuses of cultures at a given moment, by portraying Albania in terms of World Literature. The multinational approach of conceiving of a particular nation's status demonstrates the reasons for literature in one nation portraying another nation at a particular time (O'Sullivan, *Imagology Meets Children's Literature* 1-14). In a few words, images of foreign nations and cultures have instilled a sense of national identity in the process of socialization; they were also instruments of propaganda, because they were produced to point out contrast in encounters with the other to construct Albanian socialist nationalism favorably in order to internalize a communist sense fraternity.

Environmental Topography in Albanian Children's Literature

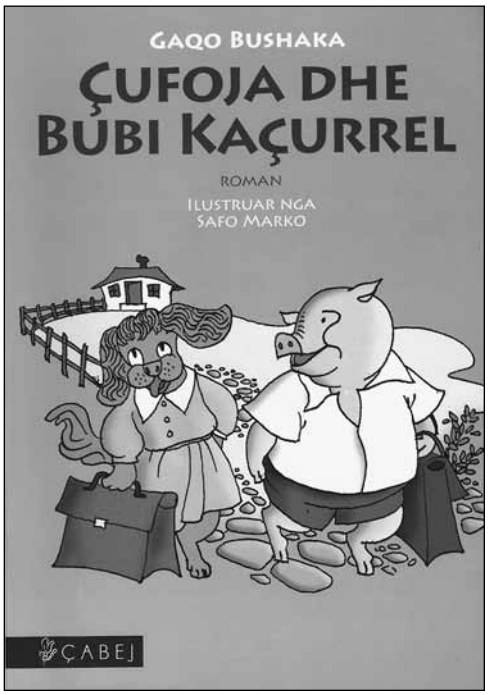
Alongside dense and rich topicality, we find a rich environmental topography as well. To better understand this purpose of environmental depiction, we focus on constructions of national image and examine the dominance and significance of certain aspects of the environment in Children's literature as associative elements to reinforce textual and visual representation of cultural, national, and ethnic identity (O'Sullivan 1-14). Viewed from this perspective, the representation of landscape in Albanian literature, as in other cultures and literatures, points out the sense of place as metonymical for social significance and cultural heritage. However, what could be grasped articulates the correspondence between internal and external realities as perceived by a society, as John Stephens has expressed (O'Sullivan 1-14). The study of this literature thus reveals national self-perception and identity construction at work in a particular cultural or historical moment. In this sense, landscape (mountains, wells, water, trees, caves, flowers, cliffs, seas, rivers, castles) implies resonances with national myth and reconstruction of identity narrative in order to configure notions of nationality and ethnicity. The Albanian children's literature text *Princesha Argjiro* [The Princess Argjiro] (I. Kadare) best illustrates this literary relationship to cultural and geographical identity. I. Kadare has attempted to narrate in poetic form the bravery of an Albanian woman who throws herself and her child from a castle in order to avoid capture by the Ottoman occupiers. I also mention *Rrasa e zogut* [The Stone of the Bird] (R. Kukaj), where a river performs an important role, literally and metaphorically.

Viewed from this perspective, the representation of landscape in Albanian literature, as in other cultures and literatures, points out the sense of place as metonymical for social significance and cultural heritage.

The Othering image of social class struggle as noted above constitutes the second approach to decipher the. And it best designates the contradictions which make themselves present in literature in the form of social anxieties and concerns, blind hopes, blind spots, ideological antinomies, fantasies of disaster, rejection and reception. This image is offered through negative protagonists. The characters designed as negative protagonists are identified as people's enemies and fall into of two categories. The first category consists of foreigners, especially neighbors, who attempt to overthrow the Communist system through either economic sabotage or direct violent attacks. They are also categorized as *diversants*,[2] whereas the second category consists of internal enemies otherwise called class enemies and accordingly classified as a declassed individual and *kulak*.[3] Certainly, both categories are notorious because of aberration from the socialist system in Albania, and, as such, both categories are characterized as inherently evil. The mentioned dissidents are conceived of as a symbolic enemy because the antagonism in them toward the communist configuration of power remains within the attempts to construct the communist system—the ideology, unconscious, desire, and history and of cultural production in narrative totality. In this sense, more attention is given to conditions of "possibility" than to "causal" determinants of text (Homer 43).

Albanian children's literature becomes a collective emblem of Albanian Communist identity.

Although Children's literature handles this sort of material by producing compensatory structures of culture and mentality to enrich narration, it represses these indications, either by the narrative construction of imaginary resolutions that coincide with the ideology in power, or by the projection of an illusion of "social harmony"—the ideal society constituted by communist New Men (Bushaka 25). In the end, we encounter in Communist era Albanian children's literature a density of ideas expressing complete compliance to Communist philosophy and ideology in literature, indicating a new social identity construction—a construction I have mentioned frequently: the New Man identity. The establishment of this new social identity begins to be constitutive of self—an identity that, once internalized, symbolizes the new social identity, expressing the ideology and philosophy that nurtures the basic principles of Communism and Communist social identity. Albanian children's literature becomes a collective emblem of Albanian Communist identity.

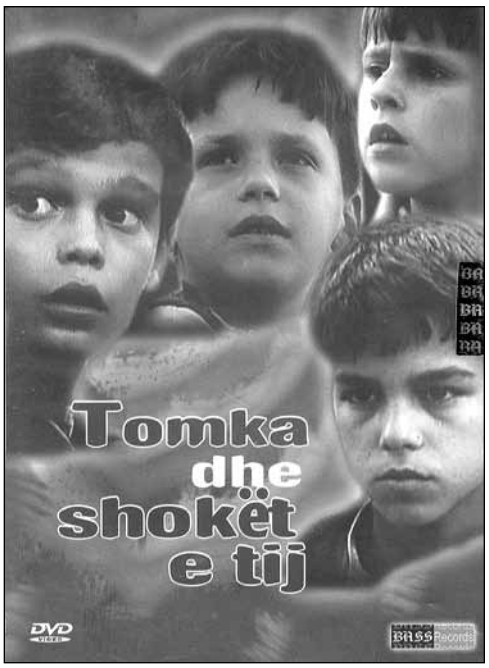


Methodologically inscribed social class struggle articulates Communism as political struggle and considers class-consciousness to be the fundamental basis of human experience. In Albanian children's literature, a genre that significantly influences how experiences are handled

in cultural terms and embodied in traditions, values, ideas, and institutional forms, always articulates experience as the struggle for creation of the Communist New Man. Some of the books that illustrate this are as follows: *Tregimi për Artanin* [The Tale for Artani] (D. Agolli), *Ushtarë të Partisë së Punës së Shqipërisë* [The Soldiers to the Labor Party of Albania (Communist Party)] (L. G. Mertini), *Lepurat e pastër* [The Clean Rabbits] (Z. Cikuli), *Ku janë këpucët e mia* [Where are my Shoes] (M. Kalaja), *Çikoja dhe Beni* [Çikoja and Beni (V. Kokona), *Çufoja dhe Bubi kaçurrel* [Çufo and the Curly Bubi] (G. Bushaka). In *Çufoja dhe Bubi kaçurrel* [Çufo and the Curly Bubi] written by G. Bushaka we see how G. Bushaka has developed a stigmatizing fable through animal characters who experience social life with "ups and downs," much like children who encounter problems and difficulties in real life. In this manner, the animal charactevrs, Çufo (pig), the curly Bubi (dog), the swan, the cock, and the squirrel, are described in school, picnic, social events and family environment. Each has a specific didactic role, embodying social norms and codes associated with socialist society mentality. This product is the most remarkable didactic book ever written for Albanian children.

Ethnicity, Nationality, and Social Class Struggle in Media: TV and Theatre

Today, children find pleasure in theatre and TV programs, just as children's books have traditionally been visually entertaining productions, however critics are aware that theatre and TV, in comparison to books, are in a special position on the borderline between verbal and visual transfer. In this manner, information is delivered differently from books. Theatre and TV productions are designed for an audience of children—consumers of a particular producer's vision—thus the imagination of this young age audience is narrowed. In theatre and TV, children passively comprehend portrayed reality. Despite this, I argue that although the child is deprived of the possibility of playing with his or her imagination, theatre and TV productions offer that child the possibility to participate in social systems of power. Children's high regard for media illustrates this relationship, which is based on key questions of the role of children's literature and children's media in general. The relationship might be phrased in terms of the roles that nationality, ethnicity, the Communist New Man, and social class struggle have played in the construction of social identity in Albania. When producing national cultural capital, Albanians have never perceived literature as a "vacuum." Literature has constantly been ideologically infused and instrumentalized by Communism. The matter conceptualized in its entirety states that theatre and TV have opened up new possibilities for representing time, space, and identity under the impact of ideology in service of power. Just as children have always been exposed to ideology in reading, so too are



…although the child is deprived of the possibility of playing with his or her imagination, theatre and TV productions offer that child the possibility to participate in social systems of power.

they exposed to it through watching theatre and TV. When producers of cultural capital become aware of the power literature, theatre, and TV hold when used for ideological purposes, they can use them as the powerful cultural instruments they are.

On this basis, the process of cultural production has been conceived of as "making new" the tradition (Flynn 424). Moreover, the creation of affective images that express the sensible force of affection, freed from an organizing body, coordinate movement in time and space, resulting in an effect that turns out to be a goal: organized action (Wasylak 427). Thus, cinema, like theatre, plays with time and movement, conceiving life in its becoming. Hence, as the body is the site of its movement, the identity of any object or a living being may be described in relation to the dynamics of its becoming. Thus, animated characters (Muji, Halili, Gjergj Elez Alia, Bajlozi, and so on), static characters (Shega, Kreshniku, Trimi and so on), and cinematic characters (Tomka, Luli, Vaso, Yllka, Petriti, Velo, Gjergji, Vaska, Gjoni, Lulja), reveal the stereotyping aspect of children's media narratives that project Albanian identity nurtured strongly by the Communist ideology and philosophy. In this respect, I consider Albanian films—*Tomka dhe shokët e tij* [Tomka and his friends], DEBATIK [The United Sons Members of the Communist Ideas], *Mëngjeze lufte* [War Mornings], *Partizani i vogël Velo* [The Little Partisan Velo], *Tinguj lufte* [The Sounds of War]—which deal with Albanian history, and particularly focus on resistance efforts during WWII or the National Liberation War in Albania. These products narrate visually the involvement and contribution of children in National Liberation War by describing them as little guerrillas/Communists. They are illustrated as imitating adults' deeds in order to contribute to the liberation of the country and expulsion of occupiers and invaders. Through this description, the little protagonists enjoy all the characteristics of the New Man, as tropes commonly inscribed in Albanian children's literature. Furthermore, theater plays, such as *Gjergj Elez Alia* [Gjergj Elez Alia], *Muji dhe Halili* [Mujo and Halili], and *Skënderbeu* [Scanderbeg], significantly evoke Albanian resistance to occupation in the Middle Ages. The subject matter of the latter is based on legend and myth, although the plays are productions from the Communist period. They are both broadcasted on TV and performed in Theatre, and the message of patriotism and homeland affection is transmitted vigorously. In addition, movie productions such as *Guximtarët* [The Brave-hearted Kids], *Në shtëpinë tonë* [In Our House], *Kalamajtë e pallatit tim* [The Kids of my Building], and *Beni ecën vetë* [Beni walks on his own] have embedded aspects of the construction of Socialist Realism in Albania—constructions of an image of Communist Albania, portraying the ideal reconfiguration of social relations in Communist society and diminishing the differences between city and village, intellectuals and workers. The New Man characteristics highlighted in the protagonists represent the new generation's features presented ideologically as instruments of social emancipation. This didacticism is accomplished through Albanian children's literature and visual mediums of entertainment, as it emphasizes Communist class struggle and the tendentious proletarian resolution of Communist goals through the strength of the New Man.

Notes

1. The term "imagology" arises from an approach rooted in comparative literature, which researches the literary expression of mental image of the "other" and of the "self."

In a recent discourse by Ton Hoenselaars and Joep Leerssen, it is defined as follows:

> Imagology is based on, but not limited to, the inventory and typology of how nations are typified, represented, and/or caricatured in a given tradition or corpus of cultural articulations. On the basis of the analysis of texts or cultural artefacts, it raises questions about the mechanism of national/ethnic 'othering' and its

> underlying self-images. Questions raised concern the relation between 'character' and 'identity'; historical variability; genre, canonicity, and irony; and intermediality. (251)

Furthermore, the origins of imagology are to be found in early twentieth-century France. In Albania, we encounter imagology in folklore, most prominently through legends, myths, and sagas, which elucidate the position and role of the other and the self in Albanian context. The best of all folk creations in Albania remains *Muji and Halili*—Albanian highlanders described in mythological dimensions. Their story narrates the resistance of the Albanians against the Serbs. Their rebellious selves stand for the collective consciousness and resistance of all Albanians. Imagology provides rich accounts for other kinds of study and opens premises for interdisciplinary surveys and researches.

2. A "diversant" is a person who violates the boundaries of a certain country to exercise violently sabotage the nation.
3. A "Kulak" is a peasant who aspires to be a part of the middle class. Kulaks were turned into objects of insult and degraded as human beings. They had no rights, and as such were frequently displaced, were constantly under surveillance, and were often imprisoned.

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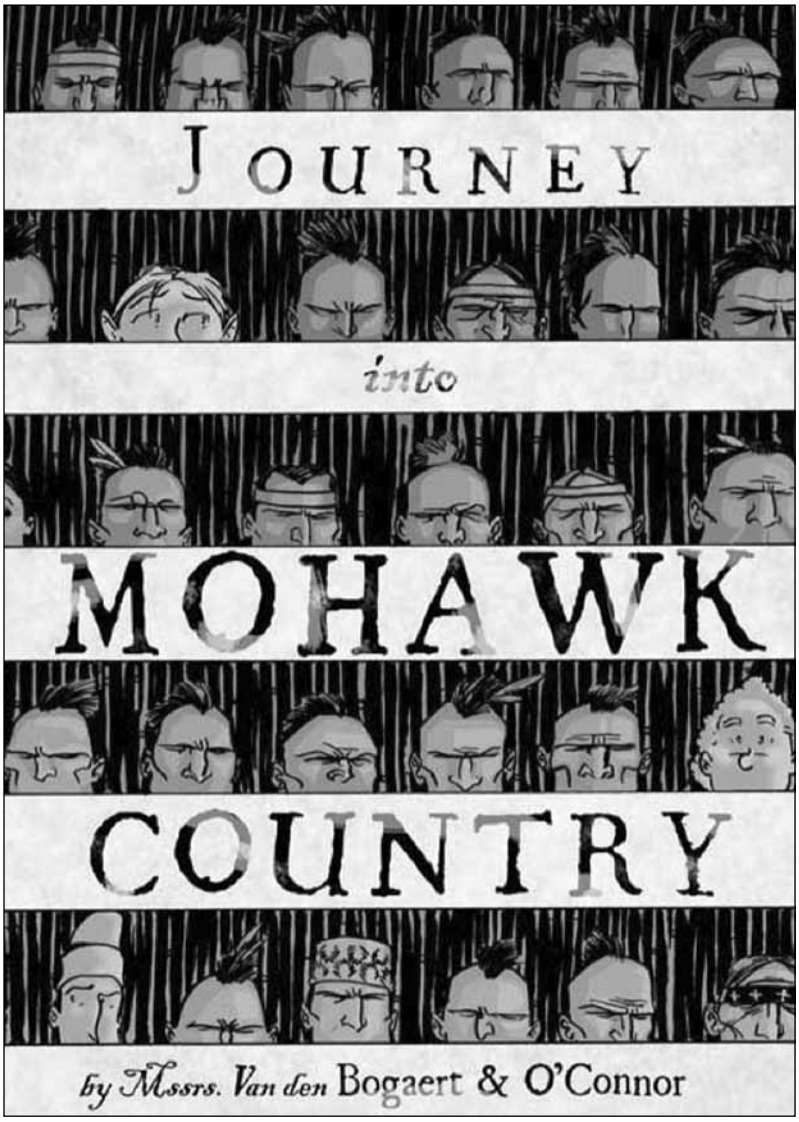

Exploring the Text/Image Wilderness: Ironic Visual Perspective and Critical Thinking in George O'Connor's Graphic Novel *Journey into Mohawk Country*

by WILLIAM BOERMAN-CORNELL

In George O'Connor's graphic novel adaptation of a Dutch translation of Harmen VandenBogaert's ***Journey into Mohawk Country****, the images interact with the text in ironic ways. The text of VandenBogaert's journal presents his interpretation of the events while O'Connor's images depict how the Mohawk Tribe may have viewed the same events. This multimodal reading highlights five kinds of visual irony then considers the implications of this way of reading for teaching students to think critically.*

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Graphic Novelist George O'Connor makes an interesting choice in creating a graphic-novel adaptation of Dutch explorer Harmen Meyndertsz Van den Bogaert's 1634 diary of his time spent with the Mohawk people in what would someday be upstate New York in the United States and the province of Ontario, Canada. Van den Bogaert's writing style is pedestrian, yet under O'Connor's pencils and pens, the story comes alive through fresh ironies.

Van den Bogaert journeyed with two other Dutch explorers deep into Mohawk territory, primarily to determine why the different sub-tribes had become less interested in trading with the Dutch out of Fort Orange and more interested in trading with the French. Since the beaver pelts they were trading were worth increasing amounts in Europe, this was no casual trip. However, Van den Bogaert and his companions seem to have little awareness of the culture and traditions of the people they visit.

Previous issues of *Bookbird* have done an excellent job of beginning to define graphic novels. The next task graphic novel researchers have is to consider what affordances and constraints graphic novels offer to creators, readers, and teachers—this task will help expand understandings of what a graphic novel is and how it works. Sociocultural theorist James Wertsch argues that any new form of expression (in this case, the graphic novel) brings with it a new set of affordances (opportunities that the format offers for particular ways to express things and particular things that can be expressed) and constraints (roadblocks to expression presented by that particular format) (14).

Little has been written about the way irony works in graphic novels, or the affordances and constraints it offers for helping young readers think critically about what they read. In *Journey into Mohawk Country*, George O'Connor uses affordances particular to the graphic novel form. O'Connor, aided by the extensive notes from the translators of Van den Bogaert's journal, Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, makes the most of the irony implicit in Van den Bogaert's work, and in so doing, communicates irony in a way that may help to encourage critical thinking in young readers.

In order to understand how graphic novels can aid in the development of critical thinking, we have to understand how graphic novels make meaning. Readers of graphic novels create meaning through more than one mode of communication, in this case through images and words. Sipe argues (in reference to picture books) that the term synergy, "[…] is a good descriptor of text-picture or multimodal relationships in picturebooks, because all sign systems together produce an effect that is greater than the effect that either would produce alone, resulting in an aesthetic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts" (23). Graphic novels function similarly, except that, unlike picture books, graphic novels have the text embedded in the midst of the images, instead of being separate at the top or bottom of the page. This proximity results in an affordance that gives readers access to greater

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levels of synergistic meaning-making potential.

The blending of image and text so closely, with the words appearing in the graphic itself rather than at the bottom as in picture books or magazine ads, allows the two systems of meaning, image and text, to blend together almost seamlessly. Iedema refers to this as a "blurring of the traditional boundaries between and roles allocated to language, image, page layout, document design, and so on" (33). Nodleman, extending that idea, suggests that the blurring of roles for image and text can provide opportunities for readers to think critically: "If we look carefully, in fact, the words…always tell us that things are not merely as they appear in pictures, and the pictures show us that events are not exactly as words describe them. Picture books are inherently ironic […]" (163). In this way, graphic novels may enable young readers to recognize irony.

In *Journey into Mohawk Country,* those ironies occur when there is a gap between the way Van den Bogaert tells the story and the way historians imagine the Mohawk would have interpreted Van den Bogaert's actions. The words in O'Connor's work come straight from Van den Bogaert's text. The images, however, are sometimes extrapolations and estimations. This allows the reader to keep a clear delineation between what Van den Bogaert's journal says (including his interpretations of events) and what the images show us about how the Mohawk likely interpreted his actions, reacted to them, and what conclusions they reached. The graphic novel format allows this clear delineation even as the two distinct readings overlap and occur simultaneously.

In* Journey into Mohawk Country,** *those ironies occur when there is a gap between the way Van den Bogaert tells the story and the way historians imagine the Mohawk would have interpreted Van den Bogaert's actions.

O'Connor's illustrations employ five methods of accomplishing visual irony: filling in what is not said in the text, reading between the lines of what is said, connecting an image in the text with a previous image, illustrating what is said explicitly, and showing reactions to what is said through facial expressions. Each of these approaches, specific to the graphic novel, offer new ways of constructing irony that are distinct from other modes of storytelling.

The first category, filling in what is not said, occurs when O'Connor extrapolates what Van den Bogaert leaves out. For example, Van den Bogaert's narrative appears in text boxes in panels one and two, reading in part, "[…] so for these reasons, I went west with Jeromus La Croex, and Willem Tomassen" (10). The first seven panels on the page show all three explorers crossing a river. Van den Bogaert goes first, followed by Jeromus and Willem, who end up leaping onto the same rock at the same time, yelling at each other, and finally shoving each other into the icy water. In the final panel on the page, Van den Bogaert is rolling his eyes and a text box above him reads "May the Lord bless our journey." O'Connor imagines that final text as a tongue-in-cheek recognition that the way may not be easy.

A slightly different type of visual irony occurs when O'Connor

reads between the lines, extrapolating possible irony from what Van den Bogaert's dry text does contain. For example, the text tersely reports the group's experience at a lone Mohawk hunter's cabin (14). They enter, eat some venison, and continue on their way. Anyone familiar with Mohawk customs (or indeed, the customs of almost any culture) would recognize that such a visit, if it is as short as Van den Bogaert seems to describe, might be impolite. In O'Connor's images, we see the three European explorers eating heartily inside the hut in only one panel. Four panels then show them pretending to throw a venison bone to the dogs, but actually keeping the bone. Finally, three panels show the explorers leaving and the Mohawk standing, arms folded and an expression of disdain. In this case, O'Connor is working with a reasonable extrapolation of the text, using the one-panel visit depicting the tricked dogs and the disdain of the Mohawk to make his point clear. At no point does he indicate through the text the reason for the Mohawk's reactions. This is left up to the reader to figure out. Similarly, the Mohawk chief shows Van den Bogaert some stones that the Mohawk use to strike sparks to make fire (108). The text indicates that Van den Bogaert is not enthusiastic about this discovery, and the final image on the page shows the stone that the Mohawk gave to Van den Bogaert discarded and half buried in the snow. In this case, O'Connor does not provide us with the Mohawk's reaction, but the arresting image of the tossed-away stone encourages us to think about how they would react nonetheless.

Often the irony is intratextual. O'Connor's images help the reader to connect a remark of Van den Bogaert's to something that occurs earlier in the narrative, which may have bearing on the current situation. For example, Jeromus tries to impress the Mohawk by throwing some sulphur paper on the fire, which then blazes briefly with a blue flame (31). The Mohawk chief explains that they actually have quite a lot of sulphur paper, having traded with another tribe for it, and that they consider it to be useful for healing many illnesses and ailments, especially tired legs. The final panel on that page shows Willem pulling up his pant-leg to reveal his scarred leg while Van den Bogaert looks the other way and whistles. The reader next must recall an earlier point in the narrative, when Van den Bogaert makes several cuts in Willem's legs with a knife in order to relieve the swelling from too much walking (20). In this case, the image reminds the reader of an event that takes place earlier in the narrative, even though the narrator alone does not make that connection. A similar situation occurs when the travelling group, hoping to stay at a hunters' cabin, finds it burned to the ground (138). The three explorers recall setting off in a hurry, failing to properly extinguish their fire (12).

A fourth category is the irony that occurs when O'Connor takes what Van den Bogaert has said in the text, but makes clearer to the reader what that might actually look like from the Mohawk perspective. For example, the text reads: "Today we feasted on two bears, and we received one half skipple of beans and some dried strawberries. Also we provided ourselves here with bread that we could take on our journey. Some of it had nuts, chestnuts, dried blueberries, and sunflower seeds baked in it" (52). The second panel of that page, connected with the first sentence of the

text, depicts the explorers taking part in a great outdoor feast. The last three panels, connected with the second sentence of the text (particularly, "Also we provided ourselves with […]"), shows the explorers in the tribe's darkened storeroom, helping themselves to the bread. Here, the irony is that the reader sees clearly, through the images, what it is that Van den Bogaert downplays in his journal: that the Dutch explorers have stolen the bread. A later moment in the narrative offers another example. Two Mohawk invite Van den Bogaert to see how they drive out the devil (work to cure a sick person). Van den Bogaert refuses, saying he has seen this procedure before, then reports that "However, I had to go along anyway." The accompanying panels show Van den Bogaert trying to brush off the invitation, and then the two warriors, each taking one of his hands and physically carrying him in the direction of the healing (103).

…O'Connor effectively shows the disparity between Van den Bogaert's version as depicted in the text boxes, and the Mohawks' interpretation of the same events as shown through their facial expressions.

Finally, O'Connor effectively shows the disparity between Van den Bogaert's version as depicted in the text boxes, and the Mohawks' interpretation of the same events as shown through their facial expressions. For example, the European travelers are bundling up to set off despite the snowstorm outside (58). They walk through a room of stony-faced Mohawk men. The text explains that they are unable to start out because no one would go with them to carry their goods. The third panel shows the same group of Mohawk men laughing with abandon at the notion of setting out on such a day. Again, Van den Bogaert's text downplays the reaction of the guides, but O'Connor makes it clear that the explorers have again run up against the custom and knowledge of their Mohawk hosts. Similarly, the text reports that, even though they are still four miles from the next village, the explorers eat up the remaining food (71). The images show the travel-worn and desperately hungry explorers, with black circles under their eyes, drinking directly from wooden bowls. The fourth panel on the page shows the two Mohawk guides' stoic, yet clearly disappointed faces.

These textual explorations may seem to indicate a rather unsympathetic portrayal of Van den Bogaert and his companions. In some senses, this is true, but because the narrative is from Van den Boagaert's perspective, he still emerges a sympathetic character. Though he commits cultural gaffes, he does so out of ignorance rather than maliciousness. The reader shares in Van den Boagaert's confusion at times, such as when the explorers stumble into a cacophonous war game between two tribes (47-51).

It is the interplay between images and text, though, more than the characters, which creates opportunities for young readers to think critically about both the text and the images as they work together. Narratives told only through text (and the text-only version of Van den Bogaert's journal is a good example of this) are often viewed by students as being authoritative and hence true. One of the great possibilities that graphic novels may offer teachers and readers alike is that the cartoonish images and handwritten text boxes are more approachable, assailable, and questionable than their text-only counterparts. Additionally, the nature of the form allows it to show two ironically contrasting readings of the same text (one a straightforward textual reading, the other a speculative, ironic reading). With modeling, teachers could use this affordance of graphic

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novels to teach students to read two separate ways simultaneously, surely a useful skill for critical readers.

Any new format offers new opportunities for readers to receive and make meaning. George O'Connor, in *Journey into Mohawk Country*, demonstrates that the graphic novel format offers creators a wide range of opportunities to illustrate irony. While the format permits a clear division between the primary source journal of Van der Bogaert (in the text boxes) and a speculative narrative of the Mohawk's response (shown in the images), the combination of image and text invites readers to recognize five different ways of constructing irony. This is one of many affordances within the graphic novel format waiting to be discovered by graphic novel readers.

Note

Image from *Journey into Mohawk Country* is used with kind permission from the Macmillan's Children's Division of Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

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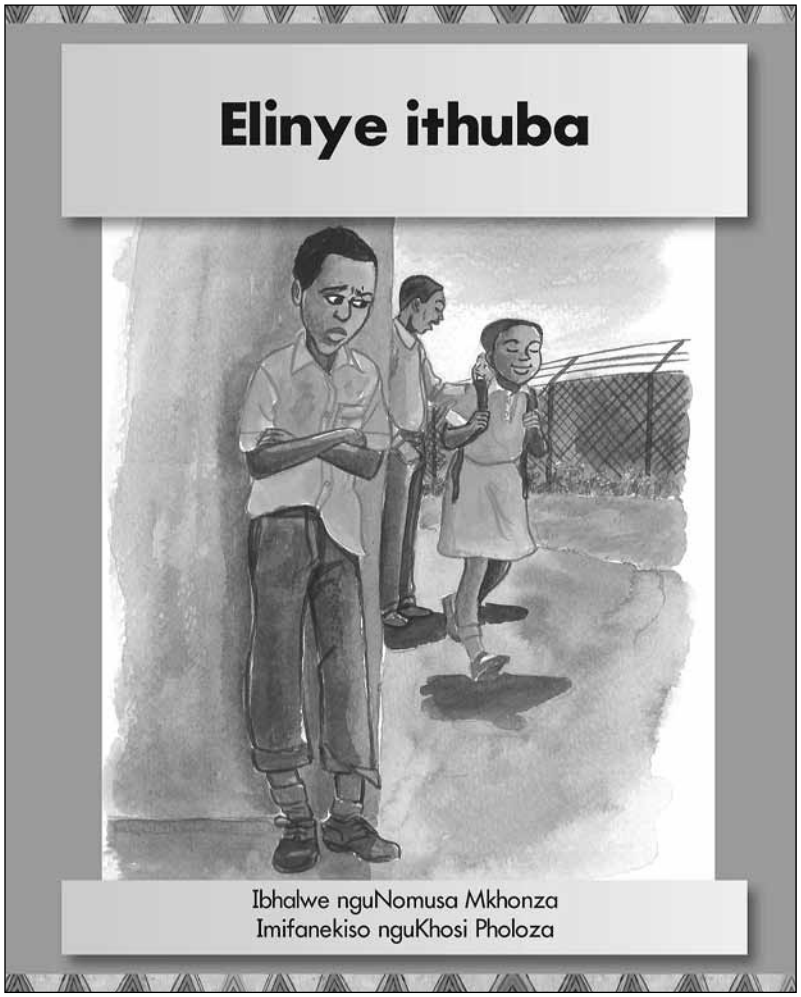

Teacher Authored Supplementary Reading Materials in South Africa

by
MISTY SAILORS
MIRIAM MARTINEZ
LORENA VILLARREAL

This article explores the nature of stories appearing in supplementary reading books authored by teachers in South Africa. Teachers wrote about topics including the role of education in improving lives and the richness and diversity of South Africa. Themes included caring, responsibility, achieving goals, earned respect, traditional values and breaking gender barriers. As authors, teachers act to uphold the values and morals of a society and as change agents when provided with ample opportunities.

South Africa is a land of diversity—geographical, linguistic, and cultural. There are twelve official languages in South Africa: nine indigenous African languages, English, Afrikaans, and

Sign Language. Culturally and historically, it is a plentiful nation, a progressive country with some of the most progressive policies and laws to protect children against child rights violations. It is a country of hope. Literacy rates for 15 to 24 year olds are on the increase, and more and more children are completing primary school.

Even though children in South Africa learn (and their teachers teach) under dire conditions, the vast majority of schools that serve the poor struggle to provide successful learning experiences for children. There are many causes for school failure, including inadequate facilities, ineffective teaching, weak school leadership, a paucity of support materials, and low levels of community support and involvement (Fiske and Ladd). Instruction is also limited due to lack of textbooks and supporting materials published in South African languages (Makalela; Sailors, Hoffman and Matthee).

Nonetheless, teachers are dedicated and they care about the children they teach, so much, in fact, they are willing to author learning materials for their classrooms (Sailors, Makalela, and Hoffman). For some teachers, the authoring process provides a powerful venue to reconcile and reconstruct pasts and to provide opportunities of hope for learners (Horan et. al.). Our team of international curriculum developers (three institutions of higher education, one based in South Africa and two in the USA; two South African Non-Governmental Organizations and the South African Department of Education) worked with 140 classroom teachers to design and develop learning materials that would supplement the reading curriculum of South Africa. Together, we designed supplementary storybooks for students in grades 4, 5, and 6—stories that were connected to the national curriculum and represented the lived experiences of the target audience. This connection to children's lives is important as books should serve as (a) mirrors and reflections of the lived experiences of children who read those books, (b) windows into the bigger, wider world outside their families and (c) doorways as paths into possible futures for those same children (Cai and Sims Bishop). Throughout the development experience,

To better understand the experience of the teachers, we asked two questions that guided this investigation, including "What do teachers choose to write about?" and "What themes did teachers address in their stories?"

we noticed that teachers were writing about topics of self-importance based on comments we overheard. To better understand the experience of the teachers, we asked two questions that guided this investigation, including "What do teachers choose to write about?" and "What themes did teachers address in their stories?" In order

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to answer these questions, we conducted a topical and thematic analysis of the stories.

Background: The Need for Materials in Developing Countries

High-quality learning materials are common in countries such as the United States (Lee and Zuze). However, in classrooms in many developing countries, access to learning materials is limited even though these materials have proven effective in raising achievement (Alidou et. al.; Farrell and Heyneman; Lockheed and Verspoor). For example, Elley, in his seminal Book Flood study, found that it is possible to double the rate of reading achievement of primary age students in developing countries by flooding their classrooms with approximately 100 high-interest books per class and providing teachers with instruction on how to use the books. Elley's work and the work of others have demonstrated the importance of the presence of materials in classrooms. However, others have challenged the quantity issue with a focus on the qualities of materials found in classrooms in developing countries. Too often the materials available to teachers and students in developing countries are poorly designed, contain factual inaccuracies, reinforce gender stereotypes, do not support higher-level thinking, and fail to reflect the lived experiences of the children using them (Baine and Mwamwenda; Montagnes).

South Africa and the National Curriculum

Post-apartheid education in South Africa needs to address issues of inequality, inequity, and redress so that old social and cultural divisive constructs can be broken down. As a result, South Africa has engaged in the construction and implementation of national standards. A set of principles and values underpin the curriculum, which has roots in the Constitution of the country (Authors 2010). These include the social values of human rights, inclusivity, and social justice that reinforce the democratic values that the Constitution has put in place to ensure that social, political, cultural, and economic transformation occurs in the country.

As in many countries undergoing curriculum reform, textbooks were part of a provisioning plan for the implementation of the curriculum, but supplementary reading materials were not included. In classrooms in South Africa, there is a great need for supplementary reading materials, but few actually exist (Sailors, Hoffman, and Matthee; Hunt). Further, most materials that do exist are in English or Afrikaans (Makalela), an unfortunate situation for a multi-linguistic society like South Africa.

Creating Locally-Authored Materials

It was in light of the documented need for supplementary learning materials in South African classrooms that we embarked with our colleagues across various international settings to design, develop, and produce

supplementary learning materials for students in grades 4, 5, and 6. Our partners in this endeavor included two universities in the United States, two South African universities, two South African Non-Governmental Organizations and 120 classroom teachers in rural and urban South Africa. We elected to engage teachers as authors

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in this process because teachers are central to educational reforms (Fullan), and because teachers can author learning materials that reflect the experiences of their learners (Sailors, Makalela and Hoffman; Simire 239).

Through our international collaboration, we authored 140 titles across the 12 official languages of South Africa. The work occurred through a series of writing workshops, and authoring teachers were encouraged to find the intersection between their lived experiences/expertise and topics that represented the lived experiences of the target audience. We asked authoring teachers to write their stories in the mother tongue language in which they felt most comfortable. The teachers also rendered a version of their story in South African English. Teachers authored their stories across three development workshops, based in the provinces of Gauteng (largely urban), and Limpopo and Mpumalanga (largely rural).

As an intermediary step in the process, members of the development and editing team (consisting of South African and US literacy and content experts) developed the English versions of the books to ensure the quality of the books and connections to the national curriculum. South African illustrators illustrated the books, which were field tested by authoring teachers with children in South African public schools. Authors revised their stories based on the results of the field-testing process. As a final step, a team of South African language experts edited the stories for conventionality.

Each book was between 20 and 32 pages long and contained between 8 and 10 full color illustrations. The development team integrated the books instructionally with the national curriculum through teacher's guides that served as an impetus for mathematics, natural science, or life skills lessons that would follow the reading of the books. In fact, nearly 50% of the books were aligned with life skills (covering physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills), 25% with mathematics, and 25% with natural science curriculum.

Our Investigation: Data and Data Analysis

We were curious as to what teachers would write about when provided an opportunity to author books for children. To that end, we asked two questions for this investigation, including, "What do teachers choose to write about?" and "What themes did teachers address in their stories?" We describe the nature of our data and our methods of analysis in this section.

In our initial analysis, we identified the topic of each of the 140 books written by the teachers, working to establish 100% agreement about each book across team members. While an analysis of topics provides one window into the stories written by authoring teachers, it may be a somewhat narrow window into what teachers find important when they author materials for learners. To broaden our insight into the nature of these stories, and in particular the kinds of messages they conveyed, we conducted an analysis of the primary themes that emerged from the books. We employed qualitative research methods (Glaser and Strauss) to analyze the themes of the books using an inductive data-driven, constant comparison approach. Members of the research team read each book, first recording an overall theme of the story and noting particular textual elements that supported the theme. Like Wolf, we defined theme as the "heart of a story—an idea or comment about life that often illuminates the

emotional content of the human condition" (54). Others have described theme as the "big idea" or the message of a story (Duffy). For a few stories, teachers explicitly stated themes in the stories. More often, though, it was necessary to infer literary themes through attention to "affect and action of characters" (Wolf 55). Team member discussions supported the building of consensus (100%) around the identification of themes for each book. Once we identified emergent themes for all stories, we categorized the themes, jointly discussing the categories. Our process of formulating categories across these themes was highly collaborative, with a constant return to the original data sources—the stories.

Results

In this section, we present the results of the topic and thematic analyses of the books.

Topic Analysis: The 140 books centered around 13 major topics with some stories addressing more than one topic. In Table 1, we group related topics and include the percentage of stories addressing each topic.

Table 1: Topics addressed in books

Topic	Percentage of Stories
Responsible behavior	50
Schools/Education	37.3
Health	26.1
Cultural traditions	24.6
Competitions	23
Literacy	22.2
Living organisms/Cycles	15.8
Abuse	15
Entrepreneurship/Funding	14.2
Crime	12.6
Travels/Journeys	11.1
Racism/Classism	8.7
Other	6.3
Religion/Spirituality	5.5

Many of the books focused on social ills, some of which are quite prevalent in contemporary South Africa. Teachers wrote about health problems, abuse, crime, racism, and classism. Issues related to health were among the most frequently addressed topics in the stories, figuring prominently in 26% of the stories. These health-related topics included drug and alcohol abuse, nutrition, exercise, and HIV/AIDS. Abuse was another social ill about which teachers wrote; some 15% of the stories addressed this topic. While authoring teachers addressed verbal and physical abuse in some stories, the majority of the abuse stories focused on bullying. Crime was yet another social issue featured in many stories. Authoring teachers were especially likely to address the issue of stealing in their stories. Almost 9% of the stories addressed issues of racism and classism, a percentage that is perhaps lower than might be expected for a country that has emerged relatively recently from apartheid.

While teachers wrote about social concerns faced by South African society, many also chose to write about topics that, in a sense, push back against the societal ills addressed in so many of the stories. Responsible behavior was the focus of 50% of the stories, and the authors addressed such behavior in varying contexts. Education and schools were addressed in more than a third of the stories. Teachers also explored two additional topics related to school stories. The first of these was competitions, which are a central part of the school experience in South Africa. Almost 25% of the stories featured various kinds of competitions (e.g., athletic, dance, music, and poetry). Literacy, a second frequently addressed topic linked to school stories, played a central role in 22% of the stories. Finally, entrepreneurship was a topic tangentially related to education in that teachers typically cast both as a means of improving one's situation. Authoring teachers addressed entrepreneurship and funding in 14% of the stories.

While authoring teachers reflected the rich cultural diversity of South Africa in many of the stories, they directly addressed particular facets of cultural tradition in almost 25% of the stories. These facets included ceremonies, birthday and wedding celebrations, and funeral customs. A

relatively small number of stories (approximately 5%) explored religion or spirituality.

Our analysis of story themes revealed six broad themes.

We identified two additional topics addressed in stories. Approximately 11% of the teachers wrote about journeys, and 15% of the stories centered on living organisms and natural cycles, including animal stories and stories about growing or farming.

Thematic Content Analysis: Our analysis of story themes revealed six broad themes (see Table 2):

Table 2: Themes of books

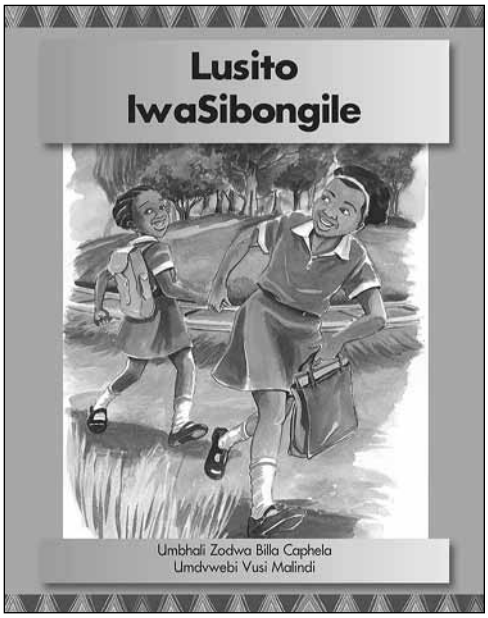
Topic	Percentage of Stories
Caring	31.4
Responsibility	23.5
Achieving dreams/goals	21.6
Earned respect	7.8
Other	5.9
Traditional values	5.9
Breaking gender barriers	3.9

1. Caring was a dominant theme in the books, accounting for 31.4% of the stories. The teachers wrote numerous stories with messages about the importance of caring for one another and the community. In many of these stories, adults assumed the role of the compassionate individual who chose to help and assist children. In particular, parents, teachers, and principals were often constructed as concerned characters who extended a sometimes much needed helping hand. For example, in the story "Another Chance," (Mkhonza) (see Figure 1) a young boy who bullies others is himself the victim of an abusive uncle. His coach rescues him from his abusive home situation and gives him a new start in a safe house.

   In a number of stories, children were the compassionate individuals who reached out to help siblings, friends, or classmates as a way of solving problems. In "Helping Hand," (Mwale) Zamokwakhe convinces her mother to invite her recently orphaned friend to live with their family, and Zamokwakhe even seeks out the social service support to make the plan a feasible one. In "How Far, How Long?" (Mdluli) Tshego, a young boy who lives with his grandparents in a rural town, longs to see his parents who live and work in Johannesburg. When shown the location of Johannesburg on a map, Tshego concludes that he can easily walk to the city. When he sets out, his older sister follows along to ensure Tshego's safety and intervenes when her younger brother becomes too tired to continue the journey.

   Teachers not only wrote stories about individuals caring for other individuals, they also portrayed individuals caring for their community. In "Pride of Bambanani," (Mogotsi) a boy gives back to his community by teaching his classmates how to garden. In "Beauty Is," (Mfobo) a young woman suffering from HIV/AIDS starts a community clinic for other victims of the illness.
2. Responsibility was another significant theme identified through our analysis; approximately 23% of the stories explored this theme. Many of the stories in this category dealt with serious situations that children and young adolescents too often encounter: being tempted by strangers, using drugs, skipping school, and hanging around with the

wrong crowd. Often these stories seemed to function as cautionary tales, warning the reader that bad things can happen to those who fail to behave in responsible ways. For example, in "Sibongile to the Rescue," (Caphela) (see Figure 2) a young girl slips away from school to retrieve missing homework and a stranger accosts her. Her sister realizes she is missing and alerts the police. In "Sounds of Silence," (Mokone) a boy recognizes the pitfalls of stealing when he becomes severely ill after eating a stolen peach covered with a pesticide. In these and other stories, characters were saved from potentially dangerous situations; they discovered the merits of behaving in ways that were more accountable.



A number of the teachers wrote stories that explored the importance of listening to elders. In these stories, parents or teachers guide a young character toward the path of responsible behavior by sharing advice or stories about people who faced unhappy consequences when they failed to heed an elder's words of wisdom. For example, in "Straightening out the Bending Fruit Tree," (Mahlangu) Lehutso begins to hang around with the wrong crowd, use drugs, and lie to his mother. His mother intervenes, and pulls Lehutso back from the brink. In a second story, a young girl begins to accept rides with strangers—until her paralyzed aunt cautions her niece that her own paralysis came about as a result of an accident that occurred when she accepted a ride with strangers. In effect, these stories suggest that the avenue to responsible behavior lies in heeding the wisdom of elders.

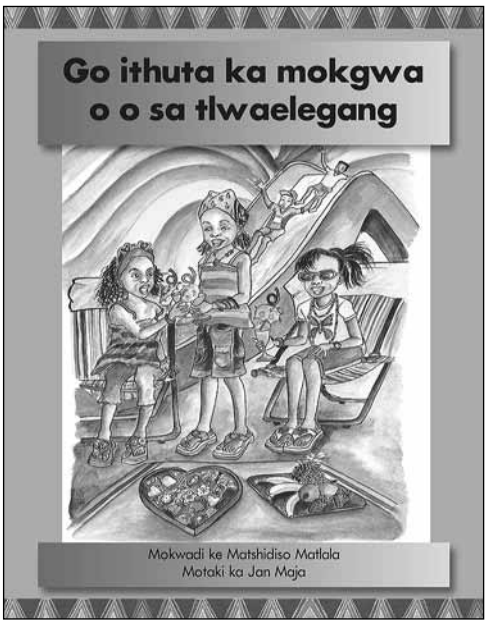
3. Achieving dreams was a theme that emerged from approximately 21% of the stories. In addressing the theme, the teachers wrote about achieving individual dreams as well as community dreams.

The prevalence of the theme of achieving individual dreams is perhaps not surprising in light of the high levels of poverty in South Africa. The particular dreams featured in stories ranged from earning money for a bicycle to becoming a star athlete or singer to acquiring money to lead a comfortable life. In each story, the means to achieve these individual dreams was through perseverance and hard work. For example, in "Duncan's Life Experience" (Mukwevho), Duncan dreams of living in a big house with his family. However, when his father dies, the boy must leave school. Determined to realize his dream, Duncan works hard, saves money, returns to school, and becomes a teacher and then a principal. It is then that he is able to realize his dream of a house on the hill.

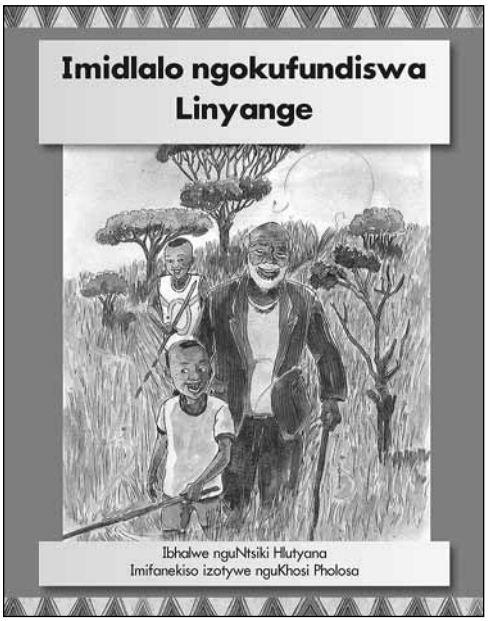
In most of the stories featuring individuals who dream, the main characters work to better their own lives. By contrast, "Children Are the Backbone of Change in South Africa" (Gae) addresses a dream of social justice. Set in apartheid South Africa, this story features Lutanyani, a young boy whose family barely ekes out a living on

a wealthy white man's farm. When he learns that other farm owners provide schools for the children who live on their farms, Lutanyani succeeds in convincing the white farmer to make such an opportunity available for the children of his workers.

Teachers also wrote about achieving a dream or goal in stories featuring groups of individuals working together for the greater good. In a story entitled "Learning in Unexpected Ways," (Matlala) (see Figure 3) a group of friends works together to plan a special outing during their holidays. In another story, a group of children wins a choir competition by practicing and working hard.



4. Teachers also explored the theme of earned respect in stories. We identified this as the theme of 7.8% of the stories. Teachers developed this theme in very different contexts. In one story entitled "Mologadi's Puppy" (Mashilwane), Mologadi's parents relegate their dog to the outdoors, the place where dogs belong, according to Mologadi's mother. When robbers invade the family home, the dog chases them away and thereby earns the mother's respect—and a place *inside* the house. In "Let Us All Read Together," (Mogale) a blind boy, the victim of his classmate's taunts, earns his adversary's respect when he wins a poetry competition.
5. While authoring teachers embedded traditional values in many of the stories, three of the stories addressed traditional ways and values directly. For example, in "As Our Fathers before Us," (Hlutyana) (see Figure 4) two boys seek the tutelage of their grandfather in order to win a school competition featuring the traditional game of stick fighting. The lessons of the grandfather center on tactics of confrontation and traditional values such as respect, much to the surprise of the boys.



6. Breaking gender barriers was the final theme that we identified. While other stories featured characters in non-traditional gender roles, the stories in this final category addressed gender roles directly. In "Potato Song" (Tsoai), Tumisang's mother does all the cooking and cleaning for the household, while her father assumes it is his right to rest and relax when at home. When Tumisang discovers that other families share household responsibilities, she sets out to bring about change in her own family. The outcome of Tumisang's efforts is a closer and happier family.

At least one author recognizes that males could also be victims of gender barriers.

"Unusual Player" (Dladla) features a boy named Sethu who wants to join the netball team. However, Sethu cannot play, as everyone believes boys should play soccer and girls should play netball. Only when a player is injured does Sethu have the opportunity to prove that boys, too, can succeed as netball players.

Discussion

The potential values of teacher-authored stories in South Africa are copious. First, by reflecting the lives of South African learners through both text and illustrations, the stories authored by these teachers have the potential to promote the self-esteem learners need to become self-fulfilled individuals and contributing members of the community. Our topical analysis revealed that the stories indeed reflect the world of South African learners—their traditions, their concerns, their joys, their families, and their communities. There is widespread agreement that it is important for learners to see themselves in stories (e.g., Harris; Sims Bishop). Nieto argues, "all students of all backgrounds, languages, and experiences need to be acknowledged, valued, and used as important sources of their education" (8). As participants in the project, we had the opportunity to visit schools when classroom teachers introduced stories for the first time, and we witnessed a palpable sense of excitement as learners read and discussed the stories that mirrored their own worlds. This implicit acknowledgement and valuing of the South African learners' world is not likely to occur in books sent to South Africa from countries far away.

Our topical analysis revealed that the stories indeed reflect the world of South African learners—their traditions, their concerns, their joys, their families, and their communities.

While teacher-authored stories can serve the important function of helping to promote learners' self-esteem, we believe they serve other important functions as well. The authoring teachers did not shy away from addressing difficult issues that are, for too many learners in South Africa, part of their everyday world—issues of crime, abuse, drugs, HIV/AIDS, and racism/classism. Many of the stories addressed these harsh social ills directly. The topical choices of these authoring teachers were particularly noteworthy given publishing trends in some countries. For example, textbook publishers in the United States deem topics of this nature inappropriate for young learners. Yet, when learners encounter such serious issues in their daily lives, one can build a very solid case for addressing these issues in schools.

Perhaps the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of tackling serious social issues lies in how teachers address the issues. We found that these teacher-authored stories addressed issues in ways that offered hope to learners. Characters—young and old—cared about one another and showed their concern by helping those who struggled. The messages that emerged from many of the stories offered guidance to young learners who face the challenges of life in contemporary South Africa. Society rewarded characters for behaving responsibly, working hard to achieve dreams, and pursuing education.

We found that these teacher-authored stories addressed issues in ways that offered hope to learners.

We believe that students learn more than just reading skills and strategies when reading books such as the ones created in this project. They learn to be better people—people who see a place for themselves in society and see the unique contribution they can make in improving their lived situation and the situation of others around them. In many ways, it would appear that the teacher authors of the books we examined were approaching literacy in a way that not only recognized the need for high quality reading materials but also see literacy as a mechanism by which they can personally contribute to a growing democracy. This seems to be the stance of teachers in general—the importance of education (and literacy education) is really about developing productive members of a society.

In short, the authoring teachers in this project may have been acting as agents of change (Ball; Fullan). Teachers in South Africa are very aware of the challenges posed within their school environments and society (Mentz and van der Walt). Unfortunately, often these teachers feel they have very little say in educational reforms (Weber 288). Our findings indicate that these teachers can in fact find their political voice and actively contribute to the shift in their country toward a more democratic society.

Implications

Supplementary reading materials are in far too limited a supply in African countries, including South Africa. One way well-intentioned individuals and organizations meet this need is by "importing" books from the United States and other countries. Many of these books are simply inappropriate (culturally and linguistically) for learners in African classrooms. We continue to be dismayed by the age of books sent to Africa for use in schools—books cleared from the shelves of school and public libraries. We would never question the intentions of individuals and organizations that ship "boats of books" to Africa, but we do question the authenticity of those books for learners in Africa.

Our findings suggest that when teachers are given the opportunity to author materials for their students, those materials represent the cultural, linguistic, and lived experiences of the students for whom those teachers are writing. The materials in this study represented important societal messages critical to learning within a society such as South Africa. When texts do not represent the students who are reading them, those students may feel disassociated with the experiences in the text. Materials such as the ones we examined afford students the opportunities to see themselves in reading materials, while also allowing them to see the bigger, broader world outside of their own. Materials that represent the lived societal experiences of students create spaces where students can visualize themselves as productive members of their society and can learn to be critically competent and caring individuals (Ciardiello), improving their society as they learn to contribute to it. Books such as those written in this project (that represent challenges faced by children from marginalized communities) allow "cultural insiders" to work with teachers, administrators and community members in understanding the lived experiences of children in their classrooms and schools (Nilsson).

Note

The authors want to thank Jennifer Kinnear for her useful comments on this essay.

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Immigrants and Immigration in Portuguese Children's Literature

by MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO TOMÉ
and GLÓRIA BASTOS

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the existence and relevance of the theme of migrations in contemporary Portuguese children's literature and to analyze the representations of immigrants and their cultures in those literary productions. We also question the way those portrayals may contribute to children's global citizenship, to cultural exchanges and to a world without boundaries.

Introduction

Since the earliest days of colonization, Portugal has been a country of emigrants. Moreover, since the end of the twentieth century, Portugal has become the destination of different migration flows, remodelling Portuguese society and turning it into a plural community. Those first migration flows were deeply connected with decolonization and the political changes that occurred in Portugal in 1974, which led to the restoration of democracy. Indeed, in the 1970s, migratory movements were essentially associated with the repatriation of Portuguese residents from colonial territories in Africa (mainly from Angola and Mozambique)

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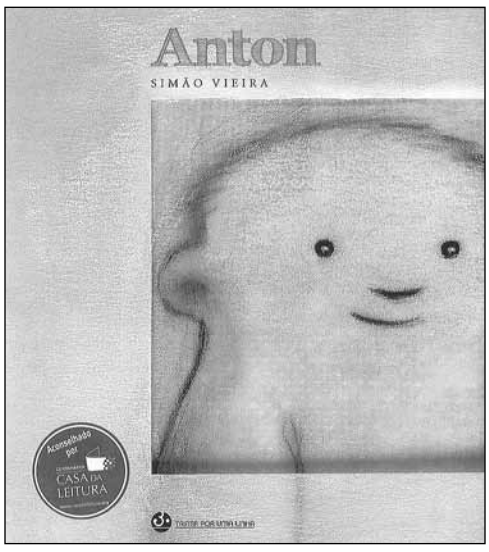
as well as the settlement in Portugal of people born in African PALOP countries (African Countries of Portuguese Official Language), who migrated to Portugal for security and economic reasons.

At the beginning of this new millennium, Portugal witnessed a sudden and unexpected change in the landscape of immigration and these, substantial migratory movements are related to the arrival of different immigrant communities in Portugal from Brazil, East European, and Asian countries. Portugal became a host country for several thousand immigrants, leading to an increasingly multicultural Portuguese society. This situation has created some challenges concerning the social integration of immigrants and their citizenship. Unfortunately, as in other countries all over the world, immigrant integration is not always successful due to racist and xenophobic attitudes, disturbingly present in Portuguese society.

Several Portuguese authors have demonstrated the importance of children's literature in developing attitudes of respect, understanding and acceptance of cultural and ethnic differences.

Since the Second World War, one of the core values of children's literature has been to promote awareness and respect for other races and cultures (Colomer 121). Several Portuguese authors have demonstrated the importance of children's literature in developing attitudes of respect, understanding and acceptance of cultural and ethnic differences. It is important to note that children's literature as a socio-cultural activity has repercussions in the social construction of reality and in setting standards for social behaviour. As Morgado and Pires emphasize, children's literature cannot be separated from politics or history, representing and shaping social and cultural relations of power (14). Children's literature may be a setting for representing the cultural diversity that surrounds young readers, with an enormous potential for social transformation, because it can help to break down strong barriers, such as prejudices and stereotypes, thereby promoting cultural dialogue.



In this paper we reflect on the existence and relevance of the issue of immigration in contemporary Portuguese children's literature and to analyse the representations of immigrants and their cultures in those literary productions. In exploring the reasons for and consequences of immigration conveyed in those literary texts, we will identify the perceptions transmitted about people from other countries and question the way those portrayals may contribute to children's global citizenship, to cultural exchanges and to a world without boundaries.

Immigration and Immigrants in Portuguese Children's Literature

Firstly, we must highlight that contemporary Portuguese children's books dealing with immigrants and

immigration published in the last decades are not representative of the broader corpus of Portuguese children's literature. However, some contemporary Portuguese children's books introduce readers to the immigrant experience. Those books are stories of recent immigrant children and their families. Irina, in *O Primeiro Natal em Portugal* [The First Christmas in Portugal] is a Ukrainian girl (Soares); in another story, Katerina comes from Eastern Europe (Gonçalves and Forjaz), as does Anton (Vieira); Nunca Unca is an African boy (Gonçalves and Forjaz); the main character in Café com leite [Coffee with Milk] is an Angolan boy (Magalhães); Tino's parents seem to be from Cape Verde (Soares,); Lia is a chinese girl (Botelho) as well as Liung in *O Carro vermelho* [The Red Car] (Soares). Those narratives tell us the story of families who left their country, making a difficult journey to another land, looking for a better life and dreaming of a new future. Written from the child's perspective, those narratives invite readers to take notice of the problems and difficulties that immigration generates in the lives of the protagonists.

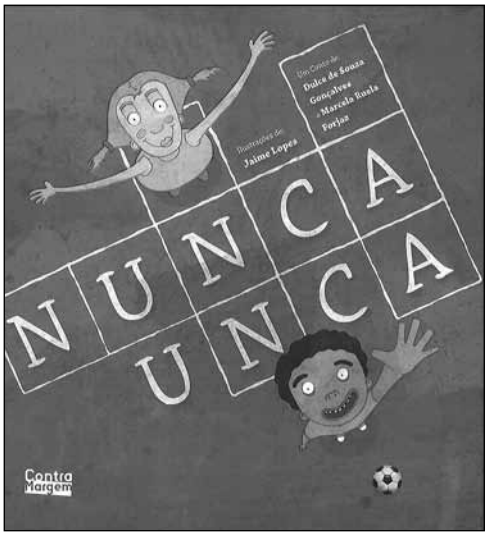
Apart from economic and/or professional reasons, reasons associated with safety and violence, among others, are cited as the main causes of migratory fluxes in the world (Klugman 55). Portuguese children's books present these reasons, which may help readers to understand this complex social issue. The main character of *Café com Leite* [Coffee with Milk] has immigrated because of war, to survive, in search of peace (Magalhães unp.); Irina's parents come to Portugal looking for a better life (Soares unp.); Djuku, a young African woman, leaves her village because she has no job in her country (Corbel unp.).

The various problems faced by immigrants (specifically by children) in a new country are developed in all these texts. Indeed, the nostalgia for the family left behind, (grandparents, brothers or close friends) is present in some books, but the difficulties of integration into a new society are essential elements to the plot of all the narratives we focus on here.

Some books stress the stigmas and prejudices of the Portuguese towards newcomers, essentially because of a physical difference, such as skin color, whether it is black or extremely white. "We don't like you. You are black... and you should have stayed in your country," say the schoolmates to the main character in *Café com Leite* [Coffee and Milk] in the school playground (Magalhães unp.); some of Irina's schoolmates sing this song ironically around her when she receives excellent results in mathematics, mocking her physical appearance:

"Irina, Irina
what a delicate girl
her skin looks like salt and
her eyes like a pool
her hair like margarine.
Are you suffering because you miss your family and friends?
Take an aspirin!" (Soares unp.)

Immigrant children are ridiculed, discriminated against, ignored at school by host country children and these narratives testify how those situations are painful for them (Gonçalves and Forjaz; Magalhães; Soares). They feel like strangers in the new country (Botelho), as if they were "aliens" (Irina's words in "O Primeiro Natal em Portugal" [The First Christmas in Portugal]) (Soares unp.), from another galaxy, as Anton also says (Vieira unp.).



Furthermore, immigrant children are faced with prejudice because of their difficulties with the new language. This situation contributes to the discrimination and segregation of immigrant children. Moreover, this compromises the possibilities of communication and of creating friendship ties. For this reason, children remain isolated in a corner on the playground playing alone and feeling apart. The moment immigrant and Portuguese children speak to each other in a friendly way is a crucial instant for the reconstruction of the identity of these children living away from their homeland. A new life begins for Irina (Soares unp.), for Nunca Unca and Katerina (Gonçalves and Forjaz unp.), and for Lia (Botelho unp.) because some schoolmates approach them and start talking to them and playing with them. In those books, as in what seems to happen in other countries. the plot reaches a stereotypical ending, with an event that breaks barriers between the newcomer and his or her classmates.

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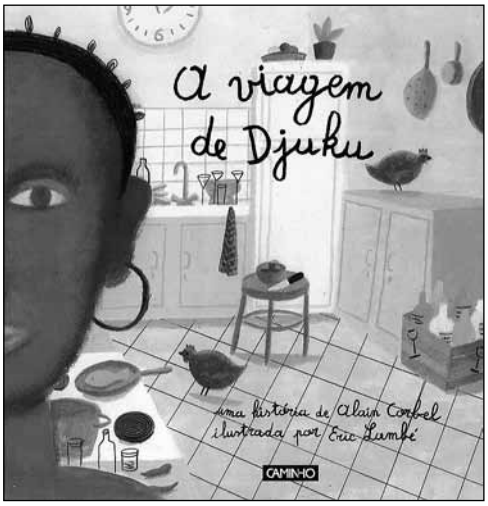


A viagem de Djuku [Djuku's Journey] tells the story of a young African woman who leaves her village where everyone knows her and reaches a big town in another country, searching for a job (Corbel unp). Leaving the village is a painful experience, but Djuku keeps every single thing her eyes see for the last time in Africa in her heart. She discovers a new world during her journey and is fascinated by all the things she sees. She feels happy, excited by the emotion of the journey. She is stunned by the vision of the city with thousands of people running around all the time (a big marching forest, in her own words). Initially she feels a little lost, but she pursues her goal and finds a job in a restaurant doing what she likes to do, cooking (Corbel unp.).

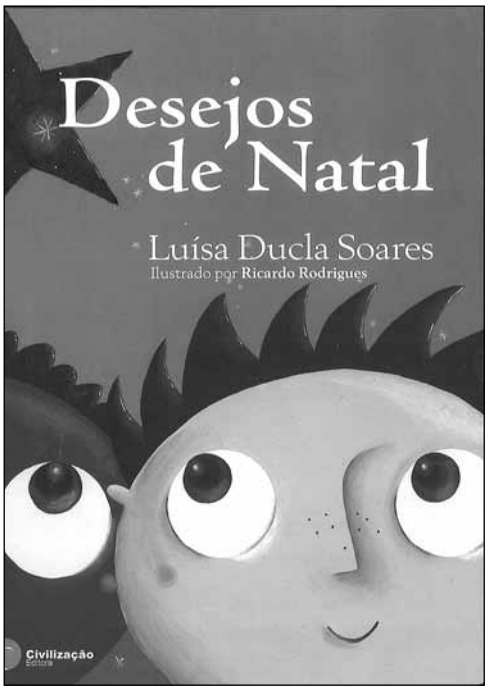
A new life begins for this young woman, but she feels like a stranger because nobody knows her—the restaurant customers only see her hands working in the kitchen, serving meals. She sighs:

"Before, everyone knew who Djuku was, but now I am just a passing shadow, who goes in the morning to work and returns at night. Nobody knows me here, I am a shadow without a story." (Corbel unp.). She tries to find a way of connecting her present situation to her old life: "One day, she thinks, I will need that what I have lived through before marries what I'm living through now; that the restaurant becomes engaged to the village." (Corbel unp.).

The moment Djuku leaves the kitchen and enters the dining room, because she hears the name of her village in the newsflash, is the moment she is finally perceived by the restaurant customers as a human being. They congratulate her on her marvelous food and she is understood as someone equal to them. This moment of sharing is an important turning point in the plot. Everybody listens to Djuku when she tells her story: how she left the village, the journey, the work in the town and her enormous loneliness. This is a magical moment, because old memories and new ones come together and Djuku is no longer a stranger; she has found her place in this new country. She brings with her new ways of cooking, new spices, but she learns other recipes, makes new friends and starts a different life (Corbel unp.). So, the immigrant experience is somehow seen as a positive condition, but this book also accentuates the importance of immigrant's integration into the new society, which depends on the respect and understanding shown by residents.

So, the immigrant experience is somehow seen as a positive condition, but this book also accentuates the importance of immigrant's integration into the new society, which depends on the respect and understanding shown by residents.

Portuguese children's books emphasize the social difficulties of immigrants' lives. In narratives already mentioned, "The First Christmas in Portugal" and "The Red Car" (Soares), and also in "Na cova da Moura" ["In Cova da Moura" from the book Christmas' Wishes] (Soares), through the main characters, Irina, a Ukrainian girl, Liung, an eight-year-old Chinese boy, and



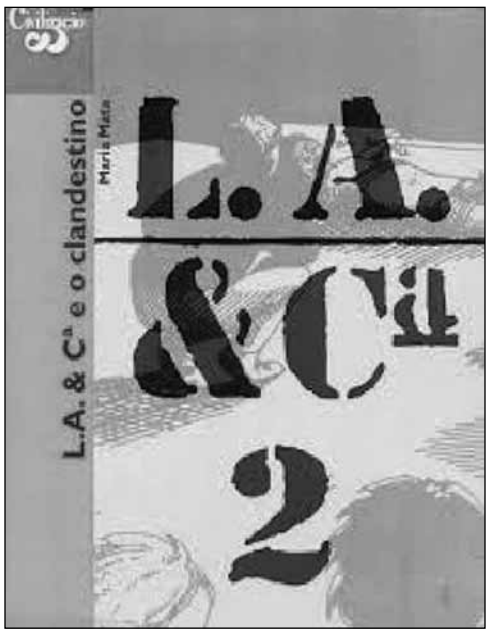
Tino, a boy of African descent, readers experience the unfortunate and dangerous conditions of immigrants' lives. Liung's parents share a house with other Chinese immigrants who work hard in stores and restaurants and, even if their uncles sell lots of toys, he cannot have just one red car for himself (Soares unp.). Irina and her parents live in a house with no indispensable conditions; Irina's father works hard in construction, although he was a doctor in his homeland (Soares unp.). Tino lives in Cova da Moura, which is considered a problematic neighbourhood near Lisbon where lots of immigrants live, and he is involuntarily involved in a robbery, forced by older boys (Soares unp.). Even when the living conditions of immigrants are presented in these books, whether in logistical, professional or personal terms, their dignity is always emphasized as well as the loneliness they go through before they make friends in their new country.

All these books and narratives help young

readers to come into contact with other ways of living, with other cultures, through the multiple cultural references presented, whether gastronomic, religious, or social allusions. Through these books, children know that in Ukraine people celebrate Christmas in January and they have special traditions; for Chinese people, Christmas is not a important festivity and they celebrate the Chinese New Year with family (*Soares, Desejos De Natal*). In Africa, people eat a different kind of food and use spices that we do not often use in Portuguese cuisine (Corbel unp.). Moreover, the Ukrainian and Chinese languages are different from Portuguese (Soares unp.; Botelho unp.); the way children live in African villages (their houses, their food, their toys...) contrasts hugely with European children's lives (Magalhães unp.). All of this information contributes to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the other and to intercultural dialogue.

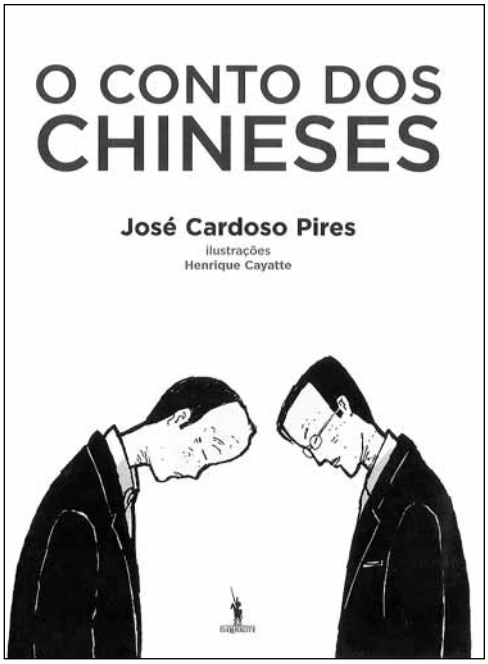
Some Portuguese books for young adults also deal with the issue of immigration. In the book *Baunilha e Chocolate* [Vanilla and Chocolate] (Meireles), Jasmim, a teenager girl, tells the readers her life story:

> I am from an African country, you can see a poor land in my face, and fires are around my mouth, which is always frowning because it is so closed. You can see it even inside my eyes, not to mention how this poverty is evident in my ridiculously varnished shoes and in my skimpy white dress. It is not difficult to realize who is poor whether it is a boy, a girl or a country. We always bear it written on our forehead. In my poor and desolate land I wanted to study. My parents also wanted to offer me a future. So, we came to Portugal, shaking off the remaining dust and trying to prepare ourselves to face the new world. (16)

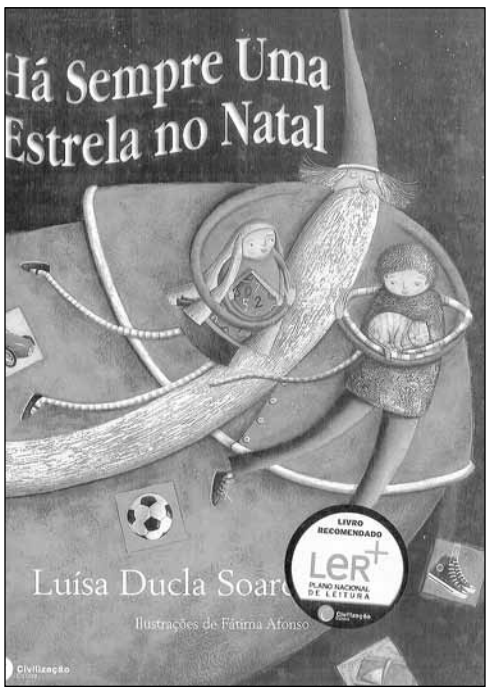


Jasmim lives in a children's institution because her mother, a victim of domestic violence, dies. Life in a new country does not go as their parents expected and her father became an alcoholic and aggressive. Jasmim is discriminated against by some of her schoolmates because she has black skin: "Blacks are either smart or stupid. Which are you?," and she is an immigrant: "When we entered room 32 'We do not want black people, black people in Africa' was written on the blackboard in big letters. And next to these fat words was a sign that history teachers called swastika." (12).

Adolescent readers also encounter the topic of illegal immigration through the adventure book *L. A. & C.ª e o Clandestino* [L. A. & Co. and the Clandestine] (Mata)"event-place":"Porto","author":[{"family":"Mata","given":"Maria"}],"issued":{"year":1996}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}. The heroes of this narrative find a black boy miserably dressed and attacked by three adults and hide him in the cellar, giving him food and clothes. Later, their parents take the boy into their home. He has run away from Angola, because of systemic violence, and he is an illegal immigrant in Portugal, looking for a job for himself, his aunts and uncles (42). The consequences of war are explored in this book as well as immigration as an escape, which is not always successful, to a better life.



The book *O conto dos chineses* [The tale of the Chinese], written in 1959 by José Cardoso Pires, one of the most important Portuguese writers, was released in 2009 as a children's version. The book tells the story of a casual meeting between a Portuguese man, a security guard at a construction site who is eating his lunch on a hot Sunday, and two Chinese immigrants, looking for a place to eat. The Portuguese man shares his bread and soup with the immigrants and they all eat together. The immigrants and the Portuguese man talk about gastronomic differences between the two cultures, mainly because the native is curious about things he believes Chinese people eat, such as rats, cockroaches and swallows. They find out that, in Portugal as in China, people like to eat small fried birds. They share flavours and ways of catching birds and the two friendly Chinese men offer a pencil for the Portuguese man's daughters who are playing nearby. They explain some Chinese characters to the Portuguese man who is interested and amazed by the Chinese language. The Portuguese security guard finds out that there are no big differences between his life and the two immigrants' lives: "Like us, said the security guard, just like us. In eating and in everything" (Pires unp.).



This powerful literary production makes readers reflect on stereotypes and prejudices and how they constitute barriers in the moment of interaction with people coming from another country and culture. On the other hand, the way the Portuguese security guard receives these immigrants is a positive lesson, an example of deep humanity. The message conveyed about immigrants' lives difficulties and the strength of the dialogue between cultures is enriching for children and young adults and contributes to promote global citizenship.

It must be said that, in all these children's books, illustration plays an important role in understanding explicit

and implicit meanings of verbal discourse, in decoding the message conveyed about immigrants and immigration. Indeed, images provide "a visual prompt, a pictorial counterpart to the text; their role is to add to the reader's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment" (Salisbury 95). In those books, through words and images, readers can more easily understand, not only the difficulties and suffering of immigrants in a new country, but also the important issue of language in this context: in the tale "O Primeiro Natal em Portugal" (from the book There's always a star at Christmas time), readers come into contact with Ukrainian words (Soares unp.); in *O Conto dos Chineses* [The Tale of the Chinese] (Pires unp.) and *A Colecção* [The Collection] they come into contact with Chinese characters (Botelho unp.).

Conclusion

Contemporary Portuguese children's literature approaches the issue of immigration in a particular way. Indeed, in nearly all the books analysed in this paper, the main characters are children. Their childhood encourages identification with the reader. This facilitates comprehension of the message. All of the books focus on the question of the difficulties of being an immigrant, especially the barriers immigrants and their families face in terms of social integration. They emphasize the problems connected with integrating immigrants into a different society, making readers reflect and understand those difficulties. Those books present problems immigrants confront in helping children to understand and accept the other and contribute to reducing stereotypes and prejudices. Even if these books deal with the question of racism and xenophobia, they use these situations to denounce incorrect attitudes and behaviors towards immigrants.

Specifically in the Portuguese school environment, we find students from various parts of the world (from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe countries) that face multiple barriers to integration into Portuguese society. These children's lives are not easy because, in addition to being involuntary immigrants, their integration depends on the host society and the construction of new social relationships. We think that the books analyzed in this paper help children to understand how difficult it is for anyone to leave her/his homeland and move to a foreign country with a new language, new mores and a different culture. This message allows readers to be aware of the other – of immigrant children.

All of the books highlight the importance of integrating immigrants into new societies, as a good deal of social research has concluded in Portugal. Indeed, those works show that young immigrants prefer integration, rejecting assimilation and separation (Neto 96). The children's books analyzed in this paper show that immigrants have a sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group, but they also look for social contacts with colleagues from other groups and with their own culture, as part of the process of socialization and integration.

We must underline that all these books portray immigrants in a positive light and this is important, even if, in some narratives, it seems that children need to prove they are trustworthy. Irina and her father help a young Portuguese woman to deliver her baby (Soares unp.); the main character in *Café com leite* [Coffe with milk] saves a classmate from drowning and this situation leads the other children to accept him (Magalhães unp.); Djuku is a competent cook (Corbel unp.); the two Chinese immigrants are smiling, kind and pleasant men (Pires unp.); Nunca Unca is a likeable boy and so is Katerina, the girl from Eastern Europe (Gonçalves and Forjaz unp.). In all of these narratives, the immigrant character is valued and their courage, sympathy and humanity are enhanced.

Taking this into account, it must be noted that, by approaching the issue of immigration and portraying the immigrant character without prejudice or in a stereotypical way, children's books may help children to commit not only intellectually but also emotionally to the other (Fittipaldi 12) giving them, through identification, the possibility to experience feelings and other ways of thinking and living. Furthermore, these books promote intercultural communication skills and integrate new social and cultural visions of the world, allowing children to feel closer to other human beings. As Teresa Colomer argues, literature is a powerful educational tool to create a new representation of current societies which necessarily include diverse origins and cultures ("Escuela e Inmigración" 1). We live in a world without hiding places (Morgado and Pires 9), and children's literature can eliminate boundaries, presenting the world as a global village and humanity as a desirable community.

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In *The Mysterious Francois's Leaf Monkeys*, field naturalist Liu Xianping takes us through China's magnificent wilderness in search of the elusive and endangered François's langur. The world needs more nature writers like Xianping, willing to share their deep knowledge and understanding of nature with young readers, yet openly admitting that we know very little about the basic needs and life histories of most species with which we share this planet, including those we have been keeping in captivity for centuries. Xianping encourages his readers to share his inquisitiveness and his account portrays the passion, patience and tenacity of those who make studying nature their life. The book is part of the series *My Friend from Mountains* by the same author. Sadly, the awkward translation of this award-winning author's work will discourage most readers from making it past the first chapter of any of the three books in the series. How unfortunate.

Doris Audet

Liu Xianping

The Mysterious Francois's Leaf Monkeys

Guangzhou: Time, 2010
102 p.
ISBN: 978-7539635606
(Nonfiction, 10+)

The School as Mediator when Constituting the Family of Readers

by YARA MARIA MIGUEL

Never has there been so much talk about reading and, particularly, never has there been so much investment in projects and programs with the purpose of breeding readers. For many, however, access to written materials takes place primarily at school. Therefore a substantial part of the investments is directed to the preparation of the readers in their school years. So much so that, for many, the completion of Secondary Education buries definitively the access to diversified reading, to the library, to living with the texts and the multiple possibilities of meetings and dialogues that the act of reading provides.

The second edition of "Retratos da Leitura no Brasil," held by the Institute Pró-Livro, showed the following results:

- Number of readers: 95 million
- Number of non-readers: 77 million
- Number of books purchased: 1.2 books per inhabitant/year (results 36.2 million Buyers of books)
- Number of books read: 4.7 books per inhabitant/year.

Yara Maria Miguel works for the Department of Education, State of Sao Paulo, as head of the Read and Write Program, a State educational policy applied at Public Fundamental Schools. She trains teachers, pedagogical coordinators and technical staff. She also advises Public Schools in the process of encouraging readers.

The Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) announced in its statement number 129, of January 10, 2012 that 5,187 municipalities have public libraries, and 378 municipalities do not have any. That alone would justify the transformation of school libraries and reading rooms throughout the country in spaces open to the community.

Through the Program Read and Write [*Programa Ler e Escrever*[1]], we have encouraged schools to develop projects to promote reading, aimed at the participation of the family in different contexts of reading. The goal of the program is to create young readers who actively enjoy reading different sorts of literature and are driven to participate in literary culture. We believe that the reverse path—that is, the participation of the school constructing a family-based reading culture—can be a determining factor for the full inclusion of pupils in the community of readers. Interaction between readers is essential, both for the training of the reader and in the hope that they will continue to read throughout his or her life.

The "Literary Bag" Project

The "*Literary Bag*"[2] project is part of a set of proposals to encourage reading. It includes events such as literary soirees and other parties, reading time, continuous silent reading,[3] and open library (sharing books with members of the community). All schools in the state education network perform one or more versions of these projects. It is important to keep in mind that many Brazilian schools carry out projects and programs to encourage reading. They rely on partnerships with foundations, Departments of Culture and Education, and NGOs, among other social agents.

When we began training with the educational coordinators and school principals in 2007, our main task was to facilitate the proposals developed by schools. In general, the disfiguration of reading as a cultural practice is both for the children and the family. Schools often organize post-reading activities in order to assess reading comprehension and ensure that the children are, in fact, reading. Children are commonly encouraged to draw or summarize their stories, while parents are invited to answer questionnaires. In this context, the role of training is to promote the redefinition of social uses of reading.

In the Literary Bag Project, pupils take home, with certain regularity, books. A significant variation was the introduction of other publications of interest for the families, such as magazines and newspapers. We can analyze the insertion of printed materials on family universe, from the following perspectives: firstly, affective aspects of books; the contact with the literature is often enchanting, and provides unexpected experiences—experiences that legitimize literature's place in the community of readers.

The second perspective relates to the fact that reading with parents and relatives creates a foundation for a continuation of learning. Habitual reading can make us better people—more committed to the collective good and to our own personal development. The third aspect of family

engagement with literature is that the regular presence of books and other written materials (newspapers, monthly publications, etc.) allow each family to build, from initial knowledge, more complex, consistent meanings on the social uses of reading.

Paulo Freire, in his book *A importância do Ato de Ler* [The Importance of the Act of Reading] tells us that "the reading of the world always precedes the reading of the word and the reading of the word implies the continuity in reading the world." Thus, the understanding of oneself and the world can be profoundly affected by the literature with which we engage throughout our lives. However, Ferreiro also argues that "the democratization of reading and writing came accompanied by a radical inability to make it effective"—to the extent that public schools did not allow many parents of pupils to become full members of reading communities. Becoming a reader is a way to recover dignity—a way to consciously adopt the role of historical subject, after having been prematurely prevented from being part of the written culture.

The 3rd Grade Experience

Ana Luiza Matielli Campos's class had 27 students between 7 and 8 years of age. At the beginning of the school year, some pupils could not write and could only read conventionally. At the end of the first semester, each student was able to read and write with autonomy. The project was named "Literary Bag," due to the arguments of the children that considered the terms "suitcase" or "pouch" inadequate, since they associate "suitcase" to boring people and "pouch" to nothing specific, because "one can take just about anything in it"

The classroom's weekly routine included the completion of reading activities to meet different ends: to obtain information, to follow instructions, for leisure or fun, to study, to review one's own writing or somebody else's, and to practice reading aloud, among other social practices of reading. At every opportunity involving reading activities, the teacher explained in great detail procedures, behaviors, and reading skills so that students could appropriate them.

The teacher assigned work individually and in groups so that each student could benefit from cognitive interaction. This methodological approach made it possible for the pupils to successfully interact with both with the teacher and other students. In addition, she considered the modalities of reading that were most suitable for the developmental level of each activity: teaching reading skills while reading to the students (shared reading/collaborative reading), proposing individual reading or pair work, and formulating questions to encourage the construction of textual meanings.

According to Ana Luiza this project has greatly impacted students, emphasizing, in the testimony that follows, the incorporation of the family:

Parents fell in love with the material their children took home. Therefore, at another meeting with parents, we had a round of literary suggestions for them—parents who couldn't participate were represented by other family members. It was a very significant and productive moment because, at the beginning, many couldn't verify or find a social function in reading. Others were simply unable to read. Many began to ask for more books, some have even gone after donations. With the significant improvement, well-motivated pupils, enamored with the reading, collectively produced a letter to the pupils of the classroom next door, inviting them to join the project. They will start in the second semester. In the final stages of the project, pupils have acquired reader and writer behavior, have read texts to pupils of other classrooms, and are producing better and better written work.

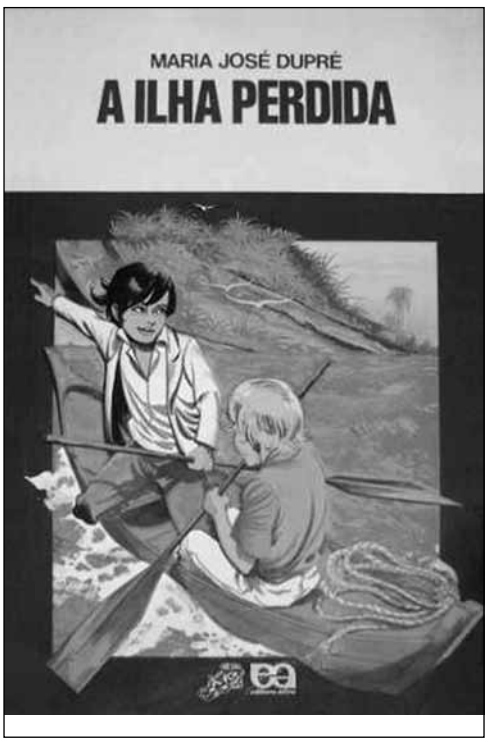
The testimonies of the students, collected by their teacher, are exciting, as they demonstrate the impact of this project within their families and school. The children note:

I can read much better, I even want to write comics telling everything that happens when I bring "The Bag" home. I read much more, too! I read to my little brother, too. When "The Bag" arrives to our home we get together reading in the living room. My mother reads magazines and newspapers, my sister and I read books, comics and Recreio magazine, and my father, who still reads just a little, is being encouraged by me to do some more reading. (Jorge Fernandes de Souza – 8 years old).

I can read better now. My mother says my reading skills have improved a great deal. I have also found more elaborate words to use when I write my texts. I am happy! My knowledge has also improved because I've been using *Recreio Magazine* to do some research and learn more. My dad says he also feels like reading. It is great when the people from the church come to our home. We read and I play with my school friends. (Larissa Ribeiro Silvestre – 8 years old)

I didn't use to read anything; I didn't even have books at home… Now I read magazines, short stories, jokes… Well… and I couldn't read so well. I think I am improving, don't you think, teacher? (Wellington Bizzin de Camargo – 8 years old)

Our family gatherings are much better now. When the "bag" arrives we all get together to read. My mom and dad are getting divorced now but when the "bag" arrives […] we are all close together again! My brother's girlfriend, who is pregnant, loved the magazines about babies. Sometimes we go on reading till very late in the evening." (Maria Fernanda Andrade Penha – 8 years old)



As we can see, this project has had a significant impact on children's learning processes, as well as in their familial relationships. They learn to read with fluency, develop proficiency in reading, and become competent writers active participants of the written culture.

Promoting reading as a positive and meaningful experience advocates learning as a right—one that should be continued throughout life—and, as Luzia de Maria suggests, literature gives you the opportunity to

> […] get in contact with the everyday life of people and the realities with which we never dreamed of [interacting]… proving that no matter how big the cultural differences are, what remains is the human aspect. And, literature keeps reminding us that we are inhabitants of the same house, heirs to a common destiny, above all and in spite of everything, forever brothers and sisters.

Keeping in mind the role of reading in cognitive development and the construction of knowledge, introducing reading rituals to children in the home played an important role in literary development. The children's experiences were embedded in the construction of new knowledge, opportunities for dialog, exchange of experiences, and they undoubtedly contributed strengthened family relationships.

Conclusion

Reading is extremely valuable in today's world in terms of exercising citizenship and human development. However, investments in reader training are made primarily in early education. By stating this I am in no means disregarding the fruitful investments in projects that promote reading. In fact, it seems appropriate to emphasize, according to Ellen Grotta, that:

> […] the effective promotion of reading—the training of readers—depends on conditions that must be present in society as whole. Such conditions include: familiarity with books, access to formal education, possibility of using a well-equipped network of libraries that meets their interests and needs, buying power for regular purchases of written materials, time for the exercise of reading, stimuli to enhance the reading as a means of acquiring knowledge, social project oriented for the awakening of the critical awareness through reading, efficient national policies to encourage reading habits, etc. (qtd. in Silva)

It is in this context that the school can fulfill its fundamental role in dealing with reading not only as the object of teaching, but also, and above all, as a possibility for cultural engagement and the strengthening of families in reading communities. When we take note of the work of Ana Luiza and her students, we conclude that these family-based reading communities are fully possible!

Notes

1. Public policy of the Department of Education of the State of São Paulo for the first grade of Elementary School. It is based on three main lines: 1.Institutional follow up through two measures: mapping of pupils' learning process and an external system of annual evaluation; 2. Pedagogical materials for pupils and teachers; 3. Professional training. An important initiative of this program has been the assembly of classroom libraries at all public schools.
2. I first became involved in this project in 2007, in a training group for the municipalities convened with the State Department of Education. At that time, many municipal schools participated in the "Join the Circle" [Entre na Roda] program, in partnership with the Volkswagen Foundation and the Center for Studies and Research in Education, Culture and Community Action (CENPEC). Literary Bag and Travelling Bag are some variations of this project.
3. "Programa de Lectura Silenciosa Sostenida" de Mabel Condemárin.

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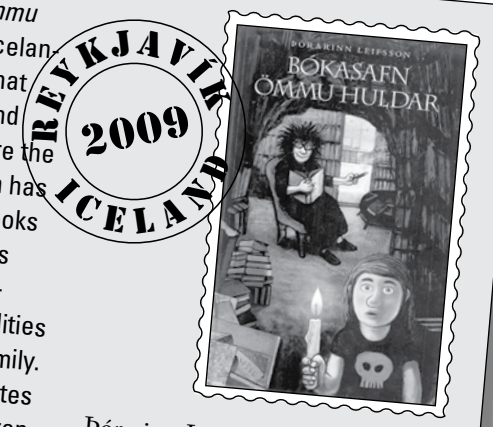
Þórarinn Leifsson's 2009 young adult novel *Bókasafn ömmu Huldar* [Grandmother's Library], inspired by the recent Icelandic financial crisis, is a creative and entertaining work that will appeal to readers of all ages. Through both words and illustrations, the author presents a dystopian future where the world is controlled by the Gold Bank (Gullbankinn), which has completely abolished all elements of culture. Although books are forbidden, the 11-year-old protagonist, Albertína, loves reading, and is thrilled when her 158-year-old great-great-grandmother, Arnheiður Huld, who possesses magical abilities and a secret collection of books, comes to live with her family. After her parents and the parents of many of her schoolmates are captured and brainwashed by the Gold Bank, the children join forces with Grandmother Huld, who introduces them to her library and helps them save their parents and the world. It is no surprise that Þórarinn Leifsson received the 2010 Reykjavík Children's Literature Prize for this highly relevant work.

Natalie M. Van Deusen



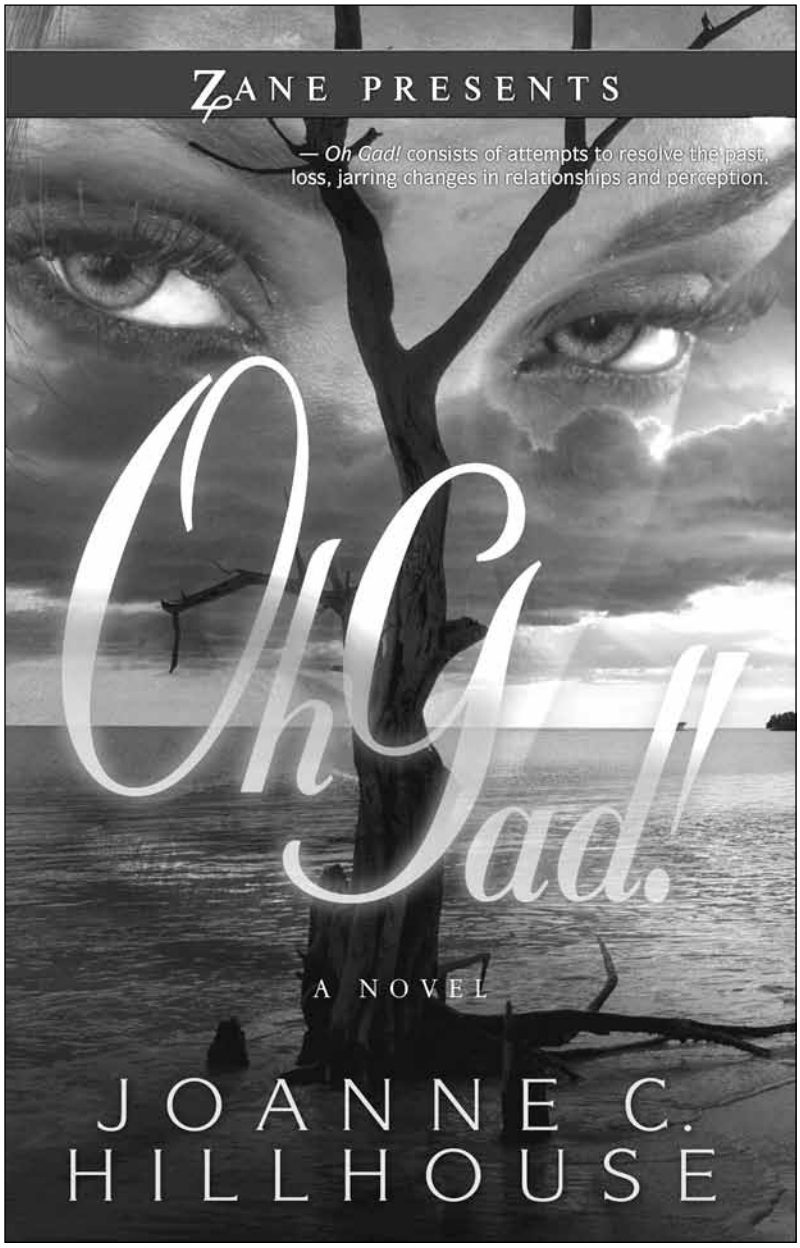
Þórarinn Leifsson

Bókasafn ömmu Huldar [Grandmother's Library]

Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2009
ISBN: 978-9979-3-3084-4
(Illustrated fiction, 9+)

Wadadli Pen and Young Writers in the Caribbean

by JOANNE C. HILLHOUSE



In 2012, shortly after the release of my book *Oh Gad!*, I had the opportunity to speak and read at the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars conference being held that year in Suriname. I decided to embrace it as an opportunity to talk about opportunities the digital age had opened up for writers writing from a small place. Rather than lamenting the challenges of being marooned on an island in the Caribbean while dreaming of telling my stories around the world, I spoke of the ways Caribbean writers were working and using technology to overcome those hurdles.

What does this have to do with children's writing? I am not, after all, a children's writer. I do, however, run a writing program for young people in Antigua and Barbuda.

Antiguan Joanne C. Hillhouse is the author of the 2012 novel *Oh Gad!*, as well as *The Boy from Willow Bend*, and *Dancing Nude in the Moonlight*. She's also the founder of the Wadadli Youth Pen Prize project.

Here's the thing. No one should have to hide his or her talent or watch it atrophy from disuse or want of opportunity. But as a writer coming up in a poor working class community on Antigua, a 108 square mile island in the Caribbean, successful writing models close to home were lacking. I hadn't a clue really, about how to become the writer I dreamed of being, and it seemed such an impossible dream, I couldn't even voice it to myself. And yet through it all, I devoured books and kept on daydreaming and writing. Then I discovered the writing of Jamaica Kincaid, the internationally renowned writer who began in the same small place I came from, and in time I dared to speak my dream out loud, and to take leaps of faith that would bring me to the point of being a published author.

It still rocks my world when some teenager reading my book in school approaches me to ask if I'm the author and to tell me how much he or she related to the book. I've been interviewed by and had the opportunity to speak to bands of these high school students on my island, and it literally transports me to the world of disbelief, because not all that long ago, I was a girl dreaming and not quite daring to believe.

Now, I don't want the next generation of scribes to ever think it's easy. It isn't. But I don't want them to doubt that it's possible. I want to stir in them a sense of the rightness of putting their art out into the world. Out of that desire grew the Wadadli Youth Pen Prize, to help young writers in the Caribbean.

At the ACWWS, I presented my Wadadli Pen experience as a case study, discussing not just what I've done with the support of my partners, but also connecting it to my larger ideas about writing authentic fiction which, if well-drawn, a reader anywhere in the world can connect with. Fostering a sense of Caribbean-ness, and within that a sense of Antiguan-ness, has been a priority, meanwhile, for my pet project, the Wadadli Youth Pen Prize, since I started it in 2004.

During a visit to Villa Primary school in Antigua to promote the annual writing contest—the Wadadli Pen 2012 Challenge—which is the centerpiece of what we do, I wrote that in making my pitch to the young ones we talked about using surrounding environment, taking note of the stories that take place in their world. When I shared with them Ashley Bryan's *Dancing Granny*, encouraging them to keep the beat, and played a recording of the first Wadadli Pen winning story, Gemma George's *Stray Dog Prepares for the Storm*, their eyes lit up because they recognized it—they recognized themselves and their world: "There I am! My life is the stuff of literature too!" That's where it starts.

Wadadli Pen exists not only to give them an outlet, but also an inlet. From the beginning, Wadadli Pen has been about giving young Antiguans and Barbudans something I had not had growing up—I wanted them to see that they have a voice. I wanted them to believe that great stories don't just happen in other places.

As a child, I read *Uncle Arthur Bed Time Stories*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Little Women*, *Are You There God It's Me Margaret?*, and *Tom Sawyer*. In my teens, I read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, more *Sweet Valley Highs* and *Sidney Sheldons* than I can count, Dickens, Bronte, and Austen. In fact, outside of the Calypso and Anansy and Jumby stories of my youth, and the few short stories and occasional Caribbean novel touched on in high school (excerpts from Michael Anthony's *Year in San Fernando* come to mind), I would credit the University of the West Indies, in my late teens/early 20s, for really stoking my awareness of and curiosity for writing from the African Diaspora—including the Caribbean, the U.S., and Africa. Dr. Carolyn Cooper was one of my teachers at UWI, and her class was one of my favourite places to be. I remember reading her newspaper column in English and Jamaican. The pride she had in her Jamaican-ness, especially her Afro-Jamai-Caribbean-ness, was palpable and inspiring.

Wadadli Pen Awards 2004

Wadadli Pen would come many years after I'd left UWI, prompted in fact by a speech by Guyanese writer Ruel Johnson in 2003 at the Caribbean Canadian Literary Expo, in which he lamented the absence of nurseries for the literary talent in the region. Having felt the absence of such a nursery, both as a wannabe writer and as a young emerging writing, I returned home and promptly drafted the plan for Wadadli Pen, which launched in 2004. It has undergone many changes over the years, but what has remained constant is its insistence on a Caribbean sensibility. It's been interesting to me that some have found this off-putting because they feel hemmed in by the clichés of the genre—that if they're writing speculative fiction, for instance, there is no place for them under this umbrella of fiction with a Caribbean sensibility. I've taken to explaining it as writing from an imaginative space rooted in their Caribbeanness, but not fenced in by it. I tell them to use it as the tether that allows them to soar like a kite caught up in the brisk Easter winds. In urging them to embrace a Caribbean aesthetic, if you will, I was hopefully helping them to see that whatever the genre, the seed of the idea can come from this rich soil of Caribbean lore, mythology, geography, history, society, imagination. I believe the work so rooted in Caribbean experience can have universal appeal not in spite of but because of its rich detail.

Antigua, my country, is not paradise. Nowhere in the Caribbean is—it's not a fantasy. It is as real as anywhere else in the world, but most importantly, it is home; not just home to the physical me, but home to the things that first sparked my imagination and sense of wonder and curiosity. Everything that is Antigua runs through me. I wouldn't know how to dilute it and I wouldn't want to, which is why I love this review posted to Amazon about *Oh Gad!*: "even though the dialect wasn't something I was used to, at the end of the book, I felt that I could go to Antigua and carry on a conversation with the best of them." Whether

she could or not is neither here nor there—but if, as she said, the book "pulled" her in "and refused to let go," I was happy that the language was understandable in context.

I want to be the kind of writer that takes the reader there, makes their world go blurry and out of focus, and brings the world of the book, my world, into vivid focus. And I want to encourage the young writers in the Wadadli Pen nursery to aspire to a similar sort of authenticity. To varying degrees, they have embraced the idea of sharing their world.

It's not just the physical world; it's also the social mores. Siena Hunte, a 2004 Wadadli Pen Challenge honourable mention recipient, writes of a wedding in her story "Nuclear Family Explosion:" "In England 'RSVP' means you let the people know whether you are coming or not. Relatives from all over the Caribbean who had not responded were arriving with their families. A look of delight, which then turned to panic, spread across my aunt's face as she tried to calculate how far the food would spread." It's the food. Runner up in the 18 to 35 age category, in 2011, Latisha Walker Jacob, in Market Day, wrote, "Her big shiny silver pot was steaming with hot rice pudding, head skin and maw..." The language is there. "When me a likkle bwoy, she min dun owl a-ready," Kemal Osmel Nicholson, a 2006 Wadadli Pen Challenge candidate of honourable mention, wrote of Ma Belle. As for fantasy, there is the make-believe world of Redonda as imagined by Rilys Adams's 2005 second placed story, "Fictional Reality," which depicts a world where "marble rocks were visible along the coastline and the sky was a deep violet… (And) the shore sparkled with fragments of diamonds."

Wadadli Pen Awards 2012

All of these stories are archived at www.wadadlipen.wordpress.com, which I initially founded in 2010 to showcase the winning stories, but which I have used in the time since to showcase Antiguan and Barbudan literature, as well as Caribbean literature.

One of the things I'm most proud of on the site is the bibliography of Antiguan and Barbudan literature. Yes, there is more to us than Kincaid, and the virtual village allows me to share that, helping to bridge the formerly huge chasm between my small place and the global marketplace.

One thing that remains true, though, is that opportunities to publish (albeit somewhat opened up with respect to self-publishing online) and the foundation needed to nurture both a literary and artistic culture, and the business of literary and other arts, remains lacking in the region. The talent, though, flourishes in spite of this drought of opportunity. The writing, where it's allowed to bloom, nurtured with constructive criticism and encouragement, reveals that the glory days of Caribbean literature are far from over, and also reveals that, details aside, human experience—pining, passions, pain, pleasure—is universal. Literature and the creative arts are the window to seeing each other more clearly, more insightfully—a fact that Caribbean readers who grew up reading more of the outside world than of the world within understand all too well.

Literature, while connecting us with the outside world, can help deepen our sense of place while broadening our sense of possibility. I refer to Kincaid's *Annie John*, key to my evolution as a reader and a writer as an example. For marginalized groups, reading literature about ourselves has power.

I write with an inherent sense of my Antiguan-ness and with an increasing desire, as my international aspirations grow, to be true to that Antiguan-ness: to not dilute it into some kind of weak beverage with no real flavor. Effectively, what I'm doing, I hope, is not taking my writing to the wider world, but allowing the wider world to come inside my Antigua and stay for a while.

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How can we teach ontology and epistemology to kids? This is the latest book from the Tiny Wisdom Series in which Narges Abyar attempts to convey epistemological concepts through the creation of a fantasy world. In her new book, she narrates three different short stories, entitled "Serious and Sad Story," "But…the Statue Which Became Prosperous," and "The Story of Two Parallel Lines." In "Serious and Sad Story," she narrates the story of a raindrop who wants to be different from other drops and finds a world that makes him happy. The second is the tale of a statue looking for his home. He goes to find his country, and on his way he asks other creatures about his origin until he reaches a river. The third narrative is the tale of two parallel lines eager to reach each other.

Bahar Eshragh

Narges Abyar

The Statue Which Became Prosperous
(Tiny Wisdom No. 6)

Illus. Hamidreza Akram
Safirardehal Publishing Press, 2011.
132 p.
ISBN: 9786006068275
Picturebook 5+0

The Challenge: A Reader-Centered Programme for Young Adults in Vocational Colleges

by FIEKE VAN DER GUCHT

Fieke Van der Gucht studied Dutch and English Linguistics and Literature at Ghent University, and finished her PhD in General Linguistics in 2005. She worked at the Artevelde University College teaching pre-school teachers and care teachers. Since 2007, she has been working as project manager of *The Challenge* at Stichting Lezen Vlaanderen (the Flemish Reading Association).

Introduction

Several studies have shown the importance of reading for pleasure. The OECD report from 2002, for example, concluded that secondary school students who showed more enthusiasm for reading performed better, and being a frequent reader was more of an advantage than wealth or social status. A study from 2010 by Oxford University even links reading for pleasure during childhood to better job prospects. Also, Mol states that people benefit from their independent leisure time reading during childhood. Mainly focusing on reading for pleasure, *The Challenge* is a reader-centered programme by Stichting Lezen Vlaanderen (The Flemish Reading Association), in partnership with a broad network of teachers and librarians, aimed at reluctant readers of fifteen years and older in vocational schools. By "reluctant readers" we mean people who are able to read but do not do so very often and are not fond of it.

For each new edition of *The Challenge* Stichting Lezen Flanders asks three celebrity patrons to encourage these vocational students to read three books within half a year. As the campaign focuses on reading for pleasure and positive reading experiences rather than on the quality of books, participants are free to pick their own books. However, any participant gets support to find the book that

suits him or her best—the best guarantee of a successful reading experience.

On the one hand, the focus on "positive reading experiences" is inspired by the Reader Development's principles, a British reading promotion method that starts from reader needs and habits rather than writers, themes or genres (van Riel). On the other hand, the whole idea of linking a reading promotion programme to the concept of a challenge took its inspiration from the UK *Six Book Challenge* by the Reading Agency (see: http://readingagency.org.uk), with which Stichting Lezen Flanders was happy to exchange ideas.

Since 2011 *The Challenge* has also been introduced in Dutch vocational colleges by Stichting Lezen Nederland (the Dutch Reading Association). After three successful editions of *The Challenge* (the first edition being introduced in the school year of 2009-2010), Stichting Lezen Flanders may conclude it has succeeded in offering thousands of reluctant readers a positive reading experience.

Reader Development Principles (*Opening the Book* Online)

According to the principles of "Reader Development," promoting reading for pleasure is more likely to succeed if based on a "reader-centred approach." Reader Development wants "to increase people's confidence and enjoyment of reading, to open up reading choices, to offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience and to raise the status of reading as a creative activity." Rather than selling individual books or writers, Reader Development is selling the reading experience and what it can do for people. Consequently, Reader Development does not make value judgments about the "quality" of books, and only aims at the quality of the reading experience.

There's a reader for every book, and a book for every reader: that is what reader-centered programs stand for. Thus, they have to find the right book in the right place at the right time in order to offer potential readers positive reading experiences. Hence, they have to know these potential readers as people's reactions to books are shaped as much by who they are as by what the book is—their personal history, prejudices, and the mood they happen to be in at the time they are reading.

On the one hand this strong belief in positive reading experiences forces professional reading promoters to turn down the snobberies often attached to reading. On the other hand, less confident readers tend to drift in comfort zones, always reading the same author or the same genres. As a conclusion Reader Development states that "as promoters of reading we need to respect readers and their choices but also to understand that we can intervene in readers' choices and encourage exploration."

One of the best ways of finding something new and tempting to read, is by browsing. Yet one of the biggest barriers to finding what one wants is the overwhelming number of choices that exist. So, on top of "selling the reading experience" reading promoters have to help potential readers to separate the wood from the trees. The first assignment, i.e. stimulating people to actually grab a book and make them read it, seems the most demanding, certainly if working with reluctant readers.

The next section describes how *The Challenge* by Stichting Lezen Flanders (as well as the UK *Six Book Challenge*) encourages people to start reading, thereby making use of the Reader Development principles.

Selling the Reading Experience by Challenging Reluctant Readers

To people that either have reading difficulties, or simply prefer other hobbies to reading, reading a book can seem quite a challenge. And that is exactly the idea the reader-centred programs of the Reading Agency and Stichting Lezen Flanders are based on: the idea of *challenging* less confident or reluctant readers.

The Six Book Challenge adresses low-literacy adults and is run through organisations such as libraries, colleges, prisons and workplaces. People are invited by a celebrity patron to read six books and record their reading in order to

enter a national prize draw. Most participants read books to take part, but the scheme can be used as well to introduce people to text in lots of different formats such as magazines, newspapers, websites and even digital games. This can be particularly effective if participants are at the start of their reading journey and need material that is both accessible and of interest to them.

In consultation with the Reading Agency, Stichting Lezen Flanders transferred the concept of the *Six Book Challenge* into their own reading programme for an audience of over fifteen year-olds in vocational colleges which are, more often than students in comprehensive schools, reluctant readers. The first edition has been introduced in 2009. Since then over 8,265 vocational students have taken part in *The Challenge* and 3,827 have completed it, meaning that 46% of all participants read three books within half a year. Moreover, 72% of all participants finished one book. So, we consider the outcome of *The Challenge* as reasonably successful, taken into account that vocational students in Flanders only have to read literature extracts according to official educational programmes.

Since starting from the daily environment of young people is quintessential to reader-centered programmes, we prefer celebrities to authors as faces of *The Challenge*. So, for each new edition we ask three of their favourite sportsmen, singers, radio and TV presenters, soap opera actors and actresses… to join *The Challenge*. In their turn, these patrons invite vocational students to do the same, i.e. reading three books within half a year. Every individual succeeding in this challenge enters a prize draw. On top of that, every class group accomplishing the "mission" can win a visit by one of the celebrities in their class.

These celebrities function as positive adult role models to the target audience. By joining *The Challenge* these patrons raise the status of reading simply by "admitting" they think reading is fun or at least are willing to give reading a try. One teacher of seventh year of Car Body Work students wrote: "I have been able to convince my all boys' class to take part in *The Challenge* because of Eline De Munck" *(*Eline De Munck is a singer and a VJ*)*. Another class in Social-Technical Sciences stated: "We take up this tough challenge only for Bert Verbeke" (Bert Verbeke is a soap actor).

From October to April, *The Challenge* runs through a network of teachers (stimulating their students to join) and librarians (promoting the campaign in neighbouring schools, providing teachers with reading suggestions). Schools and libraries are given the opportunity to order posters and booklets for free.

Additionally, the website www.deweddenschap.be offers teachers and librarians a downloadable guide to *The Challenge* with suggestions to introduce *The Challenge* to participants and to help participants choose books, with special suggestions for low-literacy students or students suffering from a reading disability. Furthermore, www.deweddenschap.be provides audiovisual materials presenting the three celebrity patrons telling about their reading experiences. On top of this, classes

participating in *The Challenge* are invited to share their experiences on the photo and video wall.

Any student willing to take up *The Challenge*, can sign up on the website, enter the three books he or she has read and, by leaving comments, share his or her reading experience as well. After the first and second book entry, participants get an e-mail encouraging them to keep on reading. After the third book entry they can print a personalised certificate with the three covers of the books they have read.

The idea behind *The Challenge* is getting reluctant readers in vocational colleges into reading by making use of positive adult role models and prizes as an extra stimulus. Yet, making participants cross the threshold of reading a book is one thing; leaving them with a positive reading experience is another thing. Supported by Reader Development's ideas, we believe every reader knows best which book will lead to a successful reading experience. This belief is confirmed by a study (Schram, 2005) pointing out that enjoyment of reading correlates to freedom of book choice. Nevertheless, for reluctant readers this freedom may be overwhelming. So, they may read along with the celebrity patrons, but for those who want to, we offer help in finding a more personal, perfect book match by *Find That Book*.

Boeken Zoeker Online

On www.boekenzoeker.org children and young people can discover books depending on their personality and on whether or not they fancy reading. Rather than browsing by author or book titles – as in more traditional databases – this database starts from browsing by the user's reading habits, moods and interests. *Find That Book* offers books in all shapes, sizes and genres. The website contains a well-balanced mixture of popular and surprising titles, lowbrow and highbrow, easy-going and demanding books, classics and modern books. By presenting familiar authors and titles, *Find That Book* pays respect to reluctant readers and their choices. By suggesting new, more surprising titles based on but crossing the borders of their comfort zone choices, *Find That Book* also encourages less confident readers to explore new horizons.

In short: *The Challenge* incorporates all kinds of reader-oriented ingredients to get reluctant readers into reading and lead them to a positive reading experience. But does it yield a profit? In the following, final paragraph, we will answer that question, making use of the small-scale survey about *The Challenge* 2009-2010 by De Waegeneer (2010).

Challenging reluctant readers: does it work?

3,839 participants registered for the first edition of *The Challenge*, running

from October 6 2009 till April 6 2010. In line with the general assumption that women do read more than men, 62% of them were girls, 38% were boys. 75% of the participants registered as part of a class, 25% took part on an individual basis. Individual participants typically were females having the occasional habit of reading. Classical participants usually were reluctant readers, both male and female.

Together, all participants of *The Challenge* 2009-2010 read 6,806 books, 45% of which were personalised suggestions by *Find That Book*. 28% of the participants did not complete the programme at all, i.e. they did not finish at least one book, meaning that 72% of all participants did succeed in reading at least one book. Almost half of all participants, 46% to be precise, completed the whole programme and read three books within half a year – a success rate comparable to the one of the UK Six Book Challenge. This success rate remained stable over the following editions. Even so, the outcome of *The Challenge* is reasonably effective, taken into account that vocational students in Flanders only have to read literature extracts according to official educational programmes.

All participants who finished three books were questioned about their reading behaviour before and after *The Challenge*. In the following, "all participants" refers to "those 46% that succeeded in *The Challenge*."

In the first place, we tried to find out whether or not the target audience would describe themselves as "reluctant readers." In spite of the general assumption that the number of young readers is decreasing over the years, figures were not alarming: 48% claim to read books regularly (5 to 6 books a year) or a lot (more than 6 books a year). 52% seldom read: they state to read never, hardly ever (1 to 2 books a year) or rarely (3 to 4 books a year). In general, we can conclude that almost half of the participants do not have the habit of reading and describe themselves as reluctant readers.

A majority of vocational students who completed the scheme, claimed to have experienced *The Challenge* as being fun and easy-going. Sumeyye Akkurt (16) was one of them: "I would like to thank you because through *The Challenge* I got to know how much fun reading can be. I did not like reading at all, but this has changed since I took part in *The Challenge*. I will keep on reading!" Only 10% thought *The Challenge* was boring or judged *The Challenge* as being too difficult.

As much as 69% were determined to keep on reading in the future and 26% were considering reading more often, whereeas before *The Challenge* only 48% indicated they read on a regular basis. Only 5% planned to never read again after *The Challenge*, being exactly the same number of participants indicating they had read no books at all before *The Challenge*. We may conclude that obstinate non-readers cannot be convinced by this program. However, a large majority of reluctant readers got into reading and are planning to read more.

The top ten list of most-read books for *The Challenge* 2009-2010 was dominated by the romantic vampire saga by Stephenie Meyer with *Twilight*, *New Moon* and *Eclipse*. The participants' preference for sequels demonstrates the tendency of reluctant readers to drift into a comfort zone, as the reader already knows what to expect. At the same time, the popularity of the *Twilight* saga, each part containing more than 300 pages, showed that even thick books contain no deterrent to reluctant readers. Also filmed books were popular (6 titles in the top ten were film adaptions, 2 of which were released between October 2009 and April 2010). Furthermore, young adult novels (8 titles) were more popular than books for adults (2 titles).

In brief, being reluctant readers, most participants did not take risks and preferred popular authors and their sequels or filmed books. Only by looking at the top twenty were more surprising titles discovered. Even though as reading promoters we must respect readers' choices, we should also stimulate them to broaden their horizon. It goes without saying that teachers and librarians can play a crucial role in this task. On the basis of what participants choose as their first book, they should suggest a second and third book that are in line with the first one, but at the same time more challenging as well.

Note

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The IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People: A Short Overview

by HEIDI BOIESEN

Heidi Cortner Boiesen is Head Librarian at Haug School and Resource Centre near Oslo, Norway since 1993. In 2002 she became Director of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People when the IBBY Documentation Centre was transferred to Haug School and Resource Centre.

In 1979 the Norwegian writer, professor in literature and mother of a disabled child, Tordis Ørjasaeter, wished to use the time until the start of the UN International Year for people with disabilities, 1981, by giving children, regardless of handicap, the chance to meet with books. She also wanted healthy children to get to know children with disabilities through quality books about their lives.

Ørjasaeter contacted former IBBY President Knud-Eigil Hauberg Tychsen, who wrote to the Norwegian Institute for Special Education in Oslo, Norway, where Tordis was employed. Would it be possible for her to use part of her working hours for an international project under the auspices of IBBY? Dr. Edvard Befring, the Principal of the Institute was willing to cooperate, and Tordis sent letters to all IBBY National Sections asking for relevant books. This lead to an international exhibition of children's books, opened at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, in April 1981. An annotated catalogue, *Books and Disabled Children*, was presented. UNESCO arranged a seminar in connection with the exhibition, based upon the article *The Role of Children's Books in Integrating Handicapped Children into Everyday Life* (No. 1 in UNESCO's Studies on Books and Reading Series). The document was translated into French and Spanish, later into Finnish, Italian and Japanese. After the success at the Bologna Book Fair, Leena Maissen at the IBBY Secretariat arranged for the books to be exhibited in Austria, Slovakia, the

Czech Republic, Mexico, Australia, Finland, Sweden, and other countries. Her enthusiasm was vital for the progress and realization of this project.

The collaboration between IBBY and the Norwegian Institute for Special Education continued, and culminated in a new exhibition of picture books, *Books for Language Retarded Children* (No. 20 in UNESCO's Studies on Books and Reading Series). This exhibition was opened at the Bologna Book Fair in 1985 and was later presented at UNESCO's General Assembly in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the Pompidou Centre in Paris, France, in Barcelona, Spain, at the International Reading Association's conference in Dublin, Ireland, and throughout the Nordic countries.

This cooperation between IBBY and The Norwegian Institute for Special Education in arranging exhibitions and producing catalogues led to a new inquiry from IBBY: would it be possible to establish a documentation centre at the Department of Special Education based on the books already collected to continue the work? In October 1985, the IBBY Documentation Centre with books about and for children with disabilities was ceremoniously opened in Oslo. At this time the collection consisted of books from more than 30 countries in 42 languages.

A trained librarian with language skills and a competent adviser was necessary to lead the centre. Nina Askvig (formerly Nina Askvig Reidarson), lecturer in Special Education Needs as well as a professional librarian, was appointed as Director, and continued cooperation with the IBBY Secretariat and Leena Maissen.

Nina Askvig was in charge of the next important exhibition with its catalogue: *Books for Disabled Young People: An Annotated Bibliography.* This exhibition was launched in Bologna in 1991 and was later presented to various IBBY National Sections. The catalogue was translated into Spanish, French, and a number of other languages. In addition to the most important books in various categories, suitable to children with disability, there were assessments of non-fiction books, addresses of publishers of special literature and general information about the different types of books and how they could stimulate children and young people with different kinds of disabilities. The project was continued with corresponding exhibitions and catalogues called *Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities* in 1997, 1999, and 2001. A special Jubilee exhibition was put together of select books from the earlier projects, and launched at IBBY's 50th anniversary and World Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 2002.

The World Congress marked the end of Nina Askvig's involvement with the IBBY Documentation Centre. In Basel she was appointed Honorary Member of IBBY as an appreciation of her efforts and contribution. Earlier, in Bologna, she was awarded the Jella Lepman Prize, a medal given to persons who have considerably contributed to developing IBBY's working areas.

The Norwegian Institute for Special Education was attached to the University of Oslo as Department of Special Needs Education in 1993.

This reduced the activities of the Documentation Centre, including the areas of information and documentation services. In addition the Centre experienced economical restrictions and lack of space. When Nina Askvig retired in 2002, the Centre was moved to the library at Haug School and Resource Centre, just outside of Oslo, Norway, under the directorship of librarian Heidi Cortner Boiesen. Haug School is a special school for young people with autism, multiple handicaps and/or learning disabilities, as well as a resource centre for parents, kindergartens and schools. Placing the Documentation Centre at this school gave the possibility of testing the books on young people with different disabilities. Heidi Cortner Boiesen attended the Basel Congress with Nina Askvig and was introduced to members of the IBBY Executive Committee and the National Sections.

The Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People had been represented at the Bologna Book Fair every year since 2002 and has exhibited books from many different countries. The Documentation Centre inspired writers, publishers, illustrators and graphic artists. Educators, nursery school staff, parents and visitors with disabilities were able to find books for their demands.

The new Director, Heidi Cortner Boiesen, was a professional librarian with long-term experience as a children's librarian, from 1993 as sole librarian at the special school. She continued the project and with the help of the IBBY National Sections put together *Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities* in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013. Sissel Hofgaard Swensen, retired principal at a school for disabled young people and one of the originators of the centre *Books for Everyone* in Norway, gave much appreciated support and assistance in helping to choose the books for the Outstanding Books projects, as well as accompanying the Director to the Bologna Book Fair on several occasions.

Like Tordis Ørjasaeter and Nina Askvig, Heidi Cortner Boiesen has received various inquiries concerning lectures and assistance in conferences in Norway and abroad. Most of these inquiries Heidi had to refuse because of a lack of resources. First there were reductions in the Centre's income when the Norwegian Institute for Special Education was moved to the University of Oslo. After a promising start at Haug School and Resource Centre there were soon further reductions from local authorities in the Baerum municipality. Obviously it was easier to work in such a center in the eighties than in the twenty-first century. In 2005 Heidi lost the extra hours she had been allotted for work related to the Documentation Centre. From the beginning she has had no financial support to go to Bologna or to take part in international congresses or conferences. To remedy this, in celebration of Tordis Ørjasæter's 80th birthday in 2007, IBBY Norway established a fund that enabled the Director of the IBBY Documentation Centre to be present at the launch of the Outstanding Books exhibitions and catalogues at the Bologna Book Fair, as well as attending the IBBY World Congresses.

Through the network of IBBY contact persons and publishers the Centre's international book collection relating to young people with special needs has been kept up-to-date. The permanent collection holds over 3000 titles in about 40 languages. These books are, first of all, the books that have been presented in the exhibitions from 1981 to 2013. These were for the most part submitted by the IBBY National Sections. Books submitted by enthusiastic writers, publishers or other individual persons have also been evaluated and sometimes accepted. Books that were

not chosen for the exhibitions were kept at the Centre, registered and shelved under each country, alphabetically sorted from Austria to Yugoslavia.

Why do we need an international documentation service concerning books for young people with disabilities? Initially it was not taken for granted that disabled children have a right to have books, both for educational aspects and for artistic enjoyment. Literature is an important aspect of culture, which provides the framework for our identities and is an instrument of commu-

nication and participation as well as for improving the quality of life. Books and cultural experiences may break boundaries and evoke a feeling of community and solidarity between children with disabilities and other children. Every human being is more than his or her handicap, and our attitude must be that every human being can be creative if there are stimulating possibilities of development.

Selecting books for the handicapped child has the same objectives as selecting books for the "ordinary" child. The books must stimulate language, reinforce or add to existing language, add colour to readers' lives, develop understanding and provide identification, and create a shared experience between the mind of the child and the mind of the writer or illustrator

Until 2002 the IBBY Documentation Centre had many visitors from all over the world. After the transfer to Haug School and Resource Centre the number of visitors was dwindling even though ordinary visitors to the school got a guided tour of the collection and information about the projects. Over the years Heidi Cortner Boiesen has given talks at the IBBY World Congress in Cape Town, at conferences in Rome and Tokyo, a tactile workshop and talks in Jakarta, at the IBBY World Congress in Santiago de Compostela, and in May 2013 at the IBBY Asia Oceania Regional Conference at Bali. One of the highlights of her career was being invited to meet Empress Michiko when the Japanese Emperor and Empress visited Norway.

Heidi Cortner Boiesen is facing retirement at the end of 2014 and no institution in Norway is ready to take over the Documentation Centre. IBBY wished to ensure a smooth transition and consequently invited the National Sections to submit proposals for accommodating the Documentation Centre. After several rounds of discussions Toronto Public Library was chosen, specifically the North York Central Library, with Sharon Moynes, Manager, Readers', Youth and Children's Services, as the new Director. Liz Page, Linda Pavonetti, and Heidi Cortner Boiesen met with the staff at TPL in October/November 2012. In April 2013 the IBBY Documentation Centre was boxed and transported to Toronto. At the time that this article was written the books were in transition to the TPL Cataloguing Department where each book would be registered before beginning the last leg of the journey to the North York Central Library, where

the new Director and her staff were eagerly awaiting their arrival. Heidi Cortner Boiesen acts as the Director until the new IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People is ready to welcome visitors, hopefully in the autumn of 2013.

Note

I wish to express my gratitude to the IBBY National Sections and everyone who has supported the Centre throughout the years as well as being there for me personally. Being the Director of the IBBY Documentation Centre has given my professional and private life a gigantic upswing. Please help promote understanding, knowledge and acceptance of people with disabilities by supporting Sharon Moynes and the new IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People at Toronto Public Library.

Raccontare gli Alberi is one of its kind. The large format resembling a drawing book is striking. The cover conceals a world of nature. Humans are physically absent, even though their presence is detectable through text and image. To a careful observer, the consequences of marginal human presence is evident. For instance, in the cover image is a squashed can in the forest. This tactic is a way to raise ecological awareness and increase respect for nature. The collaboration of illustrations by Mauro Evangelista and Pia Valentis, with the text compiled by Giusi Quarenghi and Paola Parazzoli, brings the reader to observe nature. Furthermore, it encourages readers to appreciate the poems of international and Italian authors who have been inspired by the beauty of trees. A peculiarity of this book is the combination of images with poetry, myths and legends. The book is peppered with poems by Giacomo Leopardi, Eugenio Montale, Giovanni Pascoli, Homer, Federico García Lorca, Boris Pasternak, Herman Hesse and Emily Dickinson. Images are accompanied with texts explaining various trees.

Melissa Garavini

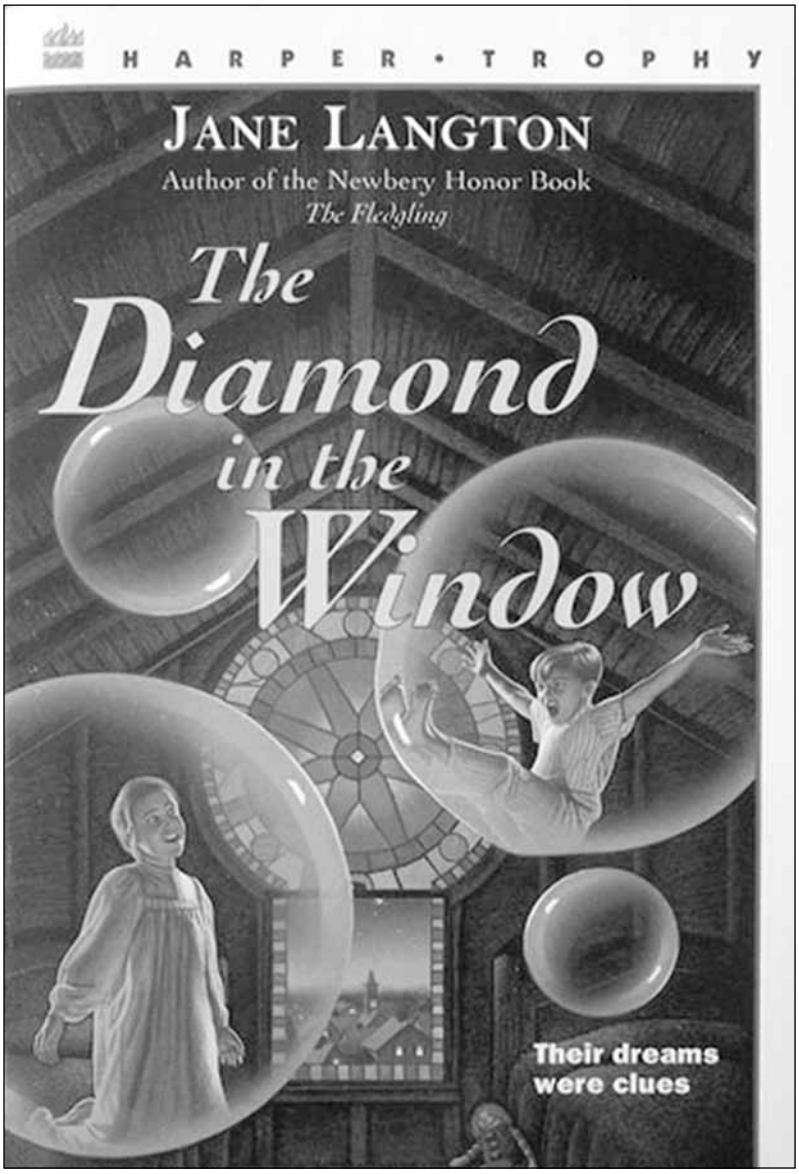
Pia Valentis and
Mauro Evangelista

Raccontare gli Alberi

Milano, Italia: Rizzoli, 2012
48 p.
ISBN 17054300
(Picture book, 10+)

"To Hand out the Stars": Jane Langton's Fiction for Children

by CRYSTAL HURDLE



I'm in Concord, Massachusetts, home of the Transcendentalists—Thoreau, Emerson—and of Louisa May Alcott. Concord is also home of author Jane Langton, creator of the fantastical Hall family series for children, among others. She and I had planned to meet, but she has fallen ill.

I have been a decades-long fan of her work since reading *Diamond in the Window* (1962) and the *Swing in the Summerhouse* (1967), shortly after their publication. When I was almost fifty, I read her most recent publication for children, *The Dragon Tree* (2008). To say her works have grown with me is an understatement.

As my husband drives into Concord's downtown, I see the prototype for the Hall family's house, with its cunning turret and seemingly magical sensibilities. Sadly, it has no diamond in the window. Its front is littered with cars; in fact, it seems to have been made

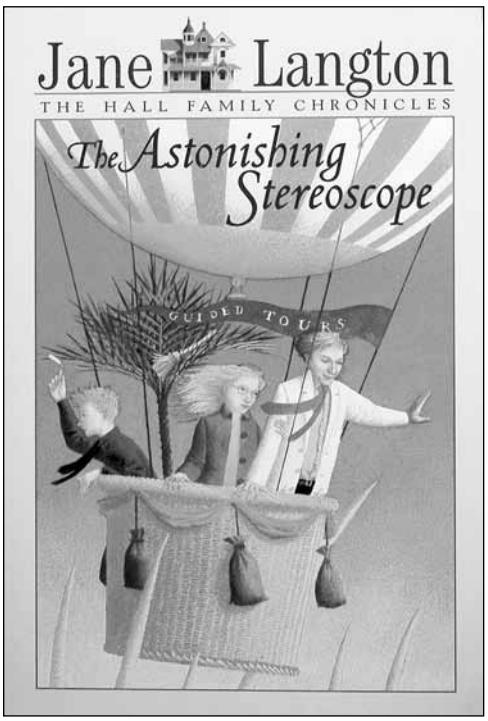
Author of *After Ted & Sylvia: Poems*, Crystal Hurdle teaches English and Creative Writing at Capilano University in North Vancouver, BC, where she lives. She loves teaching courses on writing for children and has a passion for young adult fiction. Forthcoming is a novel in verse for teens, *Teacher Pets*.

into a duplex, as two mailboxes perch outside and account, in part, for the many vehicles (none of them are The Green Hornet from the series).

Brother and sister Eleanor and Eddy, in the series, live here, after their parents' death, with their guardians, the seemingly simple-minded Uncle Freddy and his sister Aunt Lily. A later transformation, caused by a blow to the head, makes him once more the knowledgeable Professor Frederick T. Hall, who marries "the witch next door," mother of Georgie. Aunt Lily marries the enigmatic Prince Krishna, who even when absent, weaves his well-intended magic in the eight Hall family chronicles, written over a span of several decades. His gifts, such as a magic swing, bike, and stereoscope, are the catalysts for the children's quests. Dark magic becomes all the more eerie by the routine nature of such actions as swinging and cycling. The astonishing stereoscope is the lens into the fantastical worlds of all eight shape-shifting novels, realistic family dramas on one hand that fracture like Escher works into something different.

Concord is resplendent with churches that I know thanks to Langton's pen and ink drawings in her adult mysteries, but especially thanks to *The Astonishing Stereoscope* (1971), with its fearful contest of good versus evil. When a student, John Green, falls from the roof, Eleanor fears it is her fault and worries she will go to "the Bad Place," introduced in the book's opening sentence. In her quandary, she attends First Parish Church, just around the corner from her house, more faint at heart over the new ritual of taking the host and drinking the cup of blood, than in the fantastic encounter she shares with Eddy and the "weird goddess," an encounter with the spectre of human sacrifice. The intervention of Herm, the cross-eyed family cat, saves the chosen victim. Later, the children encounter biology and zoology when they enter Herm's body for a guided tour of the wonders of nature, of "cells and molecules and worlds within worlds." Wise Uncle Freddy says, "[T]he only unforgivable Sin is believing the Unforgivable Sin," but the siblings must explore religion, evolution, and creation for themselves, in a work that is adult in its sensibilities but childlike in its milieu.

A walk along Lexington Road, awash with flags, brings us to Orchard House, home of Louisa May Alcott and her family. In *Diamond*, Eleanor and Edward embark on a strange quest, articulated in a poem, "Transcendental Treasure," its verses scratched into the window of their newly discovered turreted room. In search of one of the gifts ("The second is a doll-child, / Possessed by one of four, / Fit for any princess/to mother and adore."), believing it to be associated with *Little Women*, they enter Alcott House.



Their tour guide, the indomitable Madeleine Prawn, secretary to the town's banker who is the arch enemy, is nothing like our sweet-faced, dulcet-toned East Indian guide, who could be a relative of Prince Krishna, though she does reprimand my husband for leaning against the bed jamb in Alcott's room. Bronson Alcott's School of Philosophy could well have been the inspiration for Langton's Concord College of Transcendentalist Knowledge, run by Uncle Freddy (Professor Hall), at No. 40 Walden Road, taking on far more scholarships students, however bright, than it can afford, and offering young readers a whole new world of Transcendentalism.

The guide tells of workaholic Louisa, who penned *Little Women* in twelve to fourteen-hour work days in just six weeks. She points out, wryly, that Twitter and Facebook would not then have existed as distractions. I ask her if she knows of Jane Langton's work, a chapter from *Diamond* taking place in this very house. She lives in Langton's hometown of Lincoln but hasn't heard of her. Continuing with the tour, she mentions the number of languages Alcott's work has been translated into, and says that the book has endured because of its presentation of family and societal ties.

And what about Langton's works? That Edward and Eddy are raised by an aunt and an uncle is an excellent depiction of an unconventional family, which blends with the additions of Aunt Alex and step-sister Georgie. Realistic adolescent angst rears its ugly head in *The Time Bike* (2000)—Eleanor bemoans not being invited to a popular party and falls for a movie star, while Eddie copes with theft. In *The Mysterious Circus* (2005) and *The Dragon Tree*, most of the magic is left to young Georgie and her friends, as the older siblings move into the adult world, their magic childhood adventures taking on the sad sheen of dream.

Hopeful, I go into the Concord bookstore. I'll buy a Langton book as a souvenir, though I already own all of them. None appear on the shelf. The clerk, at least, has heard of Langton and knows she lives nearby, but while some of her newer work is available on Kindle, her older books are "pretty much out of print." The computer's inventory reveals what she already knows: no Langton copies in the store.

Concord is all around me, as it is all around the characters. Miss Brill teaches Sunday school badly (modelled on Langton's own experiences) in the nearby First Parish Church; Eddy rides his birthday bike along Main Street and Sudbury Road; Georgie learns to read in the Walden Road summerhouse, courtesy of Uncle Freddy, who touchingly starts her off with a word from the beginning and one from the end of the alphabet, to be repeated daily; Eleanor receives two valentines, the first a beautiful froth, re-gifted from Uncle Freddy, perceptive of her sadness, and a cheap one from a boy she likes, his initials faint. There is no Langton.

In my head, I swing through a portal into the surreal Man-Castle and hearken back to adventures veiled in the threat of Prince Krishna's evil relative in *Diamond*. Deep cuts and bruises lead to concussion and Eddie's near death, appearing to be at the hand of Eleanor, as the children gamely follow the quest, curious, vulnerable mice to the menace of an eagle with piercing claws. In *The Fledgling*, Georgie is shot from flight by the unscrupulous banker, Mr. Preek.

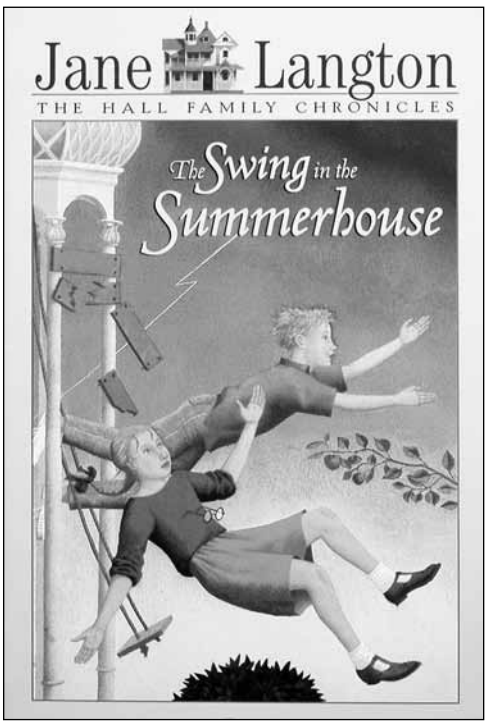
I am discouraged beyond words. How can today's children, for all the Facebook and Wikipedia factoids available at a moment's notice, grow up without these works? One of our final stops is Walden Pond. This is where Georgie soars with her Goose Prince. I remember that she, in an act of love, allows herself to be shot, sacrificed for her beloved friend. Today the setting is beautiful. We walk through the hushed mini-coniferous forest to the site of Thoreau's cabin and then cross the road to see the replica we missed. Uncle Freddy is crazy for Thoreau. When he sees bathers at Walden Pond, he first believes them to be the faithful, seeking to pay homage, and is aghast when he finds out they are not.

Exiting Concord, we enter Lincoln, and from the corner of my eye, I see Baker Farm Road, where Langton lives. It is a stone's throw from Walden Pond, her house amidst this sanctuary. The mailbox has "Langton" writ large. Though I have been unable to see her, she exists. Her characters do, too—but for how long?

Anna Quindlen said she learned much from Maud Hart Lovelace, a children's author whose oeuvre she reread as an adult. I would add Langton to the list, as an author whose children's books have much to teach both adults and kids. Young adult students in my Writing for Children classes have been intrigued by excerpts from *Diamond*. The delight and whimsicality of floating in bubbles turns to terror when the walls harden, making a prison of something ordinary, daily, relatable.

Langton's books are filled with cunning wisdom, history (especially American revolutionary history), Transcendentalist lore, and love.

Her background in Art History and Astronomy shines through every page. Specific language is clear in context. Nothing, not word choice, not content, is too difficult for children. In *The Fragile Flag*, she tackles big topics: the threat of nuclear war, of far-right politics, and does so without polemics. After the adults fail in a bid for nuclear disarmament, Georgie heads a children's crusade to present a letter to the President decrying his plans for the "Peace Missile." Strip malls and pollution reveal a less than magical world. In *The Dragon Tree*, issues of eco-rights arise when a tree grows between adjacent properties.



Outside of the Concord setting, *Paper Chains* (1977), her sole book for teens, winsomely explores freshman university and dormitory life, crushes on professors, Philosophy, the joy of labour, and the brilliance of Michelangelo.

Early works, including realistic fiction such as *The Majesty of Grace* (1961) and *The Boyhood of Grace Jones* (1972), explore gender and identity in a Depression era setting. Grace believes herself to be adopted, the real-life daughter of King George. Her venture to Woolworth's to buy gifts for all of her family members generates pocket money and love. Over-budget, she buys a purple towel that says "mother," candy to split with her brother and sister, and a "marvelous, perfect present for Pop," revealed at the end of the chapter to be a skull-shaped ash tray with a wiggly jaw.

Why are some of Langton's books out of print while Louisa May Alcott's and Maud Hart Lovelace's are not? I despair over what today's generation is missing—the compassion, wisdom, and magic that is everyday life. Eddy, in *The Astonishing Stereoscope,* says of the colourful quotidian around him, "Look at that! Right there! Right now!" *The Swing in the Summerhouse* concludes, "Eleanor [new owner of the Big Dipper] caught a glimpse of the rainbow in which Uncle Freddy perpetually stood. Perhaps he had as much right as anybody to hand out the stars." In Langton's wood just beyond Walden Pond, shadows of Eddy and Eleanor are fleet of foot but present, and their words echo transcendentally.

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Setting up a Research Collection (With No Budget)

by RACHEL JOHNSON

So many articles start off these days with the subtitle "on a tight budget" or even "with no budget" that the provision of little financing becomes a given. In the case of setting up a collection for research into children's literature funding depends on whether you have a plan to set up a collection or whether the collection starts unexpectedly. I suspect that many collections start with the discovery of a body of material in a stack or a hidden room, or as is the case with the research collections at the University of Worcester, with a focused collection looking for a home where it could enhance existing curriculum and research.

The International Forum for Research into Children's Literature located within the Institute for Humanities and the Creative Arts already had research students working in the field of children's literature and already had a small body of random material that had landed on its doorstep but was not organised for research use. Why not? The answer is easily given. The material was not part of library stock, there were no staff available to do anything with it, and there were no shelves on which to put it. The material was simply rescued in hope that it could eventually be available and used for study.

The potential existed, but the turning point came when an historical collection was offered to the university and the desire to accept coincided with senior management's support. You could say the start was therefore incidental, not contemplated, a confluence of circumstances and people.

Such a serendipitous beginning does not mean that all will go smoothly and easily. A collection needs to fit into the fabric and strategy of the institution; therefore rigorous procedures and policies need to be in place to satisfy institutional operation and development requirements.

Here we come to the main work of the setting up process, which I have summarized under six headings.

Rachel is currently Associate Staff with the International Forum for Research into Children's Literature based at the University of Worcester. Her research is predominantly in the field of nineteenth century children's literature with a specialty in George MacDonald and G.A. Henty, and pre-1950 boy's adventure stories.

Purpose and Mission Statement: Why Are We Here?

A clear message communicating what you have to offer, why, and to whom, is essential. Academic staff will pick this message up and pass it on to their students. This outcome may not be instant in some cases, but planting the potential of the collection into the minds of key subject staff is likely to result in an invitation to talk to their students.

Location

Location is of course dependent upon senior management and the situation within the Institution. You may not get a choice in this matter. The key is to make whatever you have as accessible as possible and advertise it. If you start with two clear environmental specifications, one aspirational and one realistic, then your flexibility will engender a supportive mind-set. It is of course necessary to ensure security and basic environmental requirements such as a dry location with a temperature and humidity reading that falls within conditions required for printed material.

Focus

A focused and coherent collection provides a clearer statement of research potential and opens the opportunity for scholarship based on the material available. A policy specifying criteria for addition and development of the collection must be in place to avoid pressure to accept random material that may be offered. Additions that will enhance the research potential of any given collection and support specific course or institutional focus can also be actively sought.

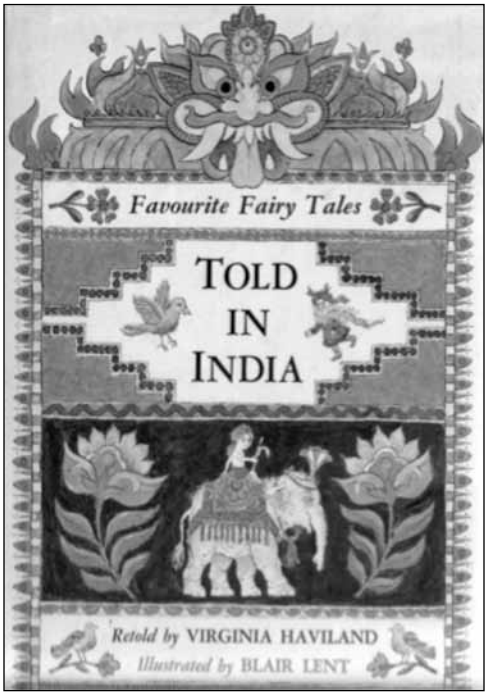
Documentation

In order to keep abreast of as many contingencies as possible, and to satisfy institutional audit regulations, you need policies for every conceivable use of the collection. An initial agreement with the depositor, be it a loan agreement (less usual) or a gift deposit agreement, is fundamental. This agreement covers any terms and conditions the depositor may require and includes safeguards against sale of material by the institution at a future date, should dispersal be necessary. This agreement clearly states what is expected of both parties (the depositor and the institution). Additional policies should address questions about management, access, future development, preservation, disaster planning, and volunteers.

Examples of policies for all of these situations are readily available from existing collections librarians. Agreements and policies can be adapted to suit your particular situation.

Staff

The need for staff to provide access to and care of the collection may seem obvious, but the reality is that research collections are often short on staff, especially librarians able to undertake cataloguing, the most fundamental task in access and dissemination. If you are able to employ one or two committed, qualified staff who know the subject field and material, you can then make a start since most research and special collections rely on the wonderful resource of interested volunteers to some extent.

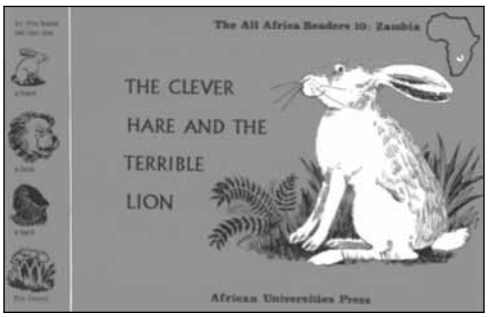


Volunteers

Volunteers have their own set of application forms, reference requirements, informal interview processes, and reasons for becoming a volunteer with any given collection (See above under Documentation). They give freely of their own time in order to undertake the housekeeping activities needed in any collection. An organised system of training for volunteers ensures they are able to undertake the tasks most useful to promote and maximise use of the collection. They often bring a high level of knowledge, expertise and professionalism with them.

Look after your volunteers. If you are able to provide a stock of tea, coffee and biscuits for them, these refreshments are always appreciated. If you are able to stretch funding include a Christmas party and/or an end of academic year Garden Party out of your meagre budget, this expression of how much you value your volunteers is well worth organising. You could also consider other perks, such as privileged access to resources and relevant external training.

Finally, don't expect deep embedding in the life, curriculum, ethos, and psyche of the institution you are working in to happen overnight. You may start with only one enthusiastic member of academic staff who realises the potential of the collection. Gradually others will become interested as you talk to anyone who is prepared to listen. Look out for any available opportunity to suggest ways in which the collection can be used as a resource for students, staff and external researchers.



Note

Please address any queries regarding the University of Worcester Research Collections or to visit the Collections, email researchcollections@worc.ac.uk or email Roger Fairman r.fairman@worc.ac.uk

Child-Sized History: Fictions of the Past in U.S. Classrooms. By Sara Schwebel. Nashville: Vanderbilt U P, 2011. 255 p.

As Sara Schwebel articulates in her book, *Child-Sized History: Fictions of the Past in U.S. Classrooms,* many teachers have turned to historical fiction as a way to make the past relatable and engage students in developing a historical perspective. Schwebel argues that many historical fiction titles, particularly those that have won awards, are so frequently used in classrooms that they constitute a canon of middle-level historical fiction. She asks us to examine the unintended consequences of the use of this canon in middle-level social studies and language arts classrooms, particularly when the books are used in the service of a grand narrative, or heritage, approach to learning history.

Schwebel's argument is that the application of historical thinking and critical historical analysis in grades 5-8 can be improved by the critical investigation of three interrelated topics: the books themselves, their authors' biographies and the cultural context at the time of the books' publication. Using a combination of literary and historical frameworks, she hopes to reinvigorate both the study of history and the titles in the canon. Is her argument successful?

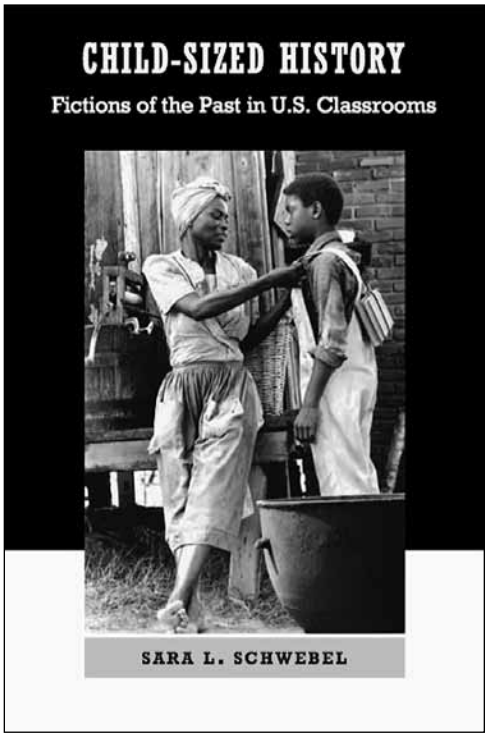
The answer is mixed. In her initial and final chapters, Schwebel presents us with overviews of contributing factors to her argument. Readers looking for a comprehensive treatment of the numerous topics included in these chapters will have to look elsewhere. The first chapter treats influences on the construction of the so-called canon, including literary awards, federal monies to schools, the history of children's book publishing and even librarians. The last chapter discusses everything from classroom use of the books to flaws in the preparation of pre-service teachers.

The heart of Schwebel's book, however, lies in the chapters where she examines books from the canon through three lenses: literary analysis, author biography and cultural and intellectual history (8). She turns these three lenses on books within the canon that have themes that are common in US history: "the role of war in shaping American identity, the place slavery and its legacy hold within the American story, and the relationship between white settlers and Native Americans in the forging of an American nation and American identity" (33).

I found her analyses of the particular books in chapters two-five to be interesting and provocative. Examining the books and authors in the context of their times is one of her more valuable suggestions, but will middle level social studies teachers see this as a valuable part of developing a critical historical stance? Teachers would need to overcome the ingrained idea that the use of historical fiction should help in understanding the history of the era in the book, not the history of the author or of the time when it was published. Will middle-level social studies teachers feel comfortable in addressing

what is essentially a literary analysis of the historical fiction they teach? Will language arts teachers take on the research that would place the book in its historical context in addition to researching the cultural and intellectual history at the time of the book's publication?

A brief examination of *Sign of the Beaver* illustrates some of the problems. In the book, the author uses an actual figure from history, but sets the story a half century earlier. The Maine woods were a much different place for both Penobscots (the "Indians" in the book) and Whites in 1769 (the time Speare's book took place) than they were in 1802 (when the historical Theophilus Sargent lived). In addition, Speare appears to know very little about Penobscot culture in either period. How does this lack of historical understanding affect the development of Speare's story and hence the understanding of the reader? Schwebel's analysis refers to "the complexity of the novel's layered meaning" (58), but this refers to its use of the historical narrative of White predominance over the so-called vanishing Indian. There is no complexity in the novel's historical understanding of the Penobscots.



Schwebel is critical of the use of historical fiction in the service of a heritage approach to history, preferring that the novels be used to foster critical thinking and a more interpretive historical perspective, not "as pedagogical tools in an environment unmoored from questions about the nature of history and historical narrative" (133). Her book analyses serve as sophisticated examples of the way this can be done, yet her suggestions in the Afterword are heavily focused on literary analysis and interpretation at the expense of analysis of the historical setting of the book. Her suggestions for teachers who are preparing to teach historical fiction are an excellent combination of literary analysis with a focus on historiography. However, two of the four pedagogical approaches she suggests place more emphasis on literary rather than historical analysis. She also conflates the challenges historians and historical novelists face when "attempting to capture what happened in the past [and] also to explain the significance of what did and did not occur" (177). The challenges are not the same. Novelists can make choices regarding literary developments that historians, if they are worthy of the name, cannot. Historical novels do not have to be completely accurate, but they cannot veer too often into the realm of the improbable or they will not be appealing for use in social studies classrooms.

Finally, I must note that I am perplexed as to why, having successfully pointed out many of the problems with some of these books, Schwebel continues to insist that "generally speaking, their presence in the lives of generations of American children is a good thing" (131). Supporting a "canon" containing many problematic award-winning novels from another era, no matter how critical the approach, is irresponsible.

Schwebel fails to acknowledge that teachers who still use these novels will most likely not take her critical stance to heart and will simply continue to use these books in the service of "heritage" history as they have always done, and they will do it with what they perceive to be the blessings of the latest research. Her assertion that everyone, both the left and the right, supports these novels is no longer true, if it ever was; there may be consensus that historical fiction in social studies classes is beneficial, but there would be considerable controversy if some of these novels were mandated for use in the curriculum. Instead of over generalizing about the acceptance of the canon as she defines it, Schwebel would do better to advocate for an expanded version.

Schwebel's desire to use historical fiction as a means to encourage students to adopt a more critical historical perspective is laudable. I wish she had chosen to focus her considerable powers of analysis on books that are worthy of her efforts and worthy of inclusion in today's classrooms.

Rebecca Berger, University of Alberta

Suspended Animation: Children's Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity. Nathalie op de Beeck. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. 262p. ISBN 978-0-8166-6574-7.

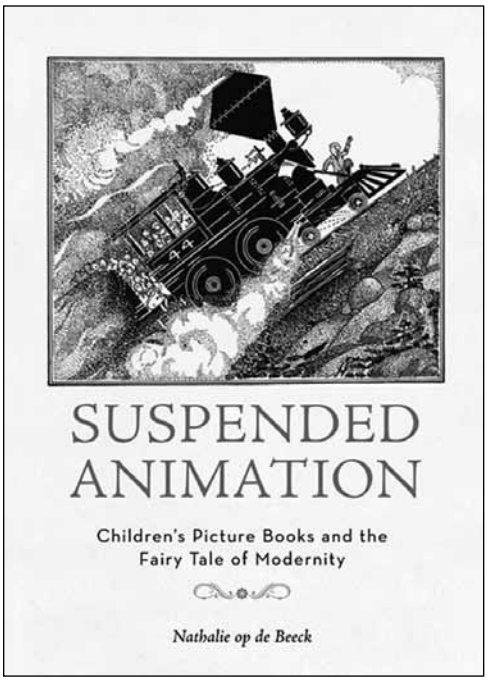
In her magisterial *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (1976), Barbara Bader comments on the early twentieth-century admiration in America for things European, including picturebooks, but, "[n]ot until the close of World War I, a time of national assertiveness, did the cry go up, why can't we have picturebooks like these? By then it was too late: the Europeans had so far outdistanced us in color printing that, whatever the will, there was no way, not for another fifteen years" (6-7). Yet, Bader reveals that picturebooks of high quality in content and production values *were* produced in the United States during the years between the two World Wars, books that in many instances are today still enjoyed by children and adults and are regarded as landmarks in the development of the picturebook. Many of the creators of these books were of European origin who came, or whose families had come, to the United States as refugees from war or persecution in European, among their number Kurt Wiese and Wanda Gág, both influential in the development of the twentieth-century picturebook.

Perhaps color printing was technically more developed in Europe, but the significance of the American picturebook of these years is high, artistically, and now, as Nathalie op de Beeck shows us, in another important book on the subject, as a social, cultural and political artefact that has informed and is informed by American childhood in the broadest sense.

While not neglecting the means whereby the visual and the verbal interact in picturebooks to convey meaning and aesthetic sensibilities,

the focus of op de Beeck's work is the contextualization of the form within developing modernism in the USA allied to a growing sense of a distinctive American identity. She states that the "[t]he picture book fossilizes information about a lived world and projects its belief systems, rightly or wrongly, into new eras" (xiv), but her main concern is with the means whereby it reflects "[t]he fairy tale of modernity, an early to mid-twentieth century mode … conceived in the context of modern, industrial urbanizing life and realized in commodity form" (xvi).

Some of the themes covered in *Suspended Animation* have already been addressed by op de Beeck in journal articles, but here she brings her thinking together in four chapters, plus an introduction and a "post-script" concerning picturebooks post-1942. The generously-sized pages are illustrated by black-and-white images and there are sixteen color plates from some of the texts discussed. These are a welcome addition since many of the texts may not be familiar, and in particular to non-American readers. It is unfortunate, however, that the placing of the monochrome images is not always on the page which refers to them, or on the page opposite, as the extensive notes related to each chapter already lead to a lot of leafing through the book. This, presumably, is due to the designer and not to the author, and if there is another edition of the book, perhaps this may be remedied.



Chapter One: "Here-and-Now Fairy Tales: Old World Tradition and Modern Technology," considers the growing popularity of the picturebook following World War I and sets the tone for the ensuing chapters. Recognition of the possibilities of its physical form and improvements in production techniques were timely since the increasing number of children in education and the greater acceptability of childhood as a time for leisure activities created new market possibilities for the picture-book. Op de Beeck describes the growth in publishing and product placement and the resulting debate about what children should, could or might read. Critical and reviewing journals were established and awards initiated, and women came to the fore in these activities.

The objectification of children and the nostalgia that constructed an idealized and sometimes sentimentalized view of childhood that followed are delineated through the lens of the social, political and educational tensions pervading children's books. The binary instigated by the debate around the merits of fairy tales and fantasy literature versus realistic literature, has, op de Beeck contends, "less to do with children than with cultural concerns in the States" (25) leading to particular social constructions around gender and ethnic issues and the popularization of literature designed for mass consumption.

Chapter Two is concerned with picture-book ethnography. It draws on mainstream art and film to highlight issues around immigration and the hegemony of certain cultural, religious and socioeconomic

groups. Educators who wanted to promote an awareness of the racial and cultural heritage of a growing number of American young people provided a market for the books produced by first or second-generation immigrants, including Gág, the Petershams, and Leonard Weisgard, all of whose work is discussed by op de Beeck in the context of the issues raised here. Berta and Elmer Hader and Armstrong Sperry also come in for particular attention due to their construction of their readers as white middle-class children who are invited to view as different or exotic children from backgrounds different from theirs. And this is echoed further on in the volume in a discussion focused on James Daugherty whose illustrative work valorized American patriotism, often at the expense of non-white Americans.

Industrialization and the mechanization of industry, the rise of urban living and the tensions resulting from a latent desire to hold to more traditional ways of life are part of tensions engendered by modernity, and these op de Beeck addresses in her third and fourth chapters. The 1920s and 1930s saw a surge in the production of books in which machines were anthropomorphized, or at least personalized, in their role as important signifiers of modernity; these titles included *Little Blacknose* (Swift and Ward 1929), *The Wonderful Locomotive* by Cornelia Meigs and illustrated by the Haders (1928) and Virginia Lee Burton's *Choo Choo* (1937) and *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* (1939), and more factual offerings such as *How the Derrick Works* (1930). The built environment too is seen as complicit in a "World War II-era shift to a new understanding of history, space and time while evincing nostalgia for artifacts of the past" (177) in books like Burton's Caldecott Medal winner *The Little House* (1942).

Picturebooks are shown by op de Beeck to be major sites of societal change. This, she contends, is especially true of the American picturebook between the wars, while post-World War II socioeconomic restrictions in book production, international influences, changing educational and child-psychology theories all led to the USA becoming a major force in the production of highly-regarded picturebooks.

Op de Beeck has provided us with a fascinating amalgam of social and economic history allied to the development of a significant, and sometimes underestimated, art-form. She recognizes picturebooks as signifiers and influencers of change and sometimes the site of tensions arising from change. *Suspended Animation* does not set out to be a survey of picturebooks of the inter-War period, but wisely, given the limitations of the number of words a volume like this may reasonably contain, she picks her texts and her arguments which she makes cogently and persuasively. One disappointment is the lack of a bibliography of primary and secondary texts. In each chapter there are extensive references and these contain bibliographic information about texts discussed, however, at times I longed to refer to a simple check list. There is also an index, but there are gaps. For example, to refer to the influential Bank Street Schools one has to be aware of the involvement of Lucy Sprague Mitchell or Margaret Wise Brown and to look under their names. These

deficiencies, however, may be due to the publishers rather than the author, for op de Beeck's thoroughness applied to her subject does not show any lack of courtesy to her readers. This is a significant contribution to the history of the picturebook form, not just in the United States but also internationally.

Valerie Coghlan

De Tintin *au Congo à* Odilon Verjus: *le missionnaire, héros de la BD Belge* [Tintin from Congo to Odilon Verjus: the Missionary, Hero of the Belgian comics]. By Philippe Delisle. Paris: Karthala, 2011. 214 p.

In this recently published text, Philippe Delisle focuses on a key figure of the colonial imagination: the Catholic missionary. From the White Father (Père Blanc) in *Tintin au Congo* (which is certainly the most emblematic work of these "colonial" comics) to Odilon Verjus, a rude and ribald priest-adventurer (and former pimp) created in 1996 by Yann and Laurent Verron, to *Charles de Foucauld* by Jijé (1959) and the *Belles histoires de l'oncle Paul*, the missionary figure is indeed curiously present, in various shapes, in all Franco-Belgian comics. This reveals the Belgians' deeply Catholic roots.

The author also explains the evolution of these comics, that, although born in Belgium, were quickly adapted to the French market: The Congo (Belgian), very present in the first adventures of *Tif et Tondu, Tintin* and *Spirou* by Rob-Vel, becomes by the 1930s an African country devoid of a specific identity in order not to confuse the little French readers. But some Belgian characteristics are still present: the importance given to missionaries is perhaps partly due to the firm belief of Catholics in this country that their religion is the pillar of any civilization. These comics, intended for children and young adults, are the ideal means for an intense missionary propaganda that uses the taste of young people for exoticism and adventure to generate vocations.

This essay, illustrated by numerous black and white thumbnails and written in a very lively and humorous way, explores the complex ties that link comics, religion, and politics.

Philippe Delisle understands how to share his passion for comics and helps us (re)discover some forgotten series, like *Blondin et Cirage* by Jijé, which passes on a generous antiracist message in 1939. He also engagingly tracks the career paths of interesting authors like Jijé or Yves Challand.

As soon as we close this book, we have only one desire: to dive into the old issues of *Spirou* or *Tintin* to meet Marc Dacier, Zig, Puce, Jean Valhardi, Pom, Teddy, and other comic strip heroes (forgotten to a certain

extent) that have contributed in strengthening colonial mythology but have also enchanted and inspired generations of young readers.

Soizik Jouin

Review reprinted from *La Revue des livres pour enfants* 271 (2013): 73. Translated by Hasmig Chahinian.

Bande dessinée franco-belge et imaginaire colonial : des années 1930 aux années 1980 [Franco-Belgian Comics and Colonial Imagination: From the 1930s to the 1980s]. Philippe Delisle. Paris: Karthala, 2008. 196 p.

In many European countries, former colonies have given rise to a large number of literary, pictorial, or cinematographic works. Philippe Delisle, a historian specializing in the religious history of the colonies and a comic afficionado, investigates the ways in which Belgian comics (which quickly became known as Franco-Belgian comics) in their early days helped in the development of the colonial imagination and in strengthening its prejudices. The corpus he examines consists of around sixty titles published in magazines, such as *Spirou* or *Tintin*, and sometimes even in books—some of which are still in print today.

The natives have traditionally been described in a negative way—savages with enormous lips, ferocious cannibals, deceitful and cruel Asians, Arab looters, etc.—or in a very paternalistic way, with the constant stereotype of the black person as a lazy and naïve child who should be educated and who can only serve Westerners. In *Tintin au Congo*, published for the first time in 1930, all the black characters speak the same "petit nègre" (pidgin French) jargon, even in the revised edition of 1946.

The whites are all born leaders and saviours (with the exception of some baddies who are often Americans): well-wishing farmers, courageous explorers, and brave camel riders popping up from behind the dunes to save the hero. Throughout the decades, these stereotypes remain unchallenged, but a clear evolution can be noticed in the 1950s due to the influence of Catholic circles: the vision becomes less caricaturised and more fraternal (see the character of Tchang in *Le Lotus bleu* by Hergé, which was rather ahead of its time since the book was published in 1936). The "natives" become the heroes of some adventures. Africa and the Maghreb, the regions that are predominately mentioned in these works, finally cease to be considered barbaric lands saved by the "civilizing" mission of colonization.

Starting in the 1970s, openly anti-colonialist texts begin to emerge, with historical series based on solid documentation, such as *Les Passagers du vent* by François Bourgeon or *Carnets d'Orient* by Jacques Ferrandez, but also less realistic works such as *Alice et Léopold* by Denis Lapière and Olivier Wozniak, and certain episodes of *Jimmy Tousseul* by Daniel Desorgher and Stephen Desberg.

Soizik Jouin

Reprinted from *La Revue des livres pour enfants* 271 (2013): 72. Translated by Hasmig Chahinian.

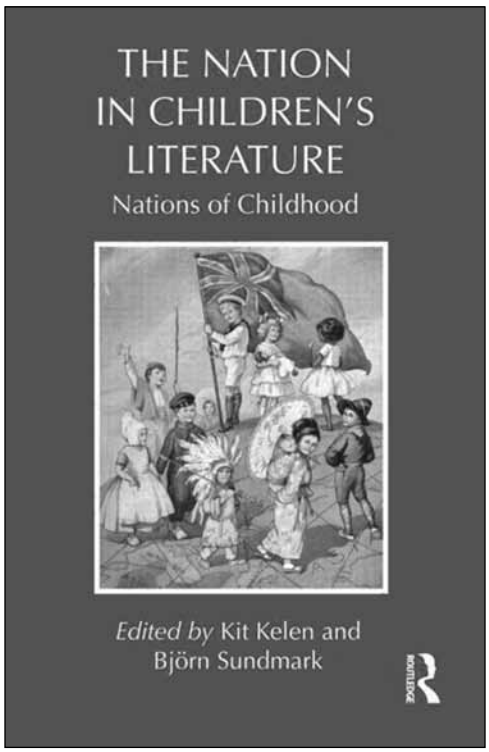
The Nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood. Edited by Christopher (Kit) Kelen and Bjorn Sundmark. London: Routledge, 2012. 296 p.

The Nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood (2013), edited by Christopher (Kit) Kelen and Bjorn Sundmark, is part of Routledge's *Children's Literature and Culture* series, whose overarching aim is to provide "original research in children's literature and culture" using an "interdisciplinary methodology" (Jack Zipes). Kelen and Sundmark's text is divided thematically into five sections: "The Child and the Nation," "Subversive Tales," "Nations Before and Within," "Empire, Globalization, and Cosmopolitan Consciousness," and "Childhood as Nation Imagined." There are seventeen individual chapters, with contributions from doctoral students and established academics working within a variety of interdisciplinary and multicultural contexts.

Kelen and Sundmark's introduction provides a thorough, critical overview of concepts of nation and nationhood from a historical and etymological perspective, setting the stage for the ensuing chapters. The editors explicitly articulate the overarching ambitions of the volume, including, but not exclusively, how children's literature constructs and represents national experiences, and how the nation is challenged and changed within this genre. They outline how and where these tasks are addressed. I found it particularly helpful that the editors situated their text within the surrounding critical and theoretical discourse on nationhood, thereby illustrating how their contribution is unique. Within the postscript, the editors consider "*where* children rule." While this is an interesting contribution, new questions are raised; what I felt was lacking was an attempt to "conclude" or summarize the arguments put forth, as a way of reminding the reader of the overarching themes. Their introduction, rather than conclusion, attempts this.

Part One includes three chapters on nationhood and the construction of the child, focusing on texts from Canada and Norway. The overarching argument is that children's literature simultaneously constructs

the child *and* the nation, and in doing so attempts to create national citizens. Danielle Russell reflects on L.M. Montgomery's *Anne,* focusing on themes such as home, the orphan, and nature. Russell's chapter balances textual analysis with a critique of the text as a cultural commodity. Her wide-angle approach, whilst providing an interesting overview of the role of Anne as a symbol of Canada, lacks explicit theoretical grounding. On the contrary, Svein Slettan's contribution employs a clearly signposted and theorized argument about the representation of nature in a range of Norwegian young adult texts from the 1930s. His application of Bahktin's chronotope to his reading of these selected texts provides a unique point of departure; he introduces chronotopes of the road, encounter, and threshold to creatively exemplify the tensions between nature and nation. His theoretical framework is contrasted and complemented within the following chapter, wherein Kristen Orjasaeter utilizes Bhabha's conceptualization of nationalism to critique metaphors of nature, also within a Norwegian context.



Part Two begins with a fascinating contribution by Caterina Sinibaldi on the translation of American comics into Italian during the regime of Mussolini. Using a historical and political perspective, Sinibaldi argues that these 'alternative' discourses provided a space for discussion on notions of foreign *and* national identity. Carrying on from this, Olga Holowina offers an analysis of several poems by Icelandic poet Porarinn Eldjarn, whose poems 'teach and tease' the reader about Icelandic culture through word play and other various literary devices. The poems, she argues, remain "devoid of patriotic loftiness" (79). Helen Kilpatrick and Orie Muta then analyze Uehashi Nahoko's ten-volume, young adult fantasy series, which deconstructs ideologies of otherness and power. Their textual analysis was intercepted with historical and geographical information, which usefully contextualized their argument for the reader. Although the chapters within this particular section can easily be read independently, their strength is brought into focus when read cohesively. The varying text types and use of perspectives, mingled with a range of theoretical, historical, and cultural frameworks, represent how children's literature can powerfully subvert or challenge our constructions of nation and childhood in diverse ways.

Section three grapples with difficult concepts such as imperialism, colonization, and otherness. Jan Keane's chapter is of particular strength. She provides a close reading of the plot, character, and landscape of several Ethel Turner narratives, commenting on text and image. Drawing on postcolonial theory, she considers representations of the "imperial other" and the "Aboriginal other." She argues that Turner's texts illustrate how Australia's Indigenous inhabitants were treated during this historical period, and the tensions that therefore arose

between British imperialists and the settler community. As a result of these representations, Keane affirms the importance of these texts, as they share the "ethos of the time;" they can also be used as an educational vehicle.

In section four, Petros Panaou and Tasoula Tsilimeni's chapter on *Alice and Pinocchio in Greece* offers an interesting point of comparison with Keane's chapter—the authors of both chapters showcase how children's literature has various implications for the reader. Panaou and Tsilimeni argue that the characters of Alice and Pinocchio, despite their international acclaim, retain elements of their national culture. For example, Pinocchio uses Italian phrases. Whilst praised as international classics, these texts simultaneously support national ideologies. These tensions provide a specific cultural experience for the child reader, who is asked to compare and interact with *various*, rather than singular, ideologies in relation to nation.

Within this review, I unfortunately do not have the space to comment on each chapter. As a reader, I appreciated the volume's organization: there was a clear line of argument that held the five sections together cohesively. What impressed me were the number and variety of voices and text-types that converged. Its multicultural, global approach made it particularly unique. In their introduction, Kelen and Sundmark note that "the nation and childhood are coeval but they are not an easy or obvious match" (3). This came through clearly within this edited volume. Whilst the questions being asked were not "easy," nor did they have "obvious" answers, various theoretical approaches were employed, enabling the reader to question the intersections between childhood and nationhood from a range of interesting and challenging perspectives.

Erin Spring, University of Cambridge

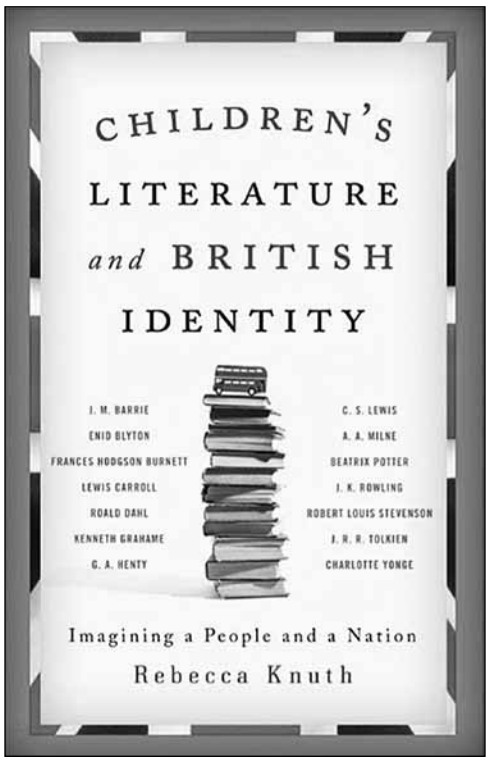
Children's Literature and British Identity: Imagining a People and a Nation. Rebecca Knuth. Toronto: Scarecrow, 2012. 209 p.

In her new book, *Children's Literature and British Identity: Imagining a People and a Nation,* Library Science professor Rebecca Knuth moves away from a topic she knows well, the threatened state of libraries, to take up a very different one: the history of British children's literature.

Knuth's goal is to give readers an overview of children's literature in Britain. She brings to her work enthusiasm for her subject matter and a familiarity with a wide range of texts. Taking on more than 50 authors and more than 250 years of literary history, Knuth approaches this large body of material chronologically; she begins with early works, such as John Newberry's *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765), and ends off with J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Different periods are broken down according to their defining themes. Her discussion of

nineteenth-century literature is, for example, organized by topics which include: "Socialization: Loyalty, Duty and Self-Sacrifice" and "Creating Manliness and the Boy Hero."

It is important to note that this book is not aimed at audiences well versed in recent work on literature for young readers. Instead, it offers readers unfamiliar with what is now several decades of scholarship on literature for young people an introductory overview of the field. Whereas readers with knowledge of the scholarly study of literature for young people will not need to be reminded that "values and cultural rituals portrayed to children in books served ideological purposes" (11), this message may well be of interest to the reader who is new to the critical analysis of children's literature and in search of a quick moving introduction. While Knuth does demonstrate her own familiarity with important works of scholarship on children's literature, she tends to quote authorities on different authors or texts and then move on. She does not pause to engage closely with the arguments of other scholars nor does she develop and articulate readings of her own.



Some of the central claims that Knuth makes in the book are less than novel. Discussing her research on children's literature, she outlines one of her major findings: "I found that children's books contribute to the development of character and, as well, to an ethos and national identity—in the case of Britain, the nebulous thing called Englishness" (vii). It's a valid point, but it is not a new one. Other points put forward by Knuth are likely to raise eyebrows. Knuth makes some sweeping claims about the historical periods she covers. She argues, for instance, that "Dickens's compelling child characters were created out of an earnest desire to counter the emotional apathy that plagued Victorian England" (33). She goes on to describe the Victorians and Edwardians as an "emotionally locked-down population" (89), a broad generalization that is neither supported nor fully elucidated by Knuth. Some of Knuth's arguments are hard to follow. As part of a discussion of children's literature written after the First World War, she proposes that, after the war, "the grip of ideology on children's literature loosened" (115)— something that informed readers of, for example, the C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* series are likely to balk at.

It should also be noted that this is not a book for literary critics, who will find little in it by way of discussion of literary technique or of quotation of the primary texts. Knuth does offer a lot of biographical information about the many authors she treats, but she says almost nothing about the literary techniques they employ. As Knuth explains in her preface, in place of a narrow literary or historical study, she hopes to offer readers "a cosmography of the universe of British children's literature and a representation of its main features and effects as the genre has emerged over time" (viii).

More of a survey than a study, the book's primary strength is Knuth's very open expression of her passion for particular books and for the imagined Englands they bring into being. Describing herself as a "raging Anglophile" (vi), Knuth shares her experiences as an American reader of British literature and makes some engaging statements about the experience of coming to know a version of England brought into being by its literature. Knuth doesn't hesitate to write poetically about her topic, declaring for instance, that "Folklore carries truth about what makes us human; it is distilled wisdom, rife with motifs and characters that have survived the crucible of time" (2). Later in the book, she proposes that "[t]he cauldron of children's literature holds a hearty brew that is instrumental in building character and shaping identity "(160). Clearly, this is a book by an author who is very passionate about children's literature and about the cultural work it has done and continues to do. This passion is Knuth's book's most notable strength.

Vanessa Warne, University of Manitoba

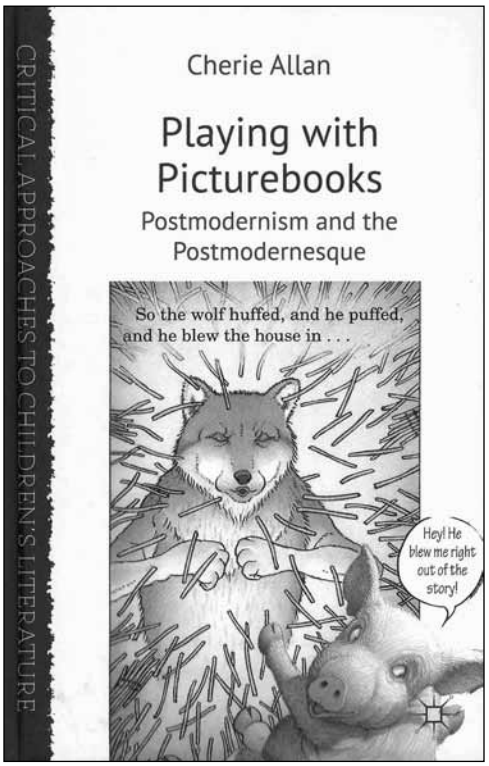
Playing with Picturebooks: Postmodernism and the Postmodernesque. Cherie Allan. Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, 2012. 216 p. ISBN: 9780230319493.

Postmodernism likes to draw attention to that with which it is implicated. It may be argued that it is this "look at me, look at me" aspect of certain picturebooks, perhaps most notably John Scieszka and Lane Smith's *The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992), that has attracted some of the regard for picturebooks as both literary and artistic artifacts that now attaches to them. There is, however, an attitude, even among some who are closely involved with children's literature that picturebooks are for pre-readers (of verbal text). Any of us who work with picturebooks will have been on the receiving end of "picturebooks are so sweet" remarks. As, however, Cherie Allan demonstrates in her study of postmodern influences on visual texts for younger readers, many picturebooks are anything but "sweet." They can be complex, daring, and sophisticated, and many of these attributes are due to the employment of postmodern strategies.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century postmodern influences began to be evident in picturebooks; it is here that Allan commences her study, a much-needed endeavour in its efforts to situate a particular category of visual text within a serious literary discourse. Numerous articles on postmodern or experimental picturebook have been published in the past thirty years, and Sipe and Pantaleo, in particular, with their collection of essays *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody and Self-Referentiality* (2008) did much to open up the discussion around these texts. Allan refers to a number of these essays in her own volume, one of the

strengths of which is the array of secondary texts on which she draws in her effort to untangle what it is that makes a book "postmodern" or even "post-postmodern" and to guide her readers through the characteristics of these texts.

In her introduction, Allan looks back at the development of postmodern literature, recognizing that the term is often misused, and suggesting that its semantic instability reflects the indeterminacy that it embodies. This section of the book will very useful for anyone who is interested in children's literature but not always sure about some of the scholarly terminology that sometimes surrounds its discussion. Citing an impressive range of critics and commentators along the way, she concludes that leading authority on postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon's (1988) designation of the term is the one most suitable to use as a model for a category of picturebooks which not only subvert conventional narrative strategies, but also interrogate the regulatory nature of the liberal humanism which is a *sine qua non* in children's books. Gradually, she leads readers towards her suggestion that "[t]he postmodern picturebook refuses to abide by conventions, employs a pastiche of styles and generally refuses to conform to a specific generic categorisation" (18).



Broadly adhering to Hutcheon's principles, Allan then moves on to discuss some specific texts in the next five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 look at how conventional narrative, often the bedrock of children's books, is discommoded by, for example, a multiplicity of voices and points of view, playful use of intertextuality, parody, and disruption of the conventional framework within which texts operate. The next three chapters look at how postmodern picturebooks may question the liberal humanist ethos prevalent in picturebooks. Allen draws attention to ways in which the stability of identity, the privileging of certain societal or racial groups and the marginalisation of others because of "their race, gender, sexual preferences, class, ethnicity, education, social and other positionings" (123) may be disrupted or questioned, to varying extents, in postmodern picturebooks. One of the examples she uses is David Weisner's *The Three Pigs*, arguing that while it presents a number of postmodern characteristics, such as indeterminacy, it undermines its postmodern credentials when it depicts the pigs engaging in activities that epitomise liberal humanist socio-cultural values of cooperation and compromise.

In her final chapter Allan addresses the evolution of the picturebook within the parameters of the evolving characteristics of postmodern literature. And, many readers will be glad to note, remarking on the clichéd nature of some recent books that *too* obviously set out to be subversive or parodic. To move beyond this tendency, Allan refers to a newer breed of picturbooks as "postmodernesque." These are books

which interrogate a hyperreal, globalised, consumer driven world—books which call into question a postmodern subjectivity, playing on postmodernism itself.

Each chapter contains a discussion of how particular picturebooks demonstrate the topic under consideration. Allan's choice of "postmodern" texts is largely drawn from the 1990s, while her "postmodernesque" texts are twenty-first-century creations. Some of those in both categories have been, as she admits, already discussed in detail elsewhere, but she uses them well to support her arguments. Most of the texts are from the Anglophone world, a pity as there is a rich seam of postmodern (and postmodernesque) picturebooks now published in Europe. Many of the texts she discusses will be as familiar to other readers as they were to me. Not surprisingly, books by Emily Gravett, Anthony Browne and Lauren Child figure strongly; even so, I found myself taking *Wolves*, *Voices in the Park*, *Whose Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* and others off the shelves to see exactly the point being made by Allan. With other texts I was less familiar, especially those by Australian illustrators which are not easily available in Europe, and I suspect, America, such as Roland Harvey's *In the City*. This was frustrating since I couldn't refer to them, and also refreshing since they were unfamiliar.

Allan concludes her study by remarking that by their very nature postmodernism/ postmodernesque picturebooks will continue to evolve, and we should enjoy them. *Playing with Picturebooks* is a valuable and timely interrogation of its subject, whether for those requiring an introduction to a fascinating topic, or for those who want to consolidate existing knowledge.

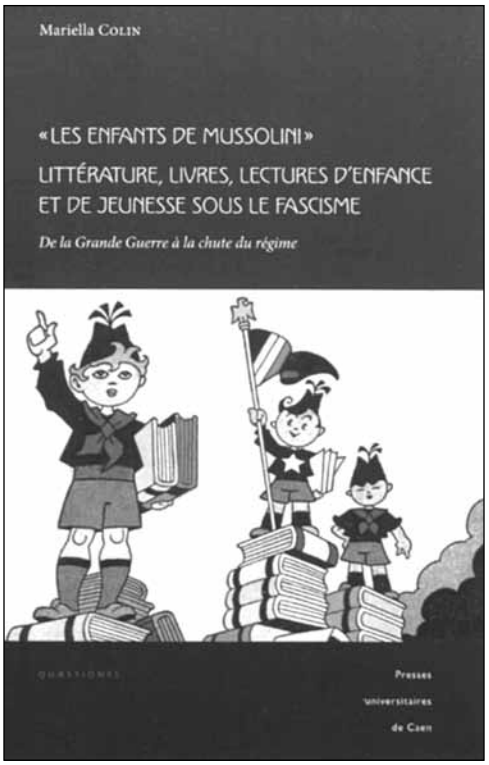
Valerie Coghlan

Mariella Colin, *Les Enfants de Mussolini : littérature, livres, lectures d'enfance et de jeunesse sous le fascisme : de la Grande Guerre à la chute du régime* [Mussolini's Children: literature, books, childhood and teenage years' readings under Fascism: from the Great War to the fall of the regime]. Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, Littérature Romane; Quæstiones, 2010. 389 p.

Mariella Colin has been engaged for a long time in fundamental work on children's books and reading in Italy: after devoting a first book, *L'Age d'or de la littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse italienne. Des origines au fascisme*, to the "Golden Age" of Italian literature for children, she now addresses the "Black Age": from the end of the Great War to the fall of the fascist regime. Through a careful study of the production written for young Italians—School textbooks as well as readings for enjoyment and the press—the analysis of this dark hour for freedom of expression is captivating once again; the author takes special care in putting

into perspective the culture, social and historical events in which these productions took place, day-to-day. The demonstration develops on four main periods, which are as many steps into the progressive appropriation by the fascist ideology, and then by the fascist regime, of the training of Italian youth.

Colin begins her study with World War I, a period where the Italian national identity radicalized, together with the desire to involve children into the great emerging patriotic movement. Before Italy entered the war in 1915, the productions for young people, especially the press, were often in a humorous style: they did not hesitate to caricature the belligerents, for example in *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*. The tone changed with the Italian soldiers going up to the front: the war wormed its way into ABC picture books for younger children; at the same time, stories for older children did not hesitate to play with anguish and emotions through the figure of children-heroes young children could identify with. The end of the conflict caused a series of testimonies by martyr soldiers of the nation and fictions based on reality, which enabled the constitution of a founding mythology of fascism.



This nationalist rhetoric does not however rule out the emergence of a quality literature, drawing from symbolist or foreign models, as evidenced by *The Chess set in the mirror* by Massimo Bontempelli (2007), inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*. After the march on Rome in 1922, fascism takes power and is deeply aware of the necessity to train young Italians. However, the reform of public education, conceived by the idealist philosopher Giovanni Gentile and implemented by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice from 1923 onwards for primary school, is undeniably a moment of educational and pedagogical innovation. Teaching as well as literary works offered to young people stimulate freedom of speech and appeal to imagination; reading is fostered by the creation of school libraries and children literature serves as a material for teaching. But fascist violence wins out, as evinced by the adventures of a *Pinocchio fascista* armed with a cudgel and the castor oil dear to *squadristi*, while the glorification of war heroism goes on through books such as *Piccolo Alpino*, whose success continues unabated since it is constantly republished from 1926 until 1989.

From the 1930s onwards, the regime retains its influence over the youth through various devices. One of the most striking is the creation of the *Opera nazionale Balilla*, an organization which becomes more and more important and is dedicated to the "Making of the new Italians." Teaching also has to be part of what is conceived as a "regeneration" of the people: improved schooling and combating illiteracy are one of the successful battles of the regime. However, even if school libraries and reading continue to be promoted, they become more and more controlled in this period when, putting an end to the innovations of the "idealist" pedagogy, the ministry of national Education institutes a unique official textbook, conceived by a pedagogical commission of writers, some of them renowned and famous, such as Grazia Deledda, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1926. Through carefully controlled lessons and readings, this textbook spreads, from primers onwards, the basis for fascist culture which will soon become a compulsory discipline in school programs.

In this context, literary creative freedom is strongly limited, and most of the works selected are essentially propaganda. Stereotyped narrative often serves no other aim than to magnify the accomplishments of the regime, as in *Il Ballila Vittorio*, a novel which will nevertheless enjoy lasting success: the climax of the young hero's adventures happens when, after having admired in the countryside the "battle for grain," he witnesses, in the capital city serving as a showcase for the greatness of the regime, Mussolini himself. In addition, biographies of the Duce become a genre *per se*, close to the hagiography dedicated to the edification of the youth. During the whole period however, nationalist or even openly fascist collections coexist with collections of Italian or international classics; paradoxically, the regime allows until 1938 the publication of translated children literature despite a general policy of closing to everything foreign.

From the Italian military intervention in Ethiopia in 1935 until the entry into war in 1940, and then the fall of the regime in 1943, every action dedicated to education and youth turns into indoctrination. While warlike values have been glorified from the start, a truly paramilitary and colonialist training is now imposed to the youth. ONB is replaced by the "Gioventú italiana del Littorio," a giant mass organization whose motto is "Believe, Obey, Fight." The fascist rhetoric swells up into an imperial and imperialist mythology valuing the model of ancient Rome. The nation has to create soldier-citizens ready for conquest and domination: textbooks inculcate colonial geography, while reading books, picture books and novels exemplify an unvarnished colonialist exoticism. Race superiority is inculcated to children and racial laws in 1938 are a step forward towards the establishment of an official racism, implying the elimination of the works by Jewish authors or publishers. Even if Italy's going to war in 1940 does not seem to have produced a great enthusiasm on the part of the population, it seems however that this attempt to indoctrinate the youth did have results, as a large number of young volunteers enlisted and left for Albania, Russia or Africa. The fall of the regime in 1943 occasioned a return to previous models and a rapid "de-fascisation" of textbooks.

Beyond its particular focus, namely reading and books for Italian young people between 1915 and 1945, this study highlights the major role devoted to the education of the youth in any society. The two illustrated sections in the book add an artistic counterpoint to this dialogue between sociology and history, which still has to be done for the French domain.

Lise Chapuis

Translated by Marine Planche.

This article was first published in *La Revue des livres pour enfants*, n° 265, BnF-CNLJ - La Joie par les livres, Paris, 2013, pp. 74-75.

IYL News: Joke van Leeuwen Wins the First James Krüss Award

By CHRISTIANE RAABE

Christiane Raabe is the director of the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.

For the work of the *International* Youth Library in Munich (IYL), James Krüss has played, and still plays, a special role. Krüss, whose works have been translated into numerous languages, is one of the best-known German children's book authors of the second half of the 20th century. After the death of this multi-talented children's poet, storyteller, and novelist, his heirs transferred his literary estate to the IYL in order to keep his memory alive and make his works and information about his life available to the general public as well as to researchers. In 2001, a small permanent exhibition was opened in the James-Krüss-Tower at Blutenburg Castle, the seat of the IYL.

To commemorate the cosmopolitan author, James Krüss's heirs have now founded a new children's literature award: The "James Krüss Preis für internationale Kinder- und Jugendliteratur" (James Krüss Award for International Children's and Young Adult Literature). The award celebrates and promotes the complete works of a living author of children's or young adult literature whose texts stand out for their linguistic skill, originality, imaginative way of storytelling, and humanity; i.e. works that share these characteristics with the works of James Krüss. Eligible for the award are German-speaking authors or authors from abroad whose works have been translated into German. Thus it adds an international aspect to the various prizes and awards for children's and young

adult literature already in existence in the German-speaking countries. The prize includes a monetary award of 8,000 Euros and will be awarded biennially.

The inaugural James Krüss Award 2013 was presented to the Dutch author Joke van Leeuwen. Her two main translators into German, Hanni Ehlers and Mirjam Pressler, were also honoured. With the constant quality of her books, her innovative approaches and her immense respect for her young readers, Joke van Leeuwen has been composing outstanding books for children and young adults for many years. The James Krüss Award jury says:

> Each of her books is a small work of art in itself. The author and illustrator is a master of linguistic and visual means. With great ease she switches between the level of text and images by playing with the imagery of language and the symbolism of images. As with James Krüss, her work is distinguished by a great sensitivity for the language and forms she uses, by a meta-literary quality to the texts, in which she explores the various possibilities of literature in an imaginative way, and by a great sympathy for her child protagonists. A characteristic feature of Joke van Leeuwen's books is a fresh, irreverent and reckless tone, with which she describes childhood as a personal cosmos without idealising or glorifying it. Her books have a socio-critical depth to them and point to the author's passionate advocacy for the rights of the child. This also reflects the literary kinship of Joke van Leeuwen with the man whose name this prize holds, James Krüss.

Joke van Leeuwen, born in 1952 in The Hague, made her literary debut in 1978 with the book *De Appelmoesstraat is anders* [Applesauce Street Is Different]. Since then she has written over 60 picture books, books for children and young people, and non-fiction titles. Among them are such renowned titles as *Iep!* [Eep!] and *Toen mijn vader een struik werd* [The Day My Father became a Bush]. So far, thirteen of her books have been translated into German.

The award ceremony was held on 4 July 2013 in the Jella Lepman Hall at the International Youth Library, at Blutenburg Castle. Joke van Leeuwen, as well as her translators, Hanni Ehlers and Mirjam Pressler, was present for the occasion. The magnificent laudatory speech was delivered by German author, journalist, and translator Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt, who knew James Krüss personally. In a witty and sensitive way, she praised the accomplishments of Joke

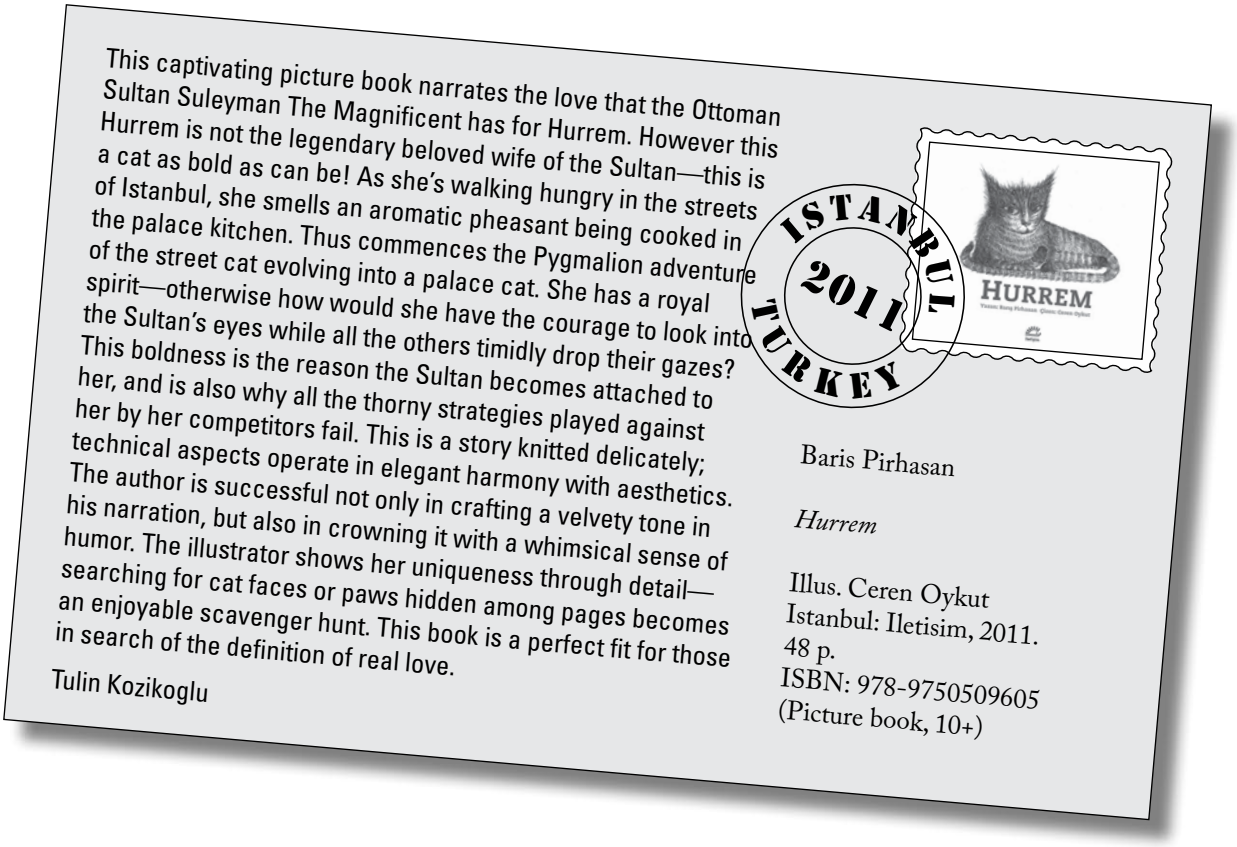
van Leeuwen, whose inspiring acceptance speech delighted the audience by offering detailed insights into her way of thinking and working.

Credits

Image 1: Logo of the James Krüss Award (Copyright © Internationale Jugendbibliothek)

Image 2: Joke van Leeuwen giving her acceptance speech (Copyright © Internationale Jugendbibliothek)

Image 3: Joke van Leeuwen at the James Krüss Award ceremony (Copyright © Internationale Jugendbibliothek)



This captivating picture book narrates the love that the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman The Magnificent has for Hurrem. However this Hurrem is not the legendary beloved wife of the Sultan—this is a cat as bold as can be! As she's walking hungry in the streets of Istanbul, she smells an aromatic pheasant being cooked in the palace kitchen. Thus commences the Pygmalion adventure of the street cat evolving into a palace cat. She has a royal spirit—otherwise how would she have the courage to look into the Sultan's eyes while all the others timidly drop their gazes? This boldness is the reason the Sultan becomes attached to her, and is also why all the thorny strategies played against her by her competitors fail. This is a story knitted delicately; technical aspects operate in elegant harmony with aesthetics. The author is successful not only in crafting a velvety tone in his narration, but also in crowning it with a whimsical sense of humor. The illustrator shows her uniqueness through detail—searching for cat faces or paws hidden among pages becomes an enjoyable scavenger hunt. This book is a perfect fit for those in search of the definition of real love.

Tulin Kozikoglu

Baris Pirhasan

Hurrem

Illus. Ceren Oykut
Istanbul: Iletisim, 2011.
48 p.
ISBN: 978-9750509605
(Picture book, 10+)

In this Focus IBBY we share with you the names of the 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Jury, as well as the complete list of nominations. Read further and you will learn about the 2013 Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities exhibition and the future plans for the Documentation Centre; find a memory of the 1st IBBY regional conference in the CANA region; the latest news about the 2014 IBBY World Congress in Mexico; two articles celebrating the 100th birthday of Sergei Mikhalkov and another one celebrating the 85th birthday of Dušan Roll.

Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2014

Twenty-eight authors and 30 illustrators have been selected from 33 countries to compete for the 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Awards. The ten-member jury, under the guidance of Spanish children's literature expert María Jesús Gil, was selected by the IBBY Executive Committee from nominations made by the National Sections of IBBY. Over the next few months, the jury will assess the complete works of the 60 candidates. A comprehensive dossier for each candidate, as well as hundreds of books, will be studied and discussed, leading up to the two-day jury meeting. We are very happy to announce that the meeting will take place at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany shortly before the Bologna International Children's Book Fair, and a shortlist will be published immediately. The winners will be announced at the IBBY press conference on Monday, 24 March 2014.

Compiled and edited by
ELIZABETH PAGE

Elizabeth Page is
IBBY's Executive Director

The jury, led by Jury President María Jesús Gil, comprises Anastasia Arkhipova, illustrator and chair of the board of the Association of Moscow Book Illustrators and Designers, Russia; Fanuel Hanan Diaz, editor, author and researcher, Caracas, Venezuela; Sabine Fuchs, university lecturer in children's literature, Graz, Austria; Sang-Wook Kim, professor in children's literature at the Chuncheon National University of Education, Seoul, Republic of Korea; Enrique Pérez Díaz, author and publisher, Havana, Cuba; Deborah Soria, book-seller and promoter of children's literature, Rome, Italy; Susan M. Stan, professor of children's literature at the Central Michigan University, USA; Sahar Tarhandeh, independent researcher in children's literature, freelance graphic designer and art director, Tehran, Iran; Erik Titusson, publisher and former Director of the ALMA, Stockholm, Sweden; Ayfer Gürdal Ünal, writer, critic, and lecturer at the Bhosphorous University, Istanbul, Turkey. Two *ex officio* members are included in the jury deliberations; they are former IBBY Vice President Elda Nogueira from Brazil and IBBY Executive Director Liz Page as jury secretary.

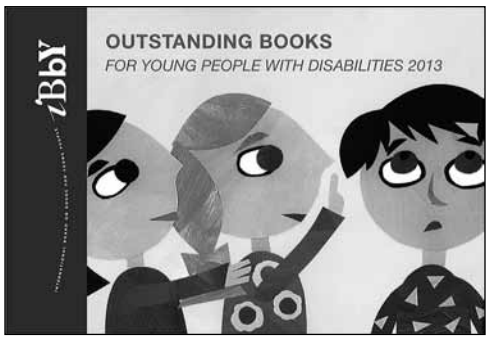
The fifty-eight nominees for the 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Awards are as follows:

Country	Author	Illustrator
Argentina	María Cristina Ramos	Isol
Australia	Nadia Wheatley	Ron Brooks
Austria	Renate Welsh	Linda Wolfsgruber
Azerbaijan	Sevinj Nurugizi	
Belgium	Frank Andriat	Carll Cneut
Brazil	Joel Rufino dos Santos	Roger Mello
Canada	Kenneth Oppel	Philippe Béha
China	Hongying Yang	Liang Xiong
Croatia		Svjetlan Junaković
Denmark	Lene Kaaberbøl	Charlotte Pardi
Estonia	Aino Pervik	
Finland	Kirsi Kunnas	Pekka Vuori
France	Jean-Claude Mourlevat	François Place
Germany	Mirjam Pressler	Rotraut Susanne Berner
Greece	Sofia Madouvalou	Daniela Stamatiadi

Iran	Houshang Moradi Kermani	
Ireland	Eoin Colfer	PJ Lynch
Italy	Bianca Pitzorno	Fabian Negrin
Japan	Nahoko Uehashi	
Republic of Korea	Jin-Kyung Kim	Byoung-Ho Han
Latvia		Reinis Pētersons
Netherlands	Ted van Lieshout	Marit Törnqvist
Norway	Bjørn Sortland	Øyvind Torseter
Portugal	António Torrado	Teresa Lima
Russia	Vladislav Krapivin	Igor Oleinikov
Slovakia	Daniel Hevier	Peter Uchnár
Slovenia	Polonca Kovač	Alenka Sottler
Spain		Javier Zabala
Sweden		Eva Lindström
Switzerland		Albertine
Turkey	Serpil Ural	Saadet Ceylan
UK	Jacqueline Wilson	John Burningham
USA	Jacqueline Woodson	Bryan Collier

Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities

The 2013 selection of books was exhibited at the IBBY stand during the Bologna International Children's Book Fair in March. The sixty books attracted a lot of interest throughout the fair and several hundred catalogues were distributed. There is no "blueprint" that says what is a suitable book, because young people with disabilities are, like all of us, individuals with different tastes and needs. What this special selection gives us is an overall view of what is currently available. We have looked for titles that can inspire publishers, caregivers, family, teachers as well as the young people themselves. The 2013 selection is the fifth in a series of regular biennial selections presented by the Haug School and resource Centre in Bekkestua, Norway. It is the last in the series that the director of the IBBY Documentation Centre for Books for Disabled Young People Heidi Boiesen began in 2005.



From 2013 the Documentation Centre will be hosted by the Toronto Public Library in Canada and housed at the North York Central Library. Work has already begun on creating a "rich" website for the IBBY collection that will deliver a good user experience with accessibility features such as high contrast fonts, closed captioning of video content and optical character recognition (OCR) so that a screen reader

Heidi Boiesen with her long-time consultant Sissel Hofgaard Swensen

can access the content. IBBY President Ahmad Redza Khairuddin publically thanked Heidi at the IBBY press conference at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair for her long and serious commitment to the IBBY Documentation Centre. The future of the Centre is in good hands and we look forward to long years of collaboration with the Toronto Public Library.

First CANA Regional Conference

In August 2012, while I was in London attending the IBBY congress, I was invited as a member of LBBY (IBBY Lebanon) to join the regional meeting for the IBBY sections from Central Asia to North Africa. The seeds for the first CANA conference were planted then and there. The host was to be the UAE section of IBBY based in Sharjah, the title was decided, and enthusiastic ideas for implementation were coming from left and right. Deep down, I thought that this is very beautiful, but will it actually happen in the near future?

Well, I did not have to wait long before finding the answer. The women (most of them were women) had their minds set and right after the IBBY congress ended and we had all returned home, UAEBBY put the plan into action and we started receiving emails telling us about progress; soon afterwards the call for papers was made and deadlines were set.

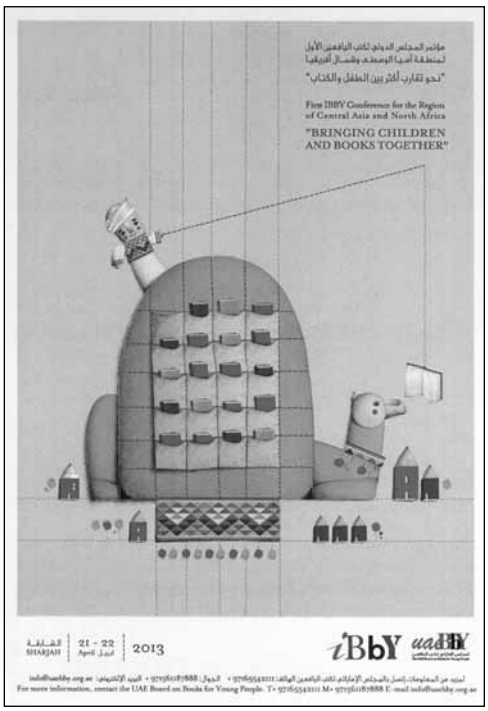
So, less than a year later, on 21st and 22nd April 2013, there we were, over forty speakers and attendees from twenty countries from Central Asia to North Africa gathered to share experiences, studies, and views on the main theme of the CANA conference, "Bringing Children and Books Together."

I met very familiar faces from the world of children's literature, and got the opportunity to meet new faces and hard-working minds who share the same passion: improving the love of books and accessibility to good literature.

Two days of talks, presentations, and panel discussions brought to the surface the main challenges in the field. The variety of experiences shared during the conference was impressive. Rawan Brakat from Jordan, founder of Raneen audio books for children talked about the use of the audio book as an educational tool. She stressed the importance of high quality audio recording, where professional actors or storytellers read the stories accompanied by music. Music, for the visually impaired, explained Raneen, creates the mood of the story and takes the role of the illustrations. Amina Alaoui, founder of *Le Carrefour des Arts* in Morocco, which specializes in art and books for children, talked about the importance of preserving cultural heritage through children's books. Philippe Claudet, director of *Les doigts qui rêvent*, presented the way they work on producing tactile books for the children with poor vision or blindness. The text is written in both Braille and large print,

while the illustrations are made tactile through collage, thermoform and embossing. Nabeela Hassan from Gaza, coordinator of children's literature programme at the Tamer Institute, presented an overview of the activities they implement to promote a reading culture in the difficult circumstances of occupied territories. Rabeea Al-Nasser talked about the *House of Tales and Music* in Jordan, a centre she established for underprivileged children, where she provides activities such as story-telling, theatre, music, and art. Many more impressive presentations were in the programme, which provided everyone with a broad look at the status of children's literature in the Central Asia to North Africa region, and at the efforts that people and organizations are exerting in order to improve the love of reading.

Besides the presented papers, there were two panel discussions organized and I had the opportunity to participate in both. In the first, we tackled the subject of writing for young adults and the challenges we as authors face. Noura al Noman from the Emirates, Randa Abdel Fattah from Australia and I exchanged our views on writing literature for this tough age group. Authors have to find a way to start breaking taboos and stereotypes associated with this age group in order to improve the literary works that address them. We need to focus closely on the psychological, mental, physical, and social changes teenagers go through, and work these issues into our literary works. The second panel discussion was about politics in children's books. Together with Jehan Helou from Palestine, Najla Bashour from Lebanon, Patricia Aldana from Canada, and Dalia Ibrahim from Egypt, we discussed the fact that politics is always present in children's literature, whether authors consciously mean it or not. Children's rights, relationships with parents, siblings and friends, dealing with war experiences, rebelling against authority, are all topics that fall under the category of politics in books. It is worth noting that the illustrator plays a big role in enhancing political ideas, by the choice of colours, patterns, elements, and other character features.



The organizers of the CANA conference did a great job in providing the participants with all necessary information, as well as comfortable lodging and transport. Even though much-needed public discussion time was limited because of the number of presentations, the side discussions that took place between participants are in my opinion as enriching as the conference itself. I always say about work-related trips that they are like a treasure box: you go there prepared with your own participation, but do not quite know what to expect or who you will meet. At the end, you leave with a heart full of new friends and ideas to freshen your outlook on the field.

The CANA conference was rich as well as personally enriching; I came out of it with many issues to think about regarding my work as

an author for children and young adults in the Arab world. As we aspire to the next CANA conference in 2015, I look forward to meeting other children's authors as well as experts and researchers in children's literature who will share with us new findings and ideas in the field.

The main strength of CANA was, as Ahmad Redza Khairuddin president of IBBY put it, "We all share a common goal, to ensure that every child has the right and opportunity to become a reader, and it is a goal that we can only reach when working together".

Whether the book is read, listened to, touched or smelled its most important role is to touch our hearts.

Fatima Sharafeddine
IBBY Lebanon

From left to right:
Moderator Jamal Al Shehhi, with Dalia Ibrahim, Patsy Aldana, Fatima Sharafeddine, Najla Bashour, Jehan Helou

IBBY Congress 2014: *May everyone really mean everyone. Reading as an inclusive experience.* Mexico City, 10-13 September 2014

Inclusion is a process by which we create environments that recognize and accept the differences among people and respond to them by offering everyone the experience of co-existing in a cooperative, supportive and respectful manner. The 2014 IBBY congress will celebrate and embrace diversity; the heterogeneity of the group is an asset not a limitation! The Congress will examine the theme of inclusion related to children's and young adult literature, and the promotion of reading. It will also examine literature that overcomes exclusion, whether it is caused by migration or displacement, or because of personal limitations and necessitates alternative forms of reading, or because of discrimination.

For the latest information go to: http://www.ibbycongress2014.org

Sergei Mikhalkov and IBBY Russia

2013 is a remarkable and special year for the world and children's literature in Russian literature. 2013 sees the 60th anniversary of the foundation of IBBY, the 45th anniversary of IBBY Russia, Sergei Mikhalkov's 100th anniversary, and the 15th anniversary of the Saint-Petersburg branch of Russian IBBY.

During the IBBY meeting to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our RBBY in 1998, Sergei Mikhalkov spoke of the first steps towards the establishment of the Soviet National Section:

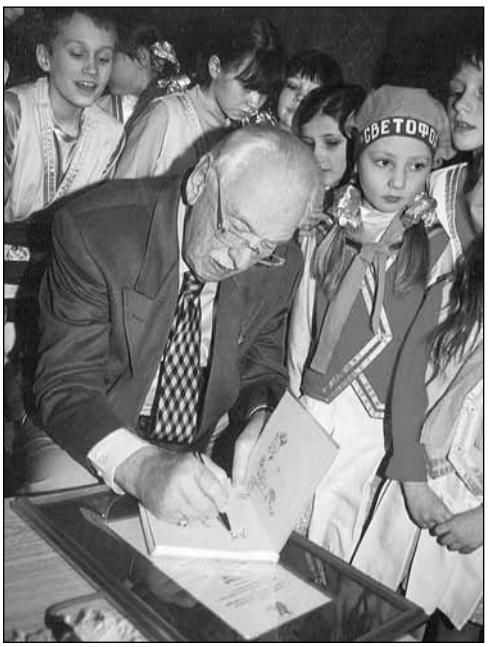
> We realized that Russian children's literature could only become part of the world's children literature in the 20th century if we joined the international community of professionals in children's literature as members of IBBY. At that time there were about 20 national sections in IBBY. I asked the Government to support our initiative to set up the USSR National Section of IBBY. The Soviet Government supported us.

Thus, in 1968 the Soviet National IBBY section was established. From the very beginning until he died in 2009, Sergei Mikhalkov was President of the Russian section. He was also the Chairman of the USSR Union of Writers as well as a popular writer. Despite being busy, Mikhalkov always found time for IBBY Russian section activities.

He did his best to enhance its prestige both in the country and abroad.

Mikhalkov was a person of great authority. In his book Igor Motyashov, a critic and IBBY EC member (1984 -1988), wrote:

> In 1968 the German writer James Krüss was awarded with the H.C. Andersen Award and in his acceptance speech quite unexpectedly recited a poem by Sergei Mikhalkov called "Peace" that Krüss had translated, and said: Those who want to educate children in complete humanism should write like the Soviet poet does. (Motyashov, Igor. *The Authority of a Good Word: The Sketchbook*. Moscow: Detskaya literature, 1975. 214.)



The early 1990s were difficult years for the section; people even called it a crisis. At that time children's literature was thought to be unnecessary by the state. In 1996, eleven specialists led by Sergei Mikhalkov established IBBY Russia as a non-governmental organization:

> …the intellectuals of the older as well as the current generation want to preserve an open window to the world and to national children's literature. I am sure the IBBY membership is an opportunity not to stay outside the world children's literature and a unique chance for us to be involved in the modern global cultural process.

During the first half century of the Russian IBBY section and Mikhalkov was extremely active:

- For the first time, a Soviet delegation took part at IBBY Congress in Bologna in 1970; Mikhalkov delivered a keynote speech, "Children, Literature, and Perceptions of the World."
- In 1972 Mikhalkov was elected to the IBBY Executive Committee, on which his served until 1976.
- In 1973, the former Czechoslovakian section published *20 years of IBBY*, in which Mikhalkov's essay, "Everything Begins with Childhood," was included.
- The Soviet Section hosted the IBBY EC meeting in March 1973 in Moscow, and again as Russian IBBY in September 2007 in Moscow, which included a visit to Saint Petersburg.
- In 1987, the Section sponsored the International Children's Book Day. Artist Victor Chizhikov designed the poster and Sergey Mikhalkov wrote the text.
- Since 1996, IBBY Russia has traditionally taken part in the biggest annual book fair in Russia—the International Moscow Book Fair (IMBF). At the fair, RBBY has always had its own stand and exhibited international books, as well as those from the national production. When Mikhalkov signed this long-term agreement between IMBF management and RBBY he said,

> A stand for a participant costs a lot, and book fairs today are much more commercial than ideological events. And why do the management of book fairs in Russia and abroad - in Italy, Germany, USA, France – always give complimentary stands and halls for IBBY national sections and their meetings? Because they understand that only IBBY national

sections can acquaint literary and publishing audiences with new and valuable projects in the world's children's literature and national literatures in particular....

- The project "The Days of Russian Children's Book Abroad," which began in 1996, was initiated by Sergey Mikhalkov and was supported by Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut in the world. The agreement was signed, and our IBBY Section began to organize different exhibitions, meetings with readers, book donations, master-classes with famous illustrators, and more, in close connections with our IBBY colleagues and under the auspice of Russian Embassies, Consulates, Russian centres of science and culture abroad. There have been "Days" in Denmark (1997, Copenhagen), Czech Republic (1998, Prague, 1999, Brno), Germany (2005, Baden-Baden, Rastatt), Austria (2007, Vienna), Belgium (2007, Brussels, Antwerp), Poland (2007, Warsaw), Sweden (2008, Stockholm), and Canada (2010, Toronto). Mikhalkov headed each mission of the delegation (except in 2010). Even at the age of 95, Mikhalkov talked for hours with young readers and adults at the Stockholm Central Library and at the Russian Embassy in Sweden.
- In 1998, the Saint Petersburg branch of RBBY was founded. That decision has given us more possibilities to promote and present Russian children's books abroad more fully.
- In 2008, the Russian Cultural Foundation resumed the Competition for the best literary work for teenagers. The Jury members assessed more than 500 manuscripts from Russia and abroad. Mikhalkov presented the winners with their awards at a special event devoted to the 40th anniversary of IBBY Russia, and Mikhalkov's 95th birthday.

Representatives of the Russian Section have served as members of the Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, the BIB Jury (Slovakia), the TIT Jury (Estonia) and the NAMI Island International Illustration Concours for Picture Book Illustration (NIIIC, South Korea), as well as on the EC IBBY. They take an active part in IBBY congresses, meetings, and attend international book fairs in Frankfurt and Bologna amongst others.

Angela Lebedeva
Executive Director of IBBY Russia

Celebrating Sergei Mikhalkov's 100th birthday

The USSR Section of IBBY was first established in 1968, in the middle of the Cold War, when the Iron Curtain divided Europe into East and West. The formal request coincided with the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, so it was no wonder that emotions were high when this request from the mighty and threatening Soviet Union was discussed. All sympathies went to Czechoslovakia, which had been member of IBBY for some time. Not only that: the famous Czech artist and puppeteer Jiri Trnka was to receive the 1968 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration at the Congress.

Sergei Mikhalkov was the chief Soviet delegate. He was known as an influential person in the literary establishment, he was Secretary of the Soviet Writers Union, and a member of the Communist Party. He was also the most popular and bestselling children's writer in the Soviet Union – every child knew his books about the tall policeman Uncle Steeple. IBBY's founder Jella Lepman and the other delegates were obviously curious to meet this man and were relieved to see that he had the look and manners of a *grand seigneur* of the Russian aristocracy, which was his background. He spoke fluent German and French and it was obvious that he did not have to worry about money. But nevertheless, he represented an oppressive system and was met with due caution and suspicion.

In accepting the membership of the Soviet Section, IBBY Executive Committee, however, decided to follow the principles of the United Nations and emphasize international cooperation instead of confrontation. IBBY's motto has always been the promotion of international understanding through children's books and reading, across all ideological or political frontiers and barriers.

Sergei Mikhalkov receiving Honorary Membership at the 2002 IBBY Congress in Basel, with Angela Lebedeva

At the IBBY Congress 1972 in Nice, France, Sergei Mikhalkov was elected member of the Executive Committee and served in this position for four years. The initial fears of some of the other representatives that he would have difficulties in adjusting to democratic discussion and voting procedures were soon dispelled.

A milestone for Sergei Mikhalkov and IBBY was reached when the Executive Committee accepted his invitation to hold its 1973 spring meeting in Moscow, to coincide with his 60th birthday celebrations. It was my first visit to Russia and I was overwhelmed.

Sergei Mikhalkov took his EC duties seriously. The financial situation of IBBY was extremely precarious at the beginning of the 1970s as the organization was rapidly expanding. He was extremely helpful in this search. From his own collection, he donated a small sculpture, a silver elephant, to be sold for the benefit of IBBY. He persuaded the popular artist Ilja Glazunov to donate two paintings, which were then sold to Finnish collectors. The greatest coup came when Sergei asked his friend Nadia Léger, the Russian-born widow of the French artist Fernand Léger, to donate a gouache called *La joie de vivre* to IBBY. In order to avoid any possible customs problems we decided to carry it personally to Switzerland. So, my father, then IBBY President, travelled to Paris, met Nadia Léger, who presented him with the artwork. He carefully placed it between the pages of the German magazine *Stern*, took the train and successfully crossed the border to Basel. The precious picture was auctioned through the Kornfeld gallery in Bern, and the proceeds corresponded to IBBY's annual budget at that time.

At IBBY's 50th anniversary Jubilee Congress in Basel in 2002 Sergei Mikhalkov was bestowed with Honorary Membership. In his moving

acceptance speech he said that the highest title he had ever received was that of a children's writer.

I was touched to receive a personal invitation from Sergei Mikhalkov to join the celebrations of his 90th birthday in Moscow, on 13 March 2003. This also coincided with the time of my retirement from IBBY, so nostalgia lay thick in the air. The world had changed radically during the thirty years that separated this visit from my first one. The USSR had become Russia, new rulers were in charge, the publishing scene had transformed from state to a market system, new authors had emerged, but it seemed that Sergei Mikhalkov's position as a prominent figure in the Russian literary scene remained secure.

The birthday festivities were magnificent: a conference at the Russian Writers' Union, was followed by a show created by his film director sons Andrei and Nikita the like of which had never before been seen in the Great Hall of the Kremlin. In this splendidly staged performance humorous sketches and reminiscences illustrated what had happened during his long life. He had written the lyrics to his country's national anthem on three different occasions, spanning almost 60 years from Stalin to Putin—an incredible achievement. The show gloriously concluded with "his" Russian National Anthem being performed by hundreds of children and adults on stage, including the Red Army Choir and Brass Band, while the audience of 4,000 rose and sang along.

Much of Russian political and cultural history throughout the 20th century was reflected in the person of Sergei Mikhalkov. He was criticized for being an opportunist simply because he survived all the political upheavals and changes of direction of his homeland. Certainly, he was a complex and controversial figure, but he firmly believed in the value of literature in forming the character of the growing child. In a thoughtful essay written for the publication *20 Years of IBBY,* in 1973, he stated that one of the big issues that preoccupy children's writers everywhere is the responsibility they feel concerning the future of children: "Their moral health, the purity and clarity of their aspirations depend much on the direction shown to them through the books they read." This was not the utopian thought of an abstract moralist; it was the idealism of a poet who had no illusions about the realities of life. Maybe Sergei Mikhalkov was lucky to be a poet who wrote the kind of verse that dictators liked and which future politicians read as children.

Leena Maissen
Former Executive Director of IBBY

When Books Become Our Wings

Dušan Roll, former president of the Slovak section IBBY, president of IBBY (1986-1990), chair of the Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury (1978-1982), member and later a vice-president of UNESCO International Book Committee (IBC), founder of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), and BIB Commissioner General (1967-2005),

celebrated his 85th birthday in January 2013. In 1994 he was bestowed with Honorary Membership of IBBY. His achievements have been quite inspirational for those who want to see transformation in children's lives.

Dušan Roll adopted Jella Lepman's motto "Give us books, give us wings" as his own motto, and has been true to it throughout his life and work.

Roll's focus on getting the best possible books to children has not been just a nice expression referring to almost an idealistic "cliché", but it also reflects real achievements. In the 1960s when he started to work for Mladé Letá, at that time the main publishing house for children's and juvenile literature in former Czechoslovakia, his opinions became aligned with ideas initiated by some bright Slovak artists, authors and intellectuals working in children's literature. They had been debating how to change the ideological influences that had resulted in an artificial simplification of the child's world. In 1956 the writer Ľubomír Feldek in his manifest for writers had openly and bravely confronted the current superficial literature. Roll aimed at creating a space to support artists that followed this movement, which could result in opening channels for a liberalization of arts: giving books wings. This space materialized with the founding of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava—BIB.

Dušan Roll used to say, "As our artists could not go out into the world, we invited the world to Bratislava." Since 1967, the BIB has been the meeting place for illustrators and experts who share this vision, as well as a starting point from which they can reach new artistic horizons. BIB has helped artists from all over the world fly over various barriers such as political and cultural, with different artistic views and approaches. It has been possible also thanks to the big international wings of IBBY, which has collaborated with BIB from the beginning. Such a long tradition of "flying together" has brought not only great accomplishment, but has also helped to articulate views, and to see the movements and progressive trends in the artistic work of illustrators. The biennial catalogue that has documented the works selected for every exhibition has allowed the community of artists and experts from all over the world to study the development of illustrations for nearly 50 years.

Timotea Vráblová
President of Slovak IBBY

Would you like to write for IBBY's journal?

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In an innovative way the reader follows the material wood through cultural history and all aspects of everyday and not so everyday life. Hence, questions are raised and answered: Which types of wood are suited to build musical instruments? How and in which form is wood heating fuel? In which way is wood used in shipbuilding? The thousands-of-years old material is presented in a thematic diversity and even complex engineering questions are adapted to the audience and answered. Typography and type of paper conform to the content of the narration in a variety of ways. Images and drawings from present and past complement the depictions. Apart from the independent thematic chapters the recurring sections are well executed: The story of a chest of drawers and its restoration runs like a golden thread through the story and thus adds a personal aspect. "Sideglance" concerns itself with technical terms and trivia surrounding the topic wood. And in the section "Tree and Forest" the constructions surrounding an oak are especially attractive.

Linda Dütsch

Reinhard Osteroth

Holz: Was unsere welt zusammenhält
[Wood: What keeps our world together]

Illus. Moidi Kretschmann
Bloomsbury: Kinderbücher & Jugendbücher, 2011.
192 p.
ISBN: 978-3-8270-5449-4
(Nonfiction, 12+)

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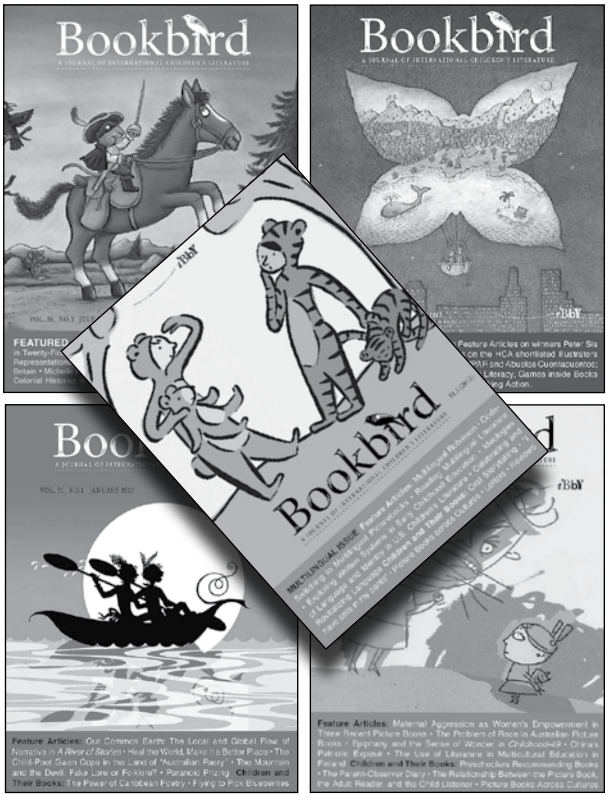

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